



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 June 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 23 June 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

■ Serious Fraud Office: Resignations

Andy Slaughter: [\[21132\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many applications have been submitted to the Advisory Committee on Public Appointments by civil servants regarding the business roles they intend to take up after leaving their positions with the Serious Fraud Office in the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022.

Alex Chalk:

During this period, one application was made to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOPA) by a former Civil Servant following employment at the Serious Fraud Office (SFO). This application was made by former SFO Director Sir David Green.

The details of Sir David's application are available [here](#).

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances

Claire Hanna: [\[22582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his planned timeline is for the implementation and ratification of the Beijing Treaty on Audiovisual Performances.

George Freeman:

The Government is committed to implementing and ratifying the Beijing Treaty. But this involves making changes to the UK performers' rights framework, which requires careful consideration and consultation with stakeholders. The Government is unable to offer a timeline for ratification at present.

■ British Airways: Redundancy

Alan Brown: [\[21235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2022 to Question 312 on British Airways: Redundancy, what mechanisms exist for employees to identify whether HR1 forms have been submitted.

Paul Scully:

Employee representatives are required to be consulted regarding any proposed redundancies and a copy of the notification should be sent to them.

■ Carbon Dioxide and Fertilisers: Manufacturing Industries

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[19593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that (a) fertiliser and (b) carbon dioxide continue to be manufactured in the UK.

Lee Rowley:

[Holding answer 21 June 2022]: The Government is working with industry to see what more they can do to achieve a more sustainable and resilient market for these products, and we encourage industry to continue to build their resilience plans.

Supply of carbon dioxide for the UK market has diversified since last year, with a variety of domestic sources providing supply along with imports where commercial agreements are made.

■ Clothing: Manufacturing Industries

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[21077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his letter of 25 March 2021 to the Chair of the Environmental Audit Select Committee, whether he has reached a conclusion in considering the idea of establishing a Garment Trade Adjudicator; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

In the response to the single enforcement body consultation published last year, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to continue to engage with the enforcement bodies and industry partners to strengthen our understanding of levels of non-compliance across the garment trade. We will continue to review this issue and consider options to drive up standards across the sector.

■ Conditions of Employment

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[21076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Written Statement of 11 May 2022, HCWS1, on Low-income Workers: Exclusivity Clauses, whether he plans to undertake a consultation in advance of publishing the employment status guidance; and when he plans to publish that guidance.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to publishing employment status guidance in due course. It will make 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. The Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure the employment status framework is fit for purpose.

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

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[22550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department spent on consultancy fees in each of the last five years.

George Freeman:

The table below shows the spend on consultancy fees in the core department in each of the last five years. The Consultancy spend is published in BEIS Annual Report & Accounts and spend relating to financial year 21/22 will be published in line with the timetable agreed with HM Treasury.

FINANCIAL YEAR	CONSULTANCY SPEND (£M)
16/17	£115
17/18	£101
18/19	£142
19/20	£164
20/21	£208

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

Emily Thornberry: [\[21135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June to Question 13662, whether all payments over £25,000 made by his Department to Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd from 7 November 2018 to 21 May 2022 took place under the Media Buying framework agreement RM6003.

George Freeman:

All payments over £25,000 made by the Department to Omnicom Media Group UK Ltd from 7 November 2018 to 21 May 2022 took place under the Media Buying framework agreement RM6003.

■ **Energy Charter Treaty: Climate Change**

Hywel Williams: [\[21099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the Energy Charter Treaty's compatibility with international climate goals.

Greg Hands:

The Energy Charter Treaty already calls on Contracting Parties to minimise the environmental impacts of energy operations.

Contracting Parties to the Energy Charter Treaty are negotiating the modernisation of the Treaty to ensure it is aligned with common climate objectives. The Government supports the process to modernise the Treaty in a way that advances the global energy transition, including the right for Member States to regulate in order to reach emissions reduction targets and ensure a stronger focus on climate security.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Employment

Rachael Maskell: [\[18964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of workers in the (a) the hospitality and (b) retail sector.

Rachael Maskell: [\[18965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of workers in (a) hospitality and (b) retail on high streets.

Paul Scully:

We are aware of elevated levels of vacancies in the hospitality and retail sectors, as with other sectors.

Both the Retail Sector Council and Hospitality Sector Council continue to work on the strategic issues facing businesses, including jobs and skills. The Retail Sector Council has identified skills and lifelong learning as a key priority and the Hospitality Strategy focuses on jobs and skills as a way to build resilience across the sector.

■ Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade: Pay

Rachael Maskell: [\[18966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the potential impact of increase wages in the hospitality and retail sectors on availability of people to work in (a) social care and (b) other public sector jobs.

Paul Scully:

Wage increases in the hospitality and retail sectors are matters for individual businesses.

■ Intellectual Property: Artificial Intelligence

Claire Hanna: [\[22583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government plans to publish its response to the consultation on Artificial Intelligence and IP: copyright and patents.

George Freeman:

This consultation ran from October 2021 to January 2022. The Government is considering the way forward and intends to publish its response during the summer of 2022.

Motor Vehicles: EU Law

Damian Green: [\[18756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he will maintain the terms and conditions of the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation despite the expiration of that regulation.

Paul Scully:

The retained Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation expires on 31 May 2023. On or before this date, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy may vary, revoke or replace the block exemption, acting in consultation with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The CMA has [announced a review](#) of the retained Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation and expects to submit a recommendation to my rt. hon. Friend the Secretary of State in late summer 2022.

Retail Trade: Urban Areas

Rachael Maskell: [\[20214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the availability of labour on high street businesses.

Paul Scully:

We are aware of elevated levels of vacancies affecting high street businesses.

Both the Retail Sector Council and Hospitality Sector Council continue to work on the strategic issues facing businesses, including jobs and skills. The Retail Sector Council has identified skills and lifelong learning as a key priority and the Hospitality Strategy focuses on jobs and skills as a way to build resilience across the sector.

Sizewell C Power Station: Floods

Alan Brown: [\[19631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the predicted flood risk frequency is for the proposed location of the Sizewell C nuclear station when taking into account the impact of climate change on sea levels.

Paul Scully:

Sizewell C is a live planning application. Given the Department's statutory responsibility for determining individual planning applications for energy projects, I am therefore unable to comment on the specifics of this case.

The Energy National Policy Statements, to which the Secretary of State must have regard when considering applications for new nuclear power stations, make clear that

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects must be resilient to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise.

■ Urban Areas

Rachael Maskell: [\[18960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what methods his Department uses to measure high street recovery; and if he will publish the data his Department holds on that matter.

Paul Scully:

The Department uses a range of a methods to measure high street recovery, including mobility data, card spend data and data on retail vacancies. This data is procured on a commercial basis and can therefore not be published.

■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[21073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households that do not receive a means tested benefits are eligible for the Warm Homes Discount; and how many households who receive a non-means tested disability benefit are eligible for that scheme.

Greg Hands:

Until now, the Government has set mandatory Warm Home Discount Broader Group eligibility criteria based on the receipt of a means-tested benefit. However, most energy suppliers expanded their eligibility criteria, subject to approval by Ofgem. It is at the discretion of each energy supplier to determine which households receive the rebate, therefore the Government does not have data on the total number of households who would have been eligible for Broader Group rebates.

From this winter, in England and Wales, the Government will replace the Broader Group with a new Core Group 2.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet: Public Opinion

Angela Rayner: [\[18924\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to Answer of 25 May to Question 5664 on Cabinet: Public Opinion, how much of the £16.539 million cited in that answer was spent on focus groups.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

Specific expenditure on focus groups is not held centrally. This means that any breakdown of the £16.539 million provided would not be accurate.

■ Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network

Jessica Morden:

[\[19594\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to (a) assist the growth of the Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network and (b) ensure it is accessible to staff in all civil service departments.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

As set out in the Declaration on Government Reform and the recent Civil Service Diversity Strategy, the civil service is committed to setting a new standard for inclusive workplaces. The Cabinet Office values the importance of ensuring our workplaces are inclusive for colleagues with dyslexia and we engage with relevant Networks where appropriate.

We engage with Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network, via the Civil Service Disability Network and with other cross-Government Diversity Networks to update on key initiatives and share best practice. The network also features on the Diversity Networks webpage on GOV.UK and the Chairs are able to collaborate with other networks using our Diversity and Inclusion hub.

Across the civil service we provide support via a range of individualised workplace adjustments to remove workplace barriers to enable dyslexic colleagues to thrive at work. Our Civil Service Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Network is a great support to improving the working environment for Civil Servants impacted by dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia across civil service departments. The development of the Toolkit has been widely shared with colleagues in Diversity and Inclusion.

Our recruitment processes are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain as inclusive as they can be, with involvement from occupational psychologists to ensure they meet the requirements of as many people with disabilities as we reasonably can.

An equality analysis was carried out in 2016 to demonstrate due and proper regard to our equality obligations. We used the analysis to assess the impact the introduction of online tests in recruitment was likely to have. This included reviews of the literature and involved a range of stakeholder and user consultations. External neurodiversity experts are also providing ongoing independent advice to GRS about how to improve the inclusive experience of neurodiverse test takers. The Civil Service publishes [written](#) and [video](#) guidance on the alternatives that exist for disabled test takers through the reasonable adjustment process.

■ LGBT+ People: Armed Forces

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[11847\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made towards the appointment of a chair of the independent review into the impact of the pre-2000 ban on LGBT+ personnel in the military.

Leo Docherty:

The Lord Etherton Kt PC QC has been appointed as Chair of the Independent LGBT Veterans Review.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

Rachael Maskell: [\[20268\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effectiveness of the scrutiny of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Michael Ellis:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is an office holder, established to provide an independent complaint handling service for complaints that have not been resolved by the NHS and UK Government departments.

The Ombudsman is accountable to Parliament through the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, who hold an annual scrutiny session to evaluate his performance.

Rachael Maskell: [\[20269\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the findings of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Stakeholder (PHSO) Survey 2021, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming the operation of the PHSO.

Michael Ellis:

The government has no plans at this time to introduce an Ombudsman Bill to Parliament.

Whilst the government will consider specific proposals on Ombudsman reform, we do not currently view more large scale Ombudsman reform as a priority for this Parliament.

Prime Minister: Consultants

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[22547\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Prime Minister's Office spent on consultancy fees in each of the last five years.

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[22549\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on consultancy fees in each of the last five years.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

For management and staffing purposes the Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office. Spend on consultancy is published in the Annual Report and Accounts. Figures for the last five years are:

YEAR	£000s
2021/22	28,997
2020/21	79,799
2019/20	35,380
2018/19	36,893
2017/18	23,988

Note - currently 2020/21 remains provisional until our annual audit is finalised.

DEFENCE

■ Air Force

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[21118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Order of Battle is for the Royal Air Force.

James Heapey:

Order of Battle is not a term commonly applied by the Royal Air Force (RAF). The information that is presented in the UK Armed Forces Equipment and Formations data, published at the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-equipment-and-formations-2021>, provides the size and shape of the RAF in tables 7, 8 and 9 for 2021.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Procurement

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[18842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress his Department has made on the development of the Ajax vehicle; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The focus for General Dynamics remains on ensuring vehicles comply with General Dynamics' contractual obligations. We want Ajax to succeed and to deliver what the British Army requires. I regularly update the House through written and oral statements and will continue to do so.

The MOD will not accept a vehicle that is not fit for purpose.

■ Armed Forces: Pastoral Care

Tommy Sheppard: [\[21223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Humanists UK's submission to the call for evidence on the

Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, dated September 2020, on the provision of non-religious pastoral support to armed forces personnel.

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[21224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel are employed in (a) the armed forces and (b) his Department to provide belief specific pastoral support and chaplaincy care to members of (i) non-religious, (ii) Baha'i, (iii) Buddhism, (iv) Hinduism, (v) Islam, (vi) Jainism, (vii) Judaism, (viii) Rastafarianism, (ix) Sikhism, (x) Zoroastrianism, (xi) Anglicanism, (xii) Roman Catholicism, (xiii) Methodism and (xiv) other Christian religion and belief groups.

Tommy Sheppard:

[\[21225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to recruit non-religious chaplains to provide belief-based support for regular and reserve personnel who identify as having no religion.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry of Defence has a diverse population, including personnel with a range of beliefs and faith, and those who have no religion. All military Chaplains have long provided pastoral care to those of all faiths and none. In addition, all Service personnel can access pastoral care from a variety of sources, including from within their Chain of Command, through the Services' professional social workers, medical staff, welfare staff and via the various staff networks, including the Humanist and Non Religious in Defence (HAND) Network.

The Department is working to create and sustain an environment where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential. We have carefully considered the position expressed by Humanists UK on the provision of non-religious pastoral support for our Armed Forces and have recently concluded a review of this matter. We are currently considering the recommendations of that review and how best we can support all our people.

It will take time to collate a detailed breakdown of personnel employed to provide belief-specific pastoral support and chaplaincy care, and I will write in due course.

■ Army

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[20216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent assessment he has made of the British Army's capability of engaging a near peer threat.

James Heappey:

The ability to conduct high-end warfighting remains at the core of the British Army, including remaining a leading contributor to the NATO alliance and the ability to field a warfighting Division.

In accordance with Defence's corporate governance structures and processes, the Army reports quarterly on its Performance against the goals and objectives set by the

Defence Strategy and Defence Plan. The Army is always ready to fulfil the task of protecting the nation and holds various people, units and equipment at various levels of readiness.

■ **Challenger Tanks: Procurement**

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[18833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date he expects the Challenger III programme to be completed.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones) to Question 638 on 18 May 2022.

Attachments:

1. Challenger Tanks [UIN 638.docx]

■ **Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[21101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2022 to Question 18824, on Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft Procurement, when his Department plans to sign a contract for the second tranche of 27 F-35 aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

We have informed the US led F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) of our Tranche 2 purchase intention; however, we do not anticipate being required to complete the next stage of contract activity until 2024.

■ **Military Provost Guard Service**

Luke Pollard: [\[21266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to reduce the number of service personnel working for the Military Provost Guard Service.

Leo Docherty:

As a result of the Army Guarding Transition Plan (AGTP), there will be a small reduction in the British Army's Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS) workforce, taking place over the next four years. This will see the Army complement of MPGS reducing by c.250 posts.

For affected Army MPGS personnel, employment opportunities exist in other sites that are under-strength, however, it is inevitable that some MPGS personnel will not be able to extend their current contract.

The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force (RAF) have no plans to reduce their MPGS workforce. The RAF have conducted a review of their guarding posture and, as a consequence, intend to increase their MPGS numbers to release Aviators back to their primary functions, and to meet extra security requirements for new capabilities.

■ Ministry of Defence: Photographs and Video Recordings

Rachel Hopkins: [\[20336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) photographers and (b) video producers were employed by his Department in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020 and (iii) 2021.

Leo Docherty:

The number of photographers working in the Ministry of Defence Head Office Directorate of Defence Communications (DDC) was two in each of the following financial years: 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22. DDC did not employ video producers, but DDC's photographers were involved in the production of videos.

■ Ministry of Defence: Procurement

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[18832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the potential merits of reforming its procurement process.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department believes that it must maintain continuous reform of its procurement process to make it more agile and ensure it delivers the best possible value for money. Our continuing improvement agenda across Defence acquisition covers five themes:

- Improving cost estimating and cost control
- Improving relationships with industry
- Delivering strategic intent and Defence priorities through our requirements
- Empowering and enabling programme leadership
- Streamlining acquisition and approvals processes and addressing project resourcing challenges.

At a tactical level the Department is very focussed on, for example, enhancing the training of its personnel and availability of SROs.

This is consistent with our commitment in the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, published in March 2021, to increasing the pace and agility of our acquisition processes.

Meanwhile the Department is supporting the Cabinet Office-led reforms to the UK's public procurement regime, leading on sector specific rules for Defence and Security.

■ Reserve Forces

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[18830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many active reservists were serving in the (a) army, (b) navy and (c) air force as of 15 June 2022.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[18831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many active regular service personnel there were in the (a) Army, (b) Navy and (c) Air Force as of 15 June 2022.

Leo Docherty:

Statistics for the number of Regular and Reserve personnel in the Armed Forces are published on a quarterly basis in the Quarterly Service Statistics Publication. The next quarterly edition, scheduled for publication on 23 June 2022, will provide the data from 1 January 2022 up to 1 April 2022. Data thereafter up to 1 July 2022 will be published in due course in the summer release of the Quarterly Service Statistics Publication.

Armed Forces Regular and Reserves statistics up until 1 January 2022 can be found in Tables 1, 2a, 2b, and 2c therein at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2022>

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Culture: Finance

Dan Carden:

[21257]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of the proposal by culture industry organisations for a Smart Fund to ensure creators and performers are paid for their work.

Julia Lopez:

The Government agrees that creators should be fairly remunerated. The Government is taking forward work to achieve this, including a programme considering the remuneration issues related to music streaming.

DCMS Ministers and officials have been engaging with the Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACs) on their proposals for a Smart Fund. It is encouraging to see proposals from the sector to support creators and fair remuneration. However introducing statutory levies of this nature can present significant challenges, including the risk that costs would be passed to consumers. This is of particular concern in the context of wider cost of living challenges. We encourage DACs to work with the tech industry to explore options for industry-led solutions.

■ Gambling Act 2005 Review

Theresa Villiers:

[21124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she will publish the review of legislation on gambling regulation.

Chris Philp:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 June to [Question UIN 13827](#).

■ **Swimming: Teachers**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[21100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if her Department will support local authorities to ensure that only level two qualified teachers teach swimming lessons to children and adults.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[21102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, and Media what steps her Department takes to ensure that people teaching swimming lessons in swimming baths in the UK have adequate qualifications to do so.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government recognises the importance of ensuring public access to indoor and outdoor pools. Swimming is a great way for people of all ages to stay fit and healthy as well as being a crucial life skill in terms of water safety.

Sport England continues to invest in access to swimming, awarding £7,111,146 in grassroots swimming and diving, including £3,099,500 directly to Swim England, since the start of 2020. This supports Swim England's work to develop the swimming workforce, including the Institute of Swimming which delivers training for swimming teachers.

Regulation of the wider sport and physical activity workforce is a key role of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMPSA). Sport England have invested £5 million into CIMSPA who are leading on the 'Retrain to Retain' programme which provides training to members of the sport workforce. This is currently being targeted at swimming teachers and potential swimming teachers to get them to return to work or join the industry.

On the Level 2 qualification, Sport England is funding CIMSPA to work with all governing bodies of sport to modernise their training for coaches and improve access to coaching qualifications, especially for people from underrepresented groups.

EDUCATION

■ **Primary Education: Physical Education and Sports**

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[21079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to renew Primary PE and Sport Premium funding for the academic year 2022-23.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[21126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he will confirm the Primary and PE Sport Premium Funding for academic year 2022-23.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[21277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has determined how much funding will be allocated for the PE and sport premium for the 2022-23 academic year; and when he plans to announce details of that premium.

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member for East Ham, the hon. Member for Streatham and the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, to the answer I gave on 16 June 2022 to Question [16901](#).

Russian Language: GCSE and GCE A-level**Munira Wilson:**[\[21288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he is having with exam boards to ensure the exam specifications for Russian (a) GCSE and (b) A-Level courses do not cause distress to Ukrainian students.

Mr Robin Walker:

Awarding organisations look carefully at their specifications and exam questions each year to manage any negative impacts on students. Awarding organisations are regulated by Ofqual, the office of qualifications and examinations regulation. Discussion about sensitivities in exam specifications is a matter for Ofqual. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, to write to the hon. Member for Twickenham and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Schools: Armed Forces**Mark Menzies:**[\[20248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) schools with a large intake of military families are adequately provisioned and (b) school roll audits are carried out termly rather than annually in those schools.

Mr Robin Walker:

State-funded schools in England that are attended by children and young people from military families (known as service children) receive additional funding in the form of the service pupil premium (SPP). This funding is currently worth £320 per annum for each pupil who is recorded as a service child at the time of the autumn school census, or who has had service child status at any point in the last six years.

Schools have flexibility over how they use the SPP to support the pastoral and academic needs that service children may have as a result of growing up in a military household. These can include needs relating to the impact of moving schools frequently during their primary and secondary education.

Schools are required in each termly school census to record information about the number of service children on roll. However, allocations of SPP funding for each financial year only draw on data from the autumn school census return. This 'lagged' approach to funding gives schools certainty over their budgets, as they know the

number of pupils for which they will receive funding in the year. Therefore, when pupil numbers fall, schools have time to respond before this starts to impact their budgets.

The department has allocated £246 million in growth and falling rolls funding to local authorities in the 2022/23 financial year. This is an increase of £12 million over the amount allocated for 2021/22. Growth funding can be used by local authorities to support schools with managing a significant growth in pupil numbers or a short-term decrease in pupil numbers, where those places are forecast to be required in future years.

The responsibility for how growth and falling rolls funding is allocated rests with local authorities. If an academy or maintained school takes on significant numbers of additional pupils because of a growing population in the area, then local authorities can provide funding from the growth pot they hold locally.

Furthermore, schools in which more than 6% of pupils joined at a non-typical date through the school year at any point in the last three years also attract funding through the mobility factor in the national funding formula. For years 1 to 11, this means the first census when the pupil was in the school was a Spring or Summer census. For the reception year, the first census is the Summer census. This year, the department allocated £44 million to local authorities through this factor. Local authorities allocate the funding they receive to schools through their local funding formula.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[21164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help protect clinically vulnerable members of staff from covid-19 in schools in England.

Mr Robin Walker:

Most people who were previously identified as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) are now well protected after receiving their primary and booster vaccination doses. For most people who were identified as CEV, they are no longer at substantially greater risk than the general population and are advised to follow the same guidance as everyone else on staying safe and preventing the spread of COVID-19, as well as any further advice they may have received from their doctor.

As individuals are now mixing in an otherwise open society, regular testing within education providers is no longer as effective as it once was at preventing transmission. 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.

Education providers should undertake a risk assessment of individuals with clinical vulnerabilities attending the provider and, as employers, should be able to explain the measures they have in place to keep staff safe at work.

Those at higher risk may also wish to consider additional advice:

- Those previously considered CEV may wish to consider taking extra precautions outlined in guidance from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>.
- Individuals with a weakened immune system should follow guidance from the UKHSA and DHSC for people whose immune system means they are at higher risk from COVID-19. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk>.
- In some circumstances, staff, children, pupils or students may have received advice from their specialist or clinician. They should follow this advice, which may be set out in a healthcare plan.

■ Schools: Email

Bridget Phillipson:

[18884]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has issued recent guidance to schools on ensuring that information intended for parents and supplied over email is routinely made as accessible as possible to parents who (a) lack access to a desktop computer or tablet at home, (b) do not have English as a first language and (c) may experience other challenges in opening and reading attachments to emails.

Mr Robin Walker:

There is no specific guidance which covers information provided by schools to parents via email.

The school information regulations, which cover the information that maintained schools must publish on their website, require schools to provide parents with free paper copies of the information on their website if they request one. The regulations also require that, if appropriate, governing bodies must make available free copies of the information they are required to publish, in a language other than English, or as a Braille or audio tape version.

More broadly, the governance handbook states that governing bodies should also be able to demonstrate the methods used to communicate with and seek the views of parents, carers, and the local community, including disadvantaged families or those families where English is not the first language.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Chris Stephens:

[900687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the rise in the cost of living on food producers.

Victoria Prentis:

Agricultural commodities are linked to global gas prices, and we recognise that farmers and food producers are facing increased input costs – namely fertiliser, energy, fuel and feed. We have taken steps to support farmers with fertiliser availability, brought forward BPS payments, implemented maize tariff reductions and introduced flexibility in the labelling of certain oils in products.

■ Agriculture: Research**Rachael Maskell:**[\[17975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to accelerate agricultural research into improving food productivity and yields to help address global food shortages.

Victoria Prentis:

Research, innovation and its take-up into practice are integral to supporting a thriving productive and sustainable food and farming sector, and to helping address the global challenges we face on food security. Defra engages with other Government departments, including the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), through the UK Research and Innovation-led Global Food Security Programme, which coordinates research and innovation activity of public funders to address food security challenges.

The recently published Government Food Strategy is a once in a generation opportunity to create a food system that feeds our nation today and protects it for tomorrow. It builds on existing work across Government and identifies new opportunities to make the food system more sustainable, resilient, and accessible for those across the UK. In the Food Strategy, Defra detailed plans to invest £270 million in industry-led research and development (R&D) through the Farming Innovation Programme, which will drive innovation in agriculture and horticulture to boost domestic productivity, including by helping to improve crop yield sustainability in the UK, and by driving the take up of new technologies, processes and practices by farmers and growers.

Defra's Genetic Improvement Networks (GINs) on Wheat, Oilseed Rape, Pulses and Vegetable crops aim to improve the main UK crops by identifying genetic traits to improve their productivity, sustainability, resilience and nutritional quality. Across the GINs we have already successfully identified genetic traits that have improved resilience to climate change and common pests and diseases, and we are working with breeders to incorporate these traits into elite UK crop varieties. Ongoing work is also investigating the capacity for nutritional improvement of our crops, such as improved pulse protein quality and nutritionally fortified rapeseed oil.

The Government is also taking steps to unlock the innovation potential of genetic technologies such as gene editing which can help increase crop yield more efficiently, and increase resilience to pests and disease which will benefit developing countries.

Further funding to support R&D for improved agricultural productivity in developing countries is administered by FCDO as part of the UK's overall Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). The UK's ODA R&D spend supports climate-resilient and nature positive food systems, combining 'upstream' science, technology and innovation with 'downstream' delivery, through partnerships with public sector, agribusinesses, and impact investors.

This includes support to the CGIAR, the world's leading agricultural science and innovation organisation (formerly the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research). The CGIAR has a strong track record in delivering tangible climate and development impacts in countries which are a priority for FCDO.

- In Sudan, heat tolerant wheat led to a doubling of wheat production levels in just five years.
- In Southern Africa, we partner with the CGIAR to develop over 200 new maize varieties that can withstand droughts and give farmers 30% greater yields under climate change.
- In Ethiopia, in 2017, higher-yielding, disease-resistant varieties of wheat have been adopted at scale, covering more than 60% of the farming area.
- Between 4.1 and 11.0 million Ethiopian households have been reached by agricultural innovations linked to CGIAR research (i.e. between 35% and 80% of rural households) - including drought resilient crops, improved soil and water conservation practices., with substantial adoption amongst poor households, young and female farmers.

FCDO's Agriculture Research programmes include our major joint research initiatives with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, including work in Cambridge which uses biological nitrogen fixation to sustainably increase yields for small-holder farmers in Africa, and Edinburgh-based research on livestock health.

■ Farmers: Government Assistance

Gareth Davies:

[\[900688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help farmers with cashflow.

Victoria Prentis:

Input costs for fuel, feed and fertiliser are worryingly high. We are monitoring the situation closely. To ease cashflow concerns, in England we have announced bringing forward half of the Direct Payment to July from December. We have powers in the Agriculture Act to help sectors if necessary.

We have just announced £30 Million to help farmers add value to their products, and we have boosted Countryside Stewardship payment rates by an average of 30%. We will shortly launch the Sustainable Farming Incentive, for which farmers will receive quarterly payments.

■ Fisheries: Quotas

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[21072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 16 June 2022 to Question 13027 on Fisheries: Quotas, if he will make it his policy to (a) follow the advice published in June 2022 by the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas, in full and for all stocks, when (i) setting quotas and (ii) negotiating with the relevant countries in 2022 and (b) where that advice is not followed, publish the scientific advice he plans to follow instead.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK's approach to negotiating total allowable catches (TACs) is founded on the best available scientific evidence. Once agreed, TACs and quota shares reflect negotiated outcomes that balance the objectives set out in the Fisheries Act 2020, including the needs of our fishing industry and the long-term sustainability of our fisheries and fish stocks.

■ Food Supply

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[21312\]](#)

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

Victoria Prentis:

The recently published Government Food Strategy puts food security at the heart of our vision for the food sector. Our aim is to broadly maintain the current level of food that we produce domestically and boost production in sectors where there are the biggest opportunities – such as horticulture and seafood.

Our farming reforms are designed to support farmers to produce food sustainably and productively, alongside delivering environmental improvements which we all benefit from.

Alongside this, we are investing over £270 million in innovation by 2029 to support agricultural productivity. Our £48 million Farming Investment Fund is supporting more than 43,000 farmers this year, providing grants towards the cost of equipment and technology, as well as large capital items, to improve productivity.

We have also awarded grants, through the Future Farming Resilience Fund, to organisations who help farmers and land managers adapt to the agricultural transition.

The Government has committed to produce an assessment of our food security at least once every three years. We published the first UK Food Security Report in December 2021, which will serve as an evidence base for future policy work.

■ Food Supply: Sustainable Development

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[16908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to promote greater food sustainability in the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

Farming in England is now going through the biggest change in a generation and government's approach to working with the farming sector is also changing. We're improving our policies and services to make them more effective, fairer, more flexible, more accessible and more workable for farmers.

We are introducing policies that work for farm businesses, food production and the environment. Food is still the primary purpose of farming, and always will be. The Food Strategy includes plans that will support farmers to boost home-grown fruit and vegetable production, and encourage people to buy more locally-sourced, high-welfare food. The Food Strategy identifies new opportunities to make the food system healthier, more sustainable, more resilient and more accessible for those across England. It sets out how we will deliver a sustainable, nature-positive food system that provides choice and access to high quality products that support healthier and sustainable diets for all. It launches the Food Data Transparency Partnership to improve sustainability data for the food system.

Farmers also play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment. If we want farming and food production to be resilient and sustainable over the long term, then farming and nature can and must go hand in hand.

We are providing farmers with two ways of receiving payments: one-off grants and ongoing schemes. Farmers can pick and choose from a range of grants and ongoing payments to find a package that works for them.

Everything we're offering contributes to our 3 related goals: supporting viable businesses, maintaining food production at its current level, and achieving environment, climate and animal health, welfare outcomes.

Over the next three years, we will spend £2.5 billion on payments to farmers through the new Sustainable Farming Incentive, Countryside Stewardship and its successor Local Nature Recovery, and continue to fund existing Environmental Stewardship agreements.

■ Village Halls

Alexander Stafford:

[\[900678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support village halls.

Rebecca Pow:

Village halls are at the heart of our rural communities, so I am delighted that we have announced our Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund. We will be spending £3 million to support the modernisation and improvement of village halls

across England – to ensure that they are fit for the future and our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy them.

■ **Wheat: Prices**

Jim Shannon:

[\[14488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help tackle the rise in wheat prices relating to trade.

Victoria Prentis:

Most cereals are internationally traded commodities. As a matter of course, supply chains are dynamic and responsive to global market developments in price and availability, whether those developments are driven by the weather or other global factors.

We continue to keep the market situation under review through the UK Agriculture Market Monitoring Group, which monitors UK agricultural markets including price, supply, inputs, trade and recent developments. We have also increased our engagement with industry to supplement our analysis with real-time intelligence and to identify where mitigations are available.

Government departments across Whitehall are working hard to find ways to resume the export of grain from Ukraine and to the countries that desperately need it. We also continue to engage with international partners in the G20 Agricultural Market Information System, the WTO and the International Grains Council to build consensus on the importance of keeping markets open and facilitate smooth functioning of the global food trade.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **Bangladesh: Disaster Relief**

Catherine West:

[\[21242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government has offered any assistance to Bangladesh following recent flooding in that country.

Vicky Ford:

I [Minister Ford] am deeply saddened by the impact of the recent floods in Bangladesh. The UK provided £195,000 to the START Fund Bangladesh in May to help during the first wave of flooding. In response to the most recent wave of flooding, the UK has contributed a further £442,500 to the START Fund. This funding will support the provision of cash assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, search and rescue operations, shelter management and provisional education materials.

■ Foreign Relations

Simon Fell:

[\[900640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps she is taking to help increase British soft power overseas.

Amanda Milling:

The FCDO funds projects and programmes that promote UK influence overseas, including the British Council, BBC World Service and our Chevening, Commonwealth and Marshall Scholarships.

Our diplomatic leadership is another important component of how others perceive the UK, as we have seen through our hosting of the G7 and COP26 and our support for a globally accessible Covid-19 vaccine.

■ Garry Pang

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[21078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the arrest and denial of bail to the Hong Kong Christian pastor Garry Pang Moon-yuen; and is she will make a statement.

Amanda Milling:

The right to peaceful protest is one of the rights China promised to protect, as guaranteed in both the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. However, the Chinese Government has failed to uphold freedom of speech and assembly, including through Chinese and Hong Kong authorities' continuing use of the National Security Law to target dissenting voices.

As a co-signatory to the Joint Declaration, we will continue to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violations of their rights and freedoms, and to urge China to uphold the rights set out in the Joint Declaration and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

■ Hamas: Terrorism and Violence

Steve McCabe:

[\[18766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to encourage regional partners to demand Hamas renounce the use of violence and terrorism.

Amanda Milling:

Our position on Hamas is clear: we condemn Hamas' continued attacks against civilians which are unacceptable and unjustifiable. We continue to call upon Hamas and other terrorist groups to permanently end their incitement and indiscriminate rocket fire against Israel. Hamas must renounce violence, recognise Israel and accept previously signed agreements.

■ Israel: Saudi Arabia**Steve McCabe:** [\[18765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Saudi counterparts on normalisation of diplomatic relations with Israel.

Amanda Milling:

The UK is committed to working with Arab and Israeli partners to help deliver shared prosperity and regional security. The Foreign Secretary made clear her commitment to the Abraham Accords at both the UK-Israel Strategic Dialogue on 29 November, and subsequently at the Gulf Cooperation Council-United Kingdom Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 20 December 2021. The UK is working with regional partners to ensure the Abraham Accords are an enduring success, and continue to encourage other countries who have not yet normalised relations to do so.

■ Odeh Mohammad Odeh Sadaqa**Mr David Jones:** [\[21125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations she has made to her Israeli counterpart on the killing of Odeh Mohammad Odeh Sadaqa in the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 2 June 2022.

Amanda Milling:

The UK has repeatedly made clear to Israel our concerns about the manner in which the Israeli Defence Forces police non-violent protests and the border areas. I recently travelled to Israel where I discussed this with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll.

■ Palestinian Authority: Human Rights**Steve McCabe:** [\[18767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the human rights situation in territory governed by the Palestinian Authority.

Amanda Milling:

We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to respect human rights, to ensure complaints of mistreatment or arbitrary detention are properly investigated and to continue to improve the performance of the security sector. I am using the opportunity of my current visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to discuss issues such as this.

■ Salah Hamouri**Sir Stephen Timms:** [\[21080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with her Israeli counterpart on that country's decision to revoke

the permanent residency in Jerusalem of lawyer and human rights defender Salah Hammouri for breach of allegiance to the State of Israel.

Amanda Milling:

We are aware of this case. Our British Embassy Tel Aviv have a regular dialogue with the Israeli Authorities on these issues. Israel's long-standing commitment to democratic values is one of its great strengths as a fellow democracy, and we continue to make clear that a strong, vibrant civil society is in Israel's own interest. As a friend of Israel, we would be concerned by any developments that may undermine this commitment.

■ **Sri Lanka: Development Aid**

Carol Monaghan:

[\[20265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she plans to provide (a) increased levels of funding and (b) emergency medical aid to Sri Lanka.

Vicky Ford:

The UK Government funds programmes to support the needs and development priorities of the Sri Lankan people. The Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) will provide £11.3 million over the next three years to work on post-conflict peacebuilding, promoting reconciliation and inclusive democratic institutions. This will fund landmine clearance, sustainable resettlement of those displaced by the conflict, and provide support to civil society.

The UK also contributes to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Operation in Sri Lanka. The DREF is supporting the Sri Lanka Red Cross with an allocation of approximately \$700,000 USD in response to the shortages and civil unrest. The World Bank, of which the UK is a major donor, has announced over \$400 million USD of assistance to provide economic and health sector support.

We welcome the start in-depth discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on reforms needed to bring the economy back to a sustainable path. We will work closely with fellow Paris Club members and multilateral organisations on solutions to Sri Lanka's debt crisis.

■ **Sri Lanka: Humanitarian Situation**

Carol Monaghan:

[\[20264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka.

Vicky Ford:

We are closely monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka particularly as it relates to food insecurity and medical shortages and will be working to support the UN and its agencies in their coordinated response. This response will be based on the UN's recent joint Humanitarian Needs and Priorities (HNP) Plan, launched on 9 June, that

called for \$47.2 million USD to provide life-saving assistance to 1.7 million people who are most at risk and need immediate support.

The UK Government recognises the difficult economic situation and welcomes the start of in-depth discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on reforms needed to bring the economy back to a sustainable path. The World Bank has announced over US\$400 million in assistance to provide economic as well as health sector support, with the UK being a major donor to the UN and World Bank.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Jim Shannon:

[19616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate funding for care homes.

Gillian Keegan:

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the care needs of the local population and develop and build local market capacity. The Local Government Finance Settlement provides an additional £3.7 billion compared to 2021/22, including £1 billion specifically for social care. Councils also have access to funding from un-ringfenced grants and council tax.

We are also committing £1.36 billion for the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund. This will support local authorities to prepare markets for reform and move towards paying providers a fair cost of care.

Jim Shannon:

[19617]

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

Edward Argar:

Ambulance trusts receive continuous central monitoring and support from the NHS England and NHS Improvement-funded National Ambulance Coordination Centre. In 2022/23, NHS England and NHS Improvement have allocated an additional £150 million for ambulance service pressures, supporting improvements to response times through additional call handler recruitment, retention and other measures.

■ Batten Disease: Children

Alexander Stafford:

[19033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to support people whose children have been diagnosed with Batten disease.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England commissions a service to treat adults and children with lysosomal storage disorders, including Batten disease. This is a holistic, inclusive

multidisciplinary service which provides diagnosis, assessment, treatment and advice on symptom control and provides support for affected families with patient advocacy groups.

■ **Batten Disease: Health Services**

Alexander Stafford: [\[19035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of treatment for (a) adults and (b) children with Batten Disease.

Maria Caulfield:

At present there are no licensed drugs for the treatment of Batten disease in adult patients. Following an evaluation by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in 2019, enzyme replacement therapy for CLN2 or Batten disease is available to paediatric patients through a managed access agreement. This allows patients who meet the eligibility criteria to access the drug and additional data is collected which NICE will use to evaluate the long-term effectiveness and safety of the drug. NICE will consider the clinical, neurodevelopmental and patient reported outcomes collected in its subsequent evaluation.

Alexander Stafford: [\[19036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people who are undergoing (a) care and (b) treatment for (i) Batten Disease and (ii) other Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinosis diseases.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England commissions a service to treat adults and children with lysosomal storage disorders, including Batten disease and other neuronal ceroid lipofuscinoses and monitors the number of patients using this service. It also offers enzyme replacement therapy for CLN2, or Batten disease, to paediatric patients through a managed access agreement and monitors the number of patients. However, NHS England has advised that the number of patients using these services is very small and any such estimate could identify individuals.

■ **Breast Cancer: Diagnosis**

Dr Rupa Huq: [\[20280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the early detection and diagnosis of breast cancer; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of raising the Faster Diagnosis Standard target to 95 per cent.

Maria Caulfield:

The NHS Breast Screening Programme is increasing uptake and reducing health inequalities to improve early detection and diagnosis of breast cancer. Regional commissioners are working with Cancer Alliances and charities to develop population specific plans. The National Health Service is implementing non-symptom specific (NSS) pathways in England to combine diagnostic equipment and expertise and

reduce waiting times for diagnoses. By February 2022, 86 NSS pathways were deployed across the 21 Cancer Alliances.

No specific assessment of the merits of raising the Faster Diagnosis Standard (FDS) to 95% has been made. The FDS threshold has initially been set at 75% and will be kept under review by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

■ **Cancer: Diagnosis**

Tim Farron: [\[19602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion cancer patients diagnosed by secondary care in Quarter 4 of 2021-22 had been seen and not diagnosed by another secondary care practitioner within the previous six months.

Maria Caulfield:

This information is not collected in the format requested.

■ **Cancer: Exercise**

Jim Shannon: [\[18905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to encourage people diagnosed with cancer to use local exercise facilities.

Maria Caulfield:

The National Health Service has published exercise guidelines for cancer patients and patients may access to local exercise facilities through social prescribing measures by their healthcare team. Advice on appropriate exercise and how to stay active during treatment forms part of any personalised care protocol, such as the personalised stratified follow up pathways deployed for a number of cancers.

Social prescribing link workers in primary care can support cancer patients to connect with local exercise opportunities. The Primary Care Directed Enhanced Services contract states that all Primary Care Networks (PCNs) must have access to social prescribing services. This is usually through the PCN commissioning social prescribing link workers using the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Tracey Crouch: [\[18871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's guidance entitled New government recommendations for England NHS hospital trusts and private hospital providers, published on 14 April 2022 and withdrawn on 27 May 2022, whether he is taking steps to help ensure that cancer patients in England can be accompanied by a relative, friend or carer to their appointments.

Maria Caulfield:

The latest National Health Service guidance on visiting in healthcare inpatients settings was updated in June 2022. This states that the same principles should also be applied in outpatient and diagnostic service settings and emergency departments.

Where a patient may wish or need to be accompanied, no patient should attend alone unless it is their personal choice.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[18875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the 10-Year Cancer Plan will be published.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: Officials are analysing the responses received to the call for evidence to develop the 10 Year Cancer Plan. The Plan will set out how we will improve cancer services and further details will be published in due course.

■ Cancer: Screening

Jim Shannon: [\[18902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on introducing DNA tests for the detection of cancers.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are exploring a number of promising genetic tests which may support early detection of cancer and continue to monitor the evolution and development of new technologies. NHS England and NHS Improvement have agreed a partnership with GRAIL to test and accelerate its Galleri test into widespread usage across the NHS. The trial is currently in its first stage. If the initial phase of this trial meets specific interim goals identified in advance, the NHS will expand the trial to one million tests in 2024 and 2025. The NHS Cancer Programme's innovation open call is supporting a small-scale project using the Guardant liquid biopsy to support diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

■ Carers: Government Assistance and Respite Care

Tracey Crouch: [\[18873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a UK recovery and respite plan for unpaid carers; and what wider steps his Department is taking to support unpaid carers.

Gillian Keegan:

There are no plans to publish a specific recovery and respite plan for unpaid carers in England. In 'People at the Heart of Care', we set out how we will invest up to £25 million with the sector to identify and test a range of new and existing interventions to support unpaid carers, which could include respite and breaks, peer group and wellbeing support.

In addition, funding provided through the Better Care Fund can be used for carer breaks and respite. The BCF Framework for 2022/23 will be published shortly and will request that all local BCF partnerships set out how funding is being used to support unpaid carers. On 13 May, we wrote to local authorities to reiterate the importance of

respite support for carers and to understand any challenges in returning these services to full capacity.

Unpaid carers in low-income households will benefit from the Means-Tested Benefit Cost of Living Payment. Those living in the same household as the disabled person for whom they care will benefit from the disability Cost of Living Payment, while families with a pensioner in the household will benefit from the Pensioner Cost of Living Payment.

■ Conversion Therapy

Caroline Lucas: [\[16907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has held discussions about his legislative intentions on conversion therapy with representatives of (a) the NHS and (b) other signatories of the March 2022 Memorandum of Understanding on conversion therapy in the UK; if he will make it his policy to ban all forms of conversion therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

We have had no specific discussions. The Government Equalities Office has legislative responsibility for the Government's policy on conversion therapy.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments

Stephen Hammond: [\[R\] \[18857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the role of covid-19 antivirals in reducing pressures on the NHS.

Maggie Throup:

No specific assessment has been made. However, clinical trial results indicate that the dual oral antiviral nirmatrelvir/ritonavir resulted in a relative risk reduction of hospitalisation or death by 88% within five days of symptom onset, compared to placebo in non-hospitalised, high-risk adults with COVID-19. Further results show that the oral antiviral molnupiravir administered within five days of symptom onset to high-risk, non-hospitalised patients resulted in a relative risk reduction of 30% in the composite primary outcome of hospitalisation or death at day 29.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Luke Pollard: [\[17121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking in response to the NHS not accepting some covid-19 home testing kits because they have four letters on the test strip ID rather than three.

Maggie Throup:

Tests with four letters on the ID strip are privately purchased lateral flow device (LFD) tests which cannot currently be registered on GOV.UK. Free LFD tests can be

registered on GOV.UK and eligible individuals should continue to do so. The registration of the different types of COVID-19 tests is currently under review.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[18069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will investigate reports that only Randox covid-19 PCR were accepted for those re-entering the UK during November 2021.

Maggie Throup:

We have no plans to do so. In November 2021, lateral flow device (LFD) tests were accepted for arrivals from all non-'red list' countries, with approximately 50 LFD test providers available via GOV.UK.

From 27 November 2021, we announced all arrivals from non-red list countries were required to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test up to day two after arrival and self-isolate until a negative test result is confirmed. As of this date, there were more than 400 PCR test providers available, including Randox, supplying tests accepted on arrival in the United Kingdom.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken on vaccine damage payment policy in respect of the families of those who died as a result of receiving a covid-19 vaccination.

Maggie Throup:

The Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme (VDPS) provides a one-off tax-free payment, currently £120,000, to individuals whose health was damaged by a vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. The VDPS can be applied for on behalf of someone who has died. To be eligible in such cases, the applicant should manage the estate of the deceased, with each case assessed against the legal requirements of the Scheme and considered on its own merits.

The Department and the NHS Business Services Authority are improving the VDPS through a simplified process and greater accessibility for all claimants. This includes the digitisation and modernisation of the claims process, including the VDPS claim form and more regular communications on the progress of claims.

■ **Cystic Fibrosis: Mental Health Services**

Ian Paisley: [\[18901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of psychosocial provision for people with Cystic Fibrosis.

Gillian Keegan:

NHS England's adult and paediatric cystic fibrosis service specifications set out national standards for cystic fibrosis services, including the importance of access to multidisciplinary teams involving appropriately trained clinical psychologists and

social workers. There are regular review meetings between the regional commissioning teams and providers to ensure compliance with service standards. Those with long term conditions such as cystic fibrosis can also access psychological support via Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services.

Health Education England has supported a 60% expansion in the clinical psychology training intake in the past two years. Trainees can undertake specialist placements and upon qualification take up posts across a wide range of settings, including working with adults and children with cystic fibrosis.

The white paper, 'People at the Heart of Care', is supported by at least £500 million to develop and support the adult social care workforce over the next three years. We are also supporting the social care workforce through the development of a post-graduate mental health social work programme, the Education Support Grant and Social Work Bursaries.

■ Dementia

Dan Jarvis: [\[21193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the prevalence rates for dementia were in (a) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England in each of the last five years.

Gillian Keegan:

The following table shows the prevalence rate in NHS Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and in England in each of the last five years for which data is available.

	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
NHS Barnsley CCG	0.75	0.82	0.81	0.77	0.77
South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw STP	0.79	0.89	0.89	0.86	0.86
England	0.71	0.79	0.78	0.76	0.76

Source: NHS Digital, Quality Outcomes Framework

■ Dementia: Health Services

Dan Jarvis: [\[21194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for dementia services in (a) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England.

Gillian Keegan:

No recent assessment has been made. The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to deliver a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services which meet the needs of the local population, including people living with dementia.

■ Dementia: Research**Dan Jarvis:**[\[21192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent progress he has made on delivering the Government's dementia moonshot commitment.

Gillian Keegan:

We will set out plans for dementia in England for the next 10 years later this year, which will include plans to increase research funding for dementia and deliver a moonshot.

■ Dental Services: Durham**Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[19683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the availability of NHS dentistry appointments in County Durham.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. Appointments for National Health Service treatment are managed directly by dental practices. Between April and June 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity to safely improve access for patients.

■ Dental Services: Private Sector**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[13655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to require private dental practices to provide payment plans for customers in need of urgent dental care.

Maria Caulfield:

There are currently no plans for private dental practices to provide payment plans for customers in need of urgent dental care.

Between April and June 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity to safely improve access for patients. An additional £50 million was provided for National Health Service dentistry for the final quarter of 2021/22 to provide urgent care to patients. The appointments were targeted to patients in most need of urgent dental treatment, including vulnerable groups and children.

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with stakeholders, including the British Dental Association, to improve the NHS dental

system. This aims to improve patient access, reduce health inequalities and make the NHS a more attractive place to work for dentists. Negotiations are currently underway on initial measures.

■ **Dental Services: Rutland and Melton**

Alicia Kearns:

[\[19014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase NHS dental provision for (a) unregistered children and (b) vulnerable NHS patients in Rutland and Melton constituency.

Maria Caulfield:

Dental patients are not registered to a particular practice outside a course of treatment. A practice can accept a patient for a course of treatment and there are no geographical restrictions on which dental practice a patient may attend, including those in Rutland and Melton.

In 2021/22, an additional £50 million was provided for National Health Service dentistry in the final quarter to provide urgent care to patients. The appointments were targeted to patients in most need of urgent dental treatment, including vulnerable groups and children. Between April and June 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity to improve access for patients safely, including children and vulnerable patients. Specialist community dental services which treat particularly vulnerable people also benefited from this additional funding. Children, people with learning disabilities, autism or severe mental health problems were prioritised in these services.

The Department and NHS England and Improvement are working with stakeholders, including the British Dental Association, to improve to the NHS dental system. This aims to increase patient access, reduce health inequalities and make the NHS a more attractive place to work for dentists. Negotiations are currently underway on initial measures.

■ **Dental Services: West Sussex**

Nick Gibb:

[\[18759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of available dental appointments for NHS patients in West Sussex.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not held centrally, as appointments for National Health Service treatment are managed directly by dental practices. Between April and June 2022, NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity to safely improve access for patients, including in areas such as West Sussex.

Nick Gibb: [\[18763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has provided to help improve access to NHS dental services in West Sussex.

Maria Caulfield:

An additional £50 million was provided for National Health Service dentistry in the final quarter of 2021/22 to provide urgent care to patients. Of this funding, £6,887,000 was made available to the South East of England, including West Sussex. NHS England provides regional commissioning teams with a combined allocation for dental services, community pharmacy and primary care ophthalmology. In 2022/23, this allocation is £5,384 million.

■ Dental Services: York

Rachael Maskell: [\[17989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many undelivered units of NHS dental activity funding has been returned to NHSE from dental practices based in York over the latest (a) year and (b) six months for which data is collected.

Rachael Maskell: [\[17990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional units of dental activity have been commissioned in York in the last (a) six and (b) twelve months.

Rachael Maskell: [\[17991\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to increase the availability of NHS dental services in (a) York and (b) England.

Maria Caulfield:

Delivered Units of Dental Activity (UDA) are reconciled against contracted UDAs at the end of each contract year. The latest data is available relates to 2020/2021. Throughout this year, revised contractual targets were mandated in response to COVID-19, taking into account national guidance on infection prevention control measures. In York, 19 providers met these revised activity targets at year end, while one provider did not meet these targets and the financial equivalent of 271 UDA was returned from this provider.

Data on the additional activity commissioned through the £50 million provided to regions for urgent dental care will be available in July. There are no plans to increase the number of dental practices in York. However, NHS England's regional commissioners continue to work with local contractors to restore access to National Health Service dentistry to pre-pandemic levels of activity and address local needs. Between April and June 2022 NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked practices to deliver at least 95% of contracted units of dental activity to safely improve access for patients safely.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: MG OMD**Emily Thornberry:**[\[13671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) procurement reference, (b) start date, (c) end date and (d) maximum value, inclusive of VAT, is of the contract that his Department has agreed with Manning Gottlieb OMD for the provision of strategic media activation services under the terms of the Crown Commercial Service's media services framework agreement reference RM6123.

Edward Argar:

There is no current live contract under the reference RM6123. Subject to approvals, the Department intends to award a procurement project to Manning Gottlieb OMD under the reference number C78833. The contract is intended to commence on 1 September 2022 and is estimated to end on 31 August 2025. The maximum value is expected to be £209,000,000, although this is exclusive of VAT.

■ Diabetes: Health Services**Colleen Fletcher:**[\[18932\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on (a) access to and (b) take-up of routine health checks for patients with diabetes in (i) Coventry, (ii) the West Midlands and (iii) England; and what steps his Department is taking to improve access to care for people living with diabetes in those areas.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: Data for NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System (ICS) shows that 20% of those with type 1 diabetes and 23% of people with type 2 or other diabetes received all eight care processes in 2020/21. This is a reduction of 45% and 51% respectively from 2019/20 due to the impact of the pandemic. Coventry and Warwickshire ICS has been identified as in need of additional funding from the national diabetes programme team to increase provision of annual diabetes checks.

In the Midlands region, 23% of people with type 1 diabetes and 32% with type 2 or other diabetes received all eight care processes in 2020/21. This is a reduction of 43% and 45% respectively compared to 2019/20. The National Health Service in the Midlands is working with all systems in the region to review data from the National Diabetes Audit and share best practice on models of care to ensure the recovery of routine diabetes checks.

In England in 2021, 26% of those with type 1 diabetes and 39% with type 2 or other diabetes received the eight care processes. While this is a 31% and 32% increase respectively compared to 2020, it is a respective reduction of 18% and 22% compared to 2019. The '2022/23 priorities and operational planning guidance' asks that diabetes care processes are restored to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022/23. We have allocated £36 million to ICSs in 2022/23, weighted by deprivation,

to support the restoration of routine diabetes care. Each ICS will set out planned recovery activity in a one-year operational plan.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Young People**

Mary Glendon:

[R] [[19613](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations of the independent review by Dr Javed Khan OBE on preventing youth access to vaping products, if his Department will take steps to ensure that (a) cartoon imagery, (b) references to youth culture and (c) flavour names that appeal to minors do not appear on the packaging or within the flavour names and descriptors of disposable vapes.

Maggie Throup:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: The Department will consider the recommendations set out in the Review. The Government's regulatory framework aims to maximise the opportunities for smokers to use vaping as a tool to quit, while preventing non-smokers and young people from using these products.

■ **Genito-urinary Medicine: Health Professions**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[[19587](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the forthcoming sexual and reproductive health strategy will include measures to ensure that ongoing training for the sexual health workforce is a core part of local service delivery requirements.

Maggie Throup:

We will set out plans for sexual and reproductive health later this year. Individual National Health Service trusts are responsible for investing in post-registration training to ensure that staff can effectively deliver sexual and reproductive health services. In addition, Health Education England's e-Learning for Healthcare includes a range of programmes and material which focus on sexual and reproductive health.

■ **Gynaecology: Health Services**

Feryal Clark:

[[19737](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the backlog in gynaecology appointments; and whether he has considered the potential merits of providing additional funding to gynaecology.

Maria Caulfield:

As of April 2022, the median average waiting time for gynaecology treatment in England was 13.7 weeks, a decrease of nearly 30% from the peak average waiting time in July 2020. However, activity levels for gynaecology treatment continue to recover and as of April 2022 were 95% of pre-COVID-19 levels. The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' outlines how the National Health Service will reduce waiting times across all elective services, including gynaecology and menstrual health.

The plan commits to investing in the physical separation of routine care to protect planned services from emergency care pressures where possible. We are increasing capacity for gynaecological surgery to tackle waiting lists through the surgical hub and High Volume Low Complexity programme.

Some gynaecological services, such as menstrual health services, are predominantly provided by general practitioners (GPs) which remained open throughout the pandemic. We have invested £520 million to improve access and expand GP capacity, in addition to the £1.5 billion already announced in 2020 to create an additional 50 million GP appointments by 2024.

■ Heart Pacemakers: Donors

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[18789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of setting up a pacemaker donor card scheme in a similar model as the organ donor card scheme.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Kidney Cancer

Laura Trott:

[\[14639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to reduce the level of kidney cancer in the UK.

Maria Caulfield:

Approximately a quarter of kidney cancers are caused by obesity. To help people achieve and maintain a healthier weight, we have introduced regulations on out-of-home calorie labelling for out of home food sold in large businesses including restaurants, cafes and takeaways, which came into force on 6 April 2022. Further legislation on restrictions on the promotion and advertising of products high in fat, salt or sugar will come into effect in due course. Reformulation programmes also aim to make the food and drink available to consumers healthier.

A further 15 types of cancer, including kidney cancer, could be preventable by supporting smokers to quit tobacco use. Recent data shows one in four deaths from all cancers were estimated to be from smoking. An independent review of the Government's aim for England to be smoke free by was published on the 9 June, which set out recommendations to support this ambition. We will consider the recommendations to inform the forthcoming health disparities white paper and a new Tobacco Control Plan.

Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:** [\[19022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 2 February 2022 from the hon. Member for High Peak, reference RL27501.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 30 May 2022.

Robert Largan: [\[19753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry dated 9 March 2022 from the hon. Member for High Peak, referenced RL36065.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 21 June 2022.

Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**Tony Lloyd:** [\[19573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2022 to Question 3475 on Mental Health Services: Children and Young People, what criteria are used to determine whether health and wellbeing measures affecting children and young people are to be afforded statutory protection; and which measures have been afforded that protection in the last 12 years.

Gillian Keegan:

Any decision to place such measures on a statutory footing would be subject to the Department's policy development process, any legal obligations such as the Public Sector Equality Duty, any relevant impact tests such as the family test, consultation with interested parties and value for money, with the final decision made by Ministers. The information on the specific measures afforded this protection in the last 12 years is not held in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mental Health Services: Telephone Services**Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:** [\[20282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many calls have been made to the NHS staff mental health hotline in each month since July 2021 for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

The following table shows the number of calls made to the National Health Service staff helpline, which is managed by Samaritans on behalf of NHS England.

MONTH	NUMBER OF CALLS
July 2021	414
August 2021	367
September 2021	641
October 2021	830
November 2021	831
December 2021	494
January 2022	728
February 2022	607
March 2022	560
April 2022	500
May 2022	449

■ Neurology: Training

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[18795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to improve the quality of training on Tourette's syndrome and other neurological disorders for service providers in England.

Edward Argar:

Individual National Health Service employers are responsible for ensuring that staff are trained, competent and have the necessary skills to safely and effectively treat patients in their care, including those with Tourette's syndrome and other neurological disorders. Health Education England's e-learning for healthcare also offers sessions including content on Tourette's syndrome.

Patients with Tourette's syndrome are usually referred to specialist neurology services. A new curriculum for dual training in neurology and internal medicine produced by the Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians Training Board is being implemented in August 2022 to manage the growing number of people with neurological diseases who can be treated and require long-term management and those who present acutely to neurology, stroke and general medical services.

■ NHS: Complaints

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the complaints process for people who have experienced a grievance or poor care within the NHS so that it is timely and responsive to the complaint raised.

Maria Caulfield:

The regulations which govern the National Health Service complaint handling arrangements contain specific provisions on timelines and responsiveness. NHS organisations are required to acknowledge complaints made within three working days and offer the complainant a meeting to discuss how the complaint will be handled and the likely timescales. The regulations also require NHS organisations to investigate complaints efficiently and ensure the complainant is informed of progress.

■ NHS: Negligence

Feryal Clark:

[\[15783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 September 2020 to Question 88854, on NHS: Negligence, how much the NHS has spent on medication errors in (a) 2020-2021 and (b) 2021-2022.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS Resolution handles clinical negligence claims on behalf of National Health Service organisations and independent sector providers of NHS care in England.

The following table shows the total value of payments made by NHS Resolution for damages and legal costs in respect of medication errors in 2020/21 on behalf of NHS organisations in England. Audited data for financial year 2021/22 is not yet available.

FINANCIAL YEAR	DAMAGES PAID	NHS LEGAL COSTS	CLAIMANT LEGAL	
			COSTS	TOTAL COSTS
2020/21	£10,216,620	£859,446	£5,810,707	£16,886,773

■ NHS: Pay

Feryal Clark:

[\[19731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure lower paid NHS staff are financially secure in the context of rising living costs.

Edward Argar:

The Government committed to a pay increase for National Health Service workers in England this year, in addition to 3% last year when pay was frozen in the public sector. The Government is looking to the independent Pay Review Bodies (PRBs) for a pay recommendation for the NHS. PRBs consider a number of factors in making

recommendations, including the cost of living and inflation, recruitment and retention, affordability and value for the taxpayer. The Government will consider these recommendations before responding.

Almost eight million households across the United Kingdom will receive support of at least £1,200 this year, including a new one-off £650 cost of living payment. Universal support also increases to £400 as the October discount on energy bills is increased and the requirement to repay it over five years is removed. This constitutes a total of £37 billion this year to support the cost of living.

■ NHS: Pensions

Feryal Clark:

[\[19735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of (a) the impact of (i) rising inflation and (ii) CPI value on pension taxation for NHS workers and (b) the potential impact of such pension taxation increases on the retention of senior NHS workers.

Edward Argar:

The NHS Pension Scheme protects pensions in payment by increasing them by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and revalues accrued career-average pension benefits by CPI plus 1.5% each year. A higher rate of revaluation will increase the size of pensions and may therefore increase annual allowance pension tax liability in a situation where inflation is increasing. However, when inflation reduces in the subsequent tax year, this may increase the scope for more pension growth before exceeding the annual allowance that year.

The vast majority of National Health Service staff build their pension tax-free. Where pension tax allowances are breached, it is not required to pay the tax charge in advance. The Scheme Pays facility allows staff to meet any annual allowance charge from their pension instead. As an individual may retire or alter their working commitments for a number of reasons, it is not possible to assess the specific impact.

■ NHS: Staff

Feryal Clark:

[\[19729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to publish a long-term health and care workforce strategy later this year.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissioned NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a long-term workforce plan. The plan will supplement the NHS People Plan and the Elective Recovery Plan and align with Health Education England's forthcoming 'Framework-15'. We intend to engage with a range of stakeholders to develop this plan and the outcomes will be made available in due course.

Feryal Clark: [\[19730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the long-term health and care workforce strategy will include specific projections of required staffing numbers based on the care needs of the public in the next (a) five, (b) 10 and (c) 15 years.

Edward Argar:

The Department commissioned NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a long-term workforce plan for the next 15 years, including supply and demand projections. The plan will supplement the NHS People Plan and the Elective Recovery Plan and align with the priorities in Health Education England's forthcoming 'Framework-15'.

Feryal Clark: [\[19733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish an NHS workforce plan for primary care by the end of the year.

Maria Caulfield:

In July 2021, the Department commissioned Health Education England to review long term strategic trends for the health and regulated social care workforce. 'Framework-15', which is nearing completion, will ensure we have the right skills, values and behaviours to deliver high standards of care. The Department also commissioned NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a long term workforce plan and its conclusions will be shared in due course.

We are also considering the recommendations made in Dr Claire Fuller's 'The Future of Integrated Primary Care', published in May with the support of the 42 integrated care system (ICS) chief executive designates. It provides advice to ICSs on accelerating implementation of the primary care, community and prevention ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan. It describes a personalised approach to care, focusing on integrating teams and professionals to improve patient care for whole populations.

■ Operose Health: Staff

John Spellar: [\[17867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the report by Panorama that Operose Health have used less qualified staff to consult with patients without supervision.

Maria Caulfield:

Physician associates (PAs) are not a substitute for a general practitioner. The use of PAs in primary care is detailed in the Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service, which describes the role and the tasks a PA funded by the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) would be expected to undertake. It also references the expectation of the supervision of PAs. NHS England and NHS Improvement have committed to review the ARRS by the end of 2023.

■ Patients: Safety**Feryal Clark:** [\[19728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the appointment of a new patient safety commissioner.

Maria Caulfield:

On 20 June 2022, Henrietta Hughes was announced as the Government's preferred candidate for the role of Patient Safety Commissioner. This role is subject to a pre-scrutiny appointment hearing by the Health and Social Care Committee on 5 July 2022.

■ Pharmacy**Feryal Clark:** [\[18104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many community pharmacies were operating in each month since January 2022; and how many community pharmacies (a) temporarily and (b) permanently closed in that same time period.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested on temporary closures of community pharmacies is not held centrally. Information on the number of operational pharmacies is published annually. In 2020/21, there were 11,600 active community pharmacies in England, with 236 new pharmacies opened and 451 closed.

■ Physician Associates: Newham**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[16904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that physician associates are used appropriately and with adequate GP supervision at practices run by Operose Health in Newham; and what recent assessment he has made of the impact that an increase in the use of physician associates as substitutes for GPs in practices will have on (a) patient safety and (b) the efficacy of NHS healthcare.

Maria Caulfield:

All providers of National Health Service general practitioner (GP) services are subject to the same requirements, regulation and standards and we expect commissioners to take action if services are not meeting the reasonable needs of patients.

Physician associates (PAs) are not a substitute for a GP. The use of PAs in primary care is detailed in the Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service, which describes the role and tasks a PA funded by the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) would be expected to undertake. This includes the expectation of the supervision of PAs. Primary Care Networks (PCNs) have access to the ARRS, which provides funding to recruit additional direct patient care roles and build multi-disciplinary teams. PAs are one of 15 roles which PCNs can recruit to best meet local need.

■ Primary Health Care**Feryal Clark:** [\[19724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Next steps for integrating primary care: Fuller Stocktake report, published on 26 May 2022.

Feryal Clark: [\[19725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Next steps for integrating primary care: Fuller Stocktake report, published on 26 May 2022. what assessment he has made of the potential merits of that report's recommendation to develop a single system wide approach to managing integrated urgent care.

Feryal Clark: [\[19726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Next steps for integrating primary care: Fuller Stocktake report, published on 26 May 2022, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the recommendation of that report on patients currently struggling to secure same day appointments.

Feryal Clark: [\[19732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations of the Fuller stocktake report published on 26 May 2022, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that general practice and primary care services have the (a) flexibility, (b) staff and (c) resources to implement those recommendations.

Maria Caulfield:

Dr Claire Fuller's stocktake on 'The Future of Integrated Primary Care' was published in May with the support of the 42 integrated care system (ICS) chief executive designates. It provides advice to all ICSs on accelerating the implementation of the primary care, community and prevention ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan. It sets out ambitions for a personalised approach to care and integrating teams and professionals to improve patient care.

We are currently considering the recommendations made in Dr Fuller's stocktake, including the recommendations on improving same-day access for urgent care and building integrated teams and we will set out further information in due course. During the pandemic, we made £520 million available to improve access and expand general practice capacity. This is in addition to at least £1.5 billion announced in 2020 to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 by increasing and diversifying the workforce.

■ Protective Clothing: Contracts**Angela Rayner:** [\[18927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 27 April 2022 to Question 157380 on Protective Clothing: Contracts, on how many

contracts for the supply of personal protective equipment did Supply Chain Coordination Limited carry out international price benchmarking since October 2020.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: Throughout the pandemic, Supply Chain Coordination Limited has used set framework agreement prices as its benchmark for all purchases of personal protective equipment.

■ **Protective Clothing: Storage**

Angela Rayner:

[\[18923\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the cost of storing personal protective equipment (PPE) in shipping containers during the period from April 2021 to May 2022; and whether his Department has made an estimate of the (a) daily, (b) weekly or (c) monthly costs of storing PPE in shipping containers as of 15 June 2022.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: The estimated cost for the period April 2021 to May 2022 is approximately £90.4 million. The current estimated average daily, weekly and monthly costs of storing personal protective equipment in containers is £0.2 million, £1.5 million and £6.5 million respectively.

Angela Rayner:

[\[18926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many units of personal protective equipment are in storage in shipping containers as of 15 June 2022; and what the cost to the public purse is of that storage.

Edward Argar:

We estimate that 4.98 billion units of personal protective equipment are currently stored in containers at a cost of £1.5 million per week.

■ **Protective Clothing: Testing**

Mick Whitley:

[\[21272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with the Health and Safety Executive on fit testing issues for personal protective equipment within the NHS.

Edward Argar:

There have been no recent discussions with the Health Safety Executive about fit testing issues with personal protective equipment used by the National Health Service.

■ Refugees: Ukraine**Alex Sobel:** [\[11849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) immediate and (b) long-term psychological impact of the war in Ukraine on refugees from that country.

Gillian Keegan:

Whilst no specific assessment has been made, the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has estimated that 13% of arrivals from Ukraine will require mental health support. We are working with the third sector and NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop proposals for providing integrated mental health care for Ukrainian arrivals.

■ Sexually Transmitted Diseases**Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[19586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he will take steps to include stakeholder consultation on the protection of patient confidentiality in any plans to review the status of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Directions 2000.

Maggie Throup:

We are currently developing updated advice and guidance on confidentiality for information and data sharing by sexual and reproductive health and HIV services. This includes reviewing the specific legislation in the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Directions 2000. Stakeholders have been consulted on initial proposals and this engagement will continue as guidance is finalised.

■ Social Services: Disability and Older People**Fleur Anderson:** [\[19006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that social care support is accessible to older and disabled people in the context of rising living costs.

Gillian Keegan:

Local authorities are best placed to understand and plan the care and support needs of the local population. We have made an additional £3.7 billion available for councils for 2022/23, which includes £1 billion specifically for social care. Councils can also use funding from un-ringfenced grants and council tax to meet inflationary and demographic pressures on these services.

■ Veterans: Mental Health Services**Matt Vickers:** [\[19752\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the provision of mental health support available for veterans.

Gillian Keegan:

NHS England has several bespoke services and initiatives to meet the needs of the armed forces community. This includes Op COURAGE and the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, which provides a mental health care pathway for veterans. Veterans benefit from personalised care plans and access to support and treatment. There have been over 20,000 referrals to Op COURAGE and in 2021, we committed an additional £2.7 million to further expand the service over the next three years. In addition, the Veterans Strategy Action Plan was published in January 2022, which aims to improve veterans' health and wellbeing.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Electronic Tagging****Anne McLaughlin:**[\[21222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the estimated annual cost to the public purse is of the proposal to electronically tag and monitor asylum seekers arriving in the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

The government is undertaking a pilot which will operate for a period of 12 months with the purpose of establishing whether electronic monitoring is an effective way to improve and maintain regular contact management with asylum claimants who arrive in the UK via unnecessary and dangerous routes, in order to progress their immigration case.

■ Asylum: Newport West**Ruth Jones:**[\[18032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people claiming asylum currently reside in Newport West constituency.

Ruth Jones:[\[18033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum claims from people in Newport West constituency have been submitted in each of the last 5 years.

Ruth Jones:[\[18034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people in Newport West constituency have outstanding asylum claims as of 14 June 2022.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: The Home Office are unable to state how many people claiming asylum currently reside in Newport West constituency, how many asylum claims from people in Newport West constituency have been submitted in each of the last 5 years or how many people in Newport West constituency have outstanding asylum claims as of 14 June 2022 as this information could only be

obtained at disproportionate cost because it would require a manual search through individual records.

However, The Home Office publishes data on asylum in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'. Data on asylum applications raised can be found in table Asy_D01, and data on asylum applications awaiting an initial decision or further review can be found in table Asy_D03 of the 'asylum and resettlement detailed datasets'. The latest data relates to the year ending March 2022. Data for June 2022 will be published on 25 August 2022.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[17895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure access to legal advice and representation for the asylum seekers held in detention ahead of potential deportation flights to Rwanda.

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[17896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the nationalities of all the asylum seekers identified for deportation to Rwanda.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: 17895:

In line with the published IRC Operating Standards, all individuals who arrive at an immigration removal centre (IRC) must be advised of their right to legal representation and of how they can obtain such representation, within 24 hours of their arrival at an IRC and again during the Home Office Detention Engagement Team induction within 48 hours of arrival.

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) operates free legal advice surgeries in IRCs in England under the Detained Duty Advice (DDA) Scheme. Individuals who are detained are entitled to receive up to 30 minutes of advice regardless of financial eligibility or the merits of their case. There is no restriction on the number of surgeries an individual may attend. If an individual who is detained requires substantive advice on a matter which is in scope of legal aid, full legal advice can be provided if the statutory legal aid means and merits criteria are met.

Staff in immigration removal centres work closely with the LAA to manage demand for the DDA Scheme.

Detained individuals can also utilise private legal representation outside of the legal aid DDA scheme. All people detained in IRCs are provided with a mobile phone and have access to landline telephones on request, fax machines, email and video calling facilities, which can be used to contact legal representatives.

17896:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of individuals being managed under inadmissibility rules and can be found online at:

[How many people do we grant asylum or protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

A breakdown of these figures specifically for those considered for relocation under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda is not currently available - however, we are working to bring that data in line with current reporting and hope to publish that information in the near future.

Rachael Maskell: [\[17983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department will provide transport to the UK for asylum seekers who receive a positive decision on their asylum application while they are located in Rwanda.

Rachael Maskell: [\[17984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made a mental health impact assessment of the effect on asylum seekers of deportation to Rwanda.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: The Migration and Economic Development Partnership will see those travelling to the UK through illegal, dangerous and unnecessary methods, considered for relocation to Rwanda. Their asylum claims will be processed by Rwanda who will resettle them if their asylum claim is accepted. Those whose claims for protection are rejected will either be offered the chance to stay in Rwanda or return to their home country. They will not return to the UK once their claims have been decided by Rwanda.

Rwanda is a fundamentally safe and secure country with respect for the rule of law. However, everyone considered for relocation will be screened and have access to legal advice. Decisions will be taken on a case-by-case basis, and nobody will be relocated if it is unsafe or inappropriate for them.

Under this agreement, Rwanda will process claims in accordance with the UN Refugee Convention, national and international laws, and will ensure individuals have protection from inhuman and degrading treatment. Under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership, Rwanda has also undertaken to provide support to ensure the health, security and wellbeing of each relocated person.

Steve McCabe: [\[18769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership on the number of small boat crossings in the Channel.

Tom Pursglove:

This partnership is part of a suite of measures in the New Plan for Immigration that we are implementing to tackle unnecessary, dangerous, and illegal journeys. There is no one single solution to this issue.

While people are dying making perilous journeys, it is only right that this Government reduces the draw of travel through multiple safe countries to claim asylum in the UK.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[19598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the interim measure granted by the European Court of Human Rights on 14 June 2022 preventing flights to Rwanda by people whose asylum applications will be processed in that country.

Tom Pursglove:

The European Court of Human Rights granted last-minute interim measures which prohibited the removal of three individuals set to be relocated to Rwanda on 14 June 2022. The Government is seeking greater transparency from the European Court of Human Rights on the reasons for their judgment.

The European Court of Human Rights did not rule that the policy or removals were unlawful. We strongly believe that this project meets our obligations under both national and international law.

We have been clear from the start that we expect people to make legal challenges or barriers to removal. However, we will do what it takes to deliver this new partnership. A full judicial review is expected to be heard in July.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[20242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the UK was given an opportunity to make representations to the European Court of Human Rights before an interim measure was granted by that Court preventing the removal of asylum seekers to Rwanda for consideration there of their asylum claims.

Tom Pursglove:

The European Court of Human Rights granted last-minute interim measures which prohibited the removal of three individuals set to be relocated to Rwanda on 14 June 2022. The UK was not given an opportunity to make representations to the European Court of Human Rights before the measure was granted. However, the Government is seeking greater transparency on the reasons for their judgment.

■ **Cybercrime: Newport West**

Ruth Jones:

[\[18042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to work with international partners to protect Newport West constituency from cyber-attacks.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: Tackling cyber crime is at the heart of the Government's National Cyber Strategy National Cyber Strategy 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

The strategy was launched in December 2021 and presents the UK's role as a responsible and democratic cyber power, protecting and promoting UK interests in, and through, cyberspace. The strategy commits £2.6bn of new investment to deliver

objectives under five strategic pillars:- Ecosystem; Resilience; Technology; Global Leadership; and, Threat.

The Home Office regularly works with international partners, both bilaterally and multilaterally to combat cyber threats. We are active in the G7, Counter Ransomware Initiative, with our Five Eyes Partners, in the Council of Europe and in the UN.

Last year, using our G7 Presidency we hosted the inaugural Senior Officials' Forum on Ransomware featuring other G7 countries, and key international organisations.

We regularly provide information about the threat landscape to help our partners to counter threats, we share the UK's own cyber deterrence toolkit and our lessons learned from using it and co-ordinate with partners on how to respond to state-directed malicious cyber activity.

■ Economic Crime

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[17028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will include a new offence of failing to prevent economic crime in the provisions of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2022.

Kit Malthouse:

Building on the recently enacted Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act, the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill will bear down further on kleptocrats, criminals and terrorists who abuse our financial system, strengthening the UK's reputation as a place where legitimate business can thrive while driving dirty money out of the UK.

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Bill will include reform of Companies House, reforms to prevent abuse of limited partnerships, additional powers to seize suspect cryptoassets more quickly and easily, and reforms to give businesses more confidence to share information in order to tackle money laundering and other economic crime.

The Government keeps UK law under regular review to ensure a robust legislative framework. In 2020, the Government commissioned the Law Commission to undertake a detailed review of how the legislative system could be improved to appropriately capture and punish criminal offences committed by corporations, with a particular focus on economic crime.

The Law Commission report was published on 10 June. The Government will carefully assess the options presented and will take forward the strongest options for reform.

■ Emergency Services: Crimes of Violence

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[19699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to mark the contribution of emergency workers killed in the line of duty.

Kit Malthouse:

It is important that we recognise the vital role emergency service workers play in society. This is never more true than when they make the ultimate sacrifice. That is why the government was pleased to support the national memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, and why the Home Secretary and Ministers regularly show their support for the police during commemorative events.

All UK honours and medals are in the personal gift of HM The Queen under the Royal prerogative. The Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medal (HD Committee) gives advice to The Queen on honours matters, including new forms of official national recognition. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office supports the Committee and will consider the options for recognition.

■ HM Passport Office and UK Visas and Immigration: Correspondence**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[21240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to UK Visas and Immigration and HM Passport Office's customer service operations data, published on 26 May 2022, what her timeframe is for reaching the performance target of 95 per cent in respect of responses to letters and emails from hon. Members.

Kevin Foster:

Performance against target has been impacted by a significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, including the unprecedented amount of correspondence about the situation in Afghanistan and more recently in Ukraine.

The Department continues to prioritise enquiries related to Ukraine and recognises it has not been able to meet service standard in other cases. Actions are being taken to clear backlogs and drive-up performance. MPs can also escalate urgent and compassionate cases via the team at Portcullis House.

The Department continues to recruit additional resources and has recently been loaned staff from non-operational areas to assist in clearing the backlogs.

■ Home Office: Standards**Kevin Brennan:**[\[17888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of applications to her Department in each customer group were processed within the time stipulated by the customer service standard since 1 January 2022.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has been prioritising visa applications in response to the humanitarian crisis arising from the invasion of Ukraine.

Information on how [UKVI](#) is performing against service standards can be found in the migration transparency data published on the [GOV.UK](#) webpage Migration transparency data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Home Office: Telephone Services

Jessica Morden: [\[21147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many new enquiries her Department's MP hotline teams have processed in each month of 2022 up to 20 June.

Kevin Foster:

The volume of calls received, and enquiries handled in these calls on the MP Helpline in each month of 2022 is detailed below.

	CALLS ANSWERED	TOTAL ENQUIRIES HANDLES THROUGH CALLS
Jan-22	1327	1650
Feb-22	1344	1659
Mar-22	1808	2383
Apr-22	1967	3632
May-22	3716	7118
Jun-22	2902	4884

■ Members: Correspondence

Robert Largan: [\[19025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the enquiry of the hon. Member for High Peak, dated 13 April 2022, reference RL37310.

Tom Pursglove:

The Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration will respond shortly.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[19628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when her Department will respond to the correspondence via email of (a) 23 March 2022 at 12:20 and (b) 25 April 2022 at 17:30 from the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth on the British National Overseas application.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: The Home Office responded to the Hon. Member's correspondence on 17 June 2022.

Gill Furniss: [\[21244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of her Department's response rate to enquiries from hon. Members.

Kevin Foster:

Performance against target has been impacted by a significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, including the unprecedented amount of correspondence about the situation in Afghanistan and more recently in Ukraine.

The Department continues to prioritise enquiries related to Ukraine and recognises it has not been able to meet service standard in other cases. Actions are being taken to clear backlogs and drive-up performance. MPs can escalate urgent and compassionate cases via the team at Portcullis House.

The Department continues to recruit additional resources and has recently been loaned staff from non-operational areas to assist in clearing the backlogs.

Gill Furniss:**[21245]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of enquiries from hon. Members to her Department received a response within 20 working days since 1 January 2022; and how many and what proportion of enquiries awaiting a response were received more than (i) 20, (ii) 40, (iii) 60 and (iv) 80 working days ago as of 20 June 2022.

Kevin Foster:

Performance against target has been impacted by a significant increase in the volume of correspondence received, including the unprecedented amount of correspondence about the situation in Afghanistan and more recently in Ukraine.

The Department continues to prioritise enquiries related to Ukraine and recognises it has not been able to meet service standard in other cases. Actions have been taken to clear backlogs and drive-up performance. MPs can escalate urgent and compassionate cases via the team at Portcullis House.

The Department continues to recruit additional resources and has recently been loaned staff from non-operational areas to assist in clearing the backlogs.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/customer-service-operations-data-q1-2022>

Motor Vehicles: Noise**Emma Hardy:****[19664]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many penalties for (a) traffic noise offences and (b) illegally modified exhaust systems have been issued in each year 2016.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on Fixed Penalty Notices and other outcomes for motoring offences, including wider offence category. The most recent data is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1040226/fixe-penalty-notice-and-other-motoring-offences-statistics-police-powers-and-procedures-year-ending-31-march-2021.xlsx

Data on the number of penalties for traffic noise offences, by year since 2016, has been provided in Annex A.

However, data is not collected specifically on penalties for illegally modified exhaust systems.

Attachments:

1. Annex A [Annex A - 19664 - Emma Hardy - copy.xlsx]

■ **Passports: Applications**

Alan Brown: **[17009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people in her Department have worked on processing passport applications in each year since 2010.

Kevin Foster:

The table below shows the total full-time equivalent staff of Her Majesty's Passport Office as at 31 March, for the years 2010–2022:

YEAR	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT
2010	4,017
2011	3,629
2012	3,134
2013	3,284
2014	3,469
2015	4,376
2016	4,059
2017	3,879
2018	3,680
2019	3,620
2020	3,947
2021	3,704
2022	4,466

■ Refugees: Afghanistan**Dame Diana Johnson:****[17898]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress she has made on the implementation of provisions to bring individuals under Category 3 to safety to the UK under the the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 22 June 2022]: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will provide up to 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

The ACRS is not application-based. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised for resettlement through three referral pathways.

Pathway 3 offers a route to resettlement for those at risk who supported the UK and international community effort in Afghanistan, as well as those who are particularly vulnerable, such as women and girls at risk and members of minority groups.

The government announced further details on Pathway 3 on 13 June 2022. Under the first year of Pathway 3, the government will offer resettlement places to eligible, at-risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni. There are 1,500 Pathway 3 places available in the first year. This number includes the principal applicants and their eligible family members.

The FCDO have set out [further information](#) on how this works. The full link to the webpage is as follows: ([Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme Pathway 3: eligibility for British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening Alumni - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)). We encourage anyone who thinks they might be eligible to complete the Expression of Interest as soon as possible, and before the deadline on Monday 15 August 2022.

After the first year of Pathway 3, the government will work with international partners and NGOs to welcome additional groups of Afghans at risk. Further detail will be set out in due course.

Tim Farron:**[20243]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2022 to Question 13085 on Refugees: Afghanistan, how many of the 12,000 individuals accommodated in hotels from the Operation Pitting evacuation have been moved to permanent accommodation as of 17 June 2022.

Kevin Foster:

We have moved, or in the process of moving 6,700 people into new homes since the first ARAP flights in June 2021.

We are working across government and with over three hundred Local Authority partners to move Afghan evacuees into permanent homes as soon as possible so they can settle and rebuild their lives. Alongside our engagement with local authorities, we are reaching out to landlords, developers and the wider private rented

sector to encourage further offers of properties, either directly to Local Authorities or through our Housing portal.

■ Refugees: Ukraine

Liz Saville Roberts:

[19651]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment has she made of the adequacy of financial support available to participants in the Ukraine Family Scheme compared to those participating in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 21 June 2022]: Ukrainian nationals coming to the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme are given the same access to work, benefits and public services as those coming here under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, as laid down in Appendix Ukraine to the Immigration Rules, details of which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-ukraine-scheme?msclkid=e6adf1dbcf7b11ec86b0be860d4b164a>

Those sponsoring under the Ukraine Family Scheme are not required to provide accommodation. Therefore, the Government has not extended the £350 per month 'thank you' payment offered to those providing a home to refugees arriving in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine and Super Sponsor Schemes.

Sponsoring family members able to provide appropriate accommodation can choose to sponsor their family members under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme or Super Sponsor Schemes in order to become eligible for the 'thank you' payment.

■ Safer Streets Fund

Stephen Hammond:

[18854]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on implementing the objectives of the Safer Street Fund.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government invested £70 million over the first three rounds of the Safer Streets Fund to support 159 high crime areas across England and Wales implement local crime prevention initiatives. A further £150 million is due to be invested over the next three years, bringing total investment to £210 million.

Targeted interventions such as improved street lighting and home security aim to drive down crime and there is strong evidence that they can prevent offences ever happening. Since its inception, the Fund has been expanded to cover violence against women and girls and anti-social behaviour as well as neighbourhood crime. Round Four of the Fund launched in March and closed for bidding on 13 May and we plan to announce the outcome shortly.

■ UK Visas and Immigration: Telephone Services

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[21114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the UKVI MP Urgent Inquiries line closed at least 20 minutes early on 17 June 2022.

Kevin Foster:

Due to an unexpected spike in calls a large queue of callers built. To ensure those in the queue were able to speak with an agent before 5pm the line closed to NEW callers at 3.15pm (45 minutes earlier than normal). Agents continued to assist queued callers up until 6pm. We continue to closely monitor and review call volumes to match staffing capacity to anticipated demand.

Analysis of the spike on 17th June is currently being undertaken to ensure a closure of this nature is not required in the future.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Caroline Lucas: [\[18869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her policy on deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda, whether she has set a target number for the reduction of people crossing the English Channel in small boats.

Tom Pursglove:

The Migration and Economic Development Partnership is part of a suite of measures in the New Plan for Immigration that we are implementing to tackle unnecessary, dangerous, and illegal journeys. There is no one single solution to this issue.

While people are dying making perilous journeys, it is only right that this Government reduces the draw of travel through multiple safe countries to claim asylum in the UK.

■ Visas: Afghanistan

Imran Hussain: [\[20256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals have been granted UK visas since 1 July 2021.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office publishes data on entry clearance grants by nationality in the [‘Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release’](#). Data on the number of visas granted to Afghan nationals is published in table Vis_D02 of the [‘entry clearance visa applications and outcomes detailed datasets’](#). Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the ‘Notes’ page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending March 2022. Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the [‘summary tables’](#). The ‘contents’ sheet contains an overview of all available data on entry clearance visas.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the [‘Research and statistics calendar’](#).

■ Visas: Applications

Grahame Morris:

[\[18876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to reduce administrative errors on the visa application with reference GWF06412451; and if her Department will fast-track the reissuing of paperwork for that application where necessary.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: The teams handling employment visas consider tens of thousands of applications per week. The vast majority of these are considered and reach the correct outcome.

Processing errors are rare and when any errors are flagged to the department they are resolved quickly, as they have been in this case.

■ Visas: Married People

Emma Hardy:

[\[17093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the merits of including endometriosis amongst the medical criteria which allow consideration of escalating spousal visa applications on compelling or compassionate grounds.

Kevin Foster:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: Every family visa application is dealt with on its own merits.

Any evidence which indicates a compelling or compassionate reason for expediting an application will be considered, yet the bar for this is high in fairness to other applicants who have applied on an earlier date.

JUSTICE

■ Bill of Rights: European Convention on Human Rights

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[20240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the proposed Bill of Rights will take precedence over the European Convention on Human Rights.

James Cartlidge:

The Government introduced the Bill of Rights on 22 June. The Bill of Rights repeals and replaces the Human Rights Act 1998, which incorporated into UK law the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. Under the Bill of Rights, UK citizens will continue to be able to have their Convention rights upheld in UK courts.

However, the Bill of Rights empowers UK courts to apply human rights in a UK context, affirming the primacy of the Supreme Court in the interpretation of rights. It reinforces the primacy of UK case law, clarifying there is no requirement to follow

case law from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). It makes clear that the UK Supreme Court, not the ECtHR, is the ultimate judicial arbiter in deciding the proper interpretation of rights in the UK.

■ **Bill of Rights: Juries**

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[20241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the right to a jury trial will be included in the proposed Bill of Rights.

James Cartlidge:

The Government introduced the Bill of Rights on 22 June. The Bill of Rights recognises the right to trial by jury under, and subject to, the framework set by Parliament and by the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. This enables us to give greater prominence to a UK right which is central to our justice system.

■ **Burglary: Criminal Proceedings**

Steve Reed: [\[21203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many burglary cases were (a) received and (b) disposed of at every (i) magistrates' court and (ii) Crown court in England and Wales in each of the last five years for which data is available.

James Cartlidge:

Receipts and disposals for burglary offences by Crown Court has been provided (Table 1) along with this PQ response.

Magistrates courts' information relating to receipts, disposals and outstanding cases is not available by offence type. Identifying burglary offences for this PQ would therefore represent disproportionate costs.

Attachments:

1. for Publication [2022-06-23 21203 table.xlsx]

■ **Burglary: Remand in Custody**

Steve Reed: [\[21202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish figures on the (a) number of offenders who were held on remand awaiting trial for burglary and (b) length of time those offenders were held on remand for, in each prison in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

James Cartlidge:

The number of prisoners who were held on untried remand for alleged burglary and the length of time those prisoners were held on remand, in each prison in England and Wales, as at 30 June in each of the last five years, is shown in the attached tables.

When the court is making a remand decision, the Bail Act 1976 provides a presumption in favour of bail, recognising that a person should not be deprived of their liberty unless necessary for the protection of the public or the delivery of justice.

The courts decide on a case-by-case basis whether a defendant presents such a bail risk as to warrant custody. Bail can only be refused where there is justification, as prescribed in Schedule 1 to the Bail Act, such as substantial grounds for believing that the defendant, would abscond, commit further offences, interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice.

The overall remand population has increased in recent years as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Government is committed to supporting the recovery of the courts and we continue to take action to tackle the impact the pandemic has had on the system. We have extended 30 Nightingale courtrooms beyond the end of March 2022 and have again removed the limit on the number of days the Crown Court can sit this financial year. To secure enough capacity to sit at the required levels in 2022/23 and beyond, we are also expanding our plans for judicial recruitment.

Attachments:

1. PQ21202 [2022-06-23 21202.xlsx]

■ **Child Arrangements Orders: Carers**

Munira Wilson:

[\[21289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many children are subject to a Child Arrangements Order in which the court orders that the child live with a kinship carer in England as of 20 June 2022.

Munira Wilson:

[\[21290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Child Arrangements Orders in which the court ordered that the child live with a kinship carer were made in each of the last five years for which data is available.

James Cartlidge:

Kinship care arrangements are most often made in public family law proceedings, whereas child arrangement orders, to which the question also refers, are mainly made in private family law proceedings.

The following table sets out the number of private law child arrangement orders made, where there is a non-parent applicant (which we have used as a proxy for kinship carer) for the last five years, and the number of children to which those orders relate.

YEAR	CHILD ARRANGEMENT ORDERS	
	MADE – WITH NON-PARENT APPLICANT	CHILDREN INVOLVED IN RESIDENCE ORDERS
2017	2384	5255

YEAR	CHILD ARRANGEMENT ORDERS	
	MADE – WITH NON-PARENT APPLICANT	CHILDREN INVOLVED IN RESIDENCE ORDERS
2018	2228	5161
2019	2619	5953
2020	1899	4339
2021	1893	4279

Figures for June 2022 are not currently available.

Source: HMCTS Familyman system.

1) Includes orders made in private law (Children Act) cases only. Public law (Children Act) cases have been excluded as it is common for Local Authorities to be recorded as the applicant, and it would not be possible to identify in these cases if residence orders were granted to parents or other family members.

2) From data held centrally it is not possible to identify who the residence order was granted to. The data in the table is based on the applicant(s) recorded in the case.

3) Residence orders have been counted where there were no applicants in the case where the relationship to child was recorded as mother or father, or where there were no applicants where the relationship to child was not recorded.

4) There were approximately 220,000 residence orders granted between 2017 and 2021. Of these, around 2% did not have the relationship to child of the applicant recorded on the case. These have not been included in the figures provided.

5) Some cases may have more than one applicant and more than one order recorded against a case. In these cases it is not possible to link an order to a specific applicant. Applicants are linked via case number.

■ European Convention on Human Rights

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[21148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether there are any plans (a) to make interim measures granted by the European Court of Human Rights binding on the UK, and (b) to amend the Human Rights Act 1998 to make a breach of an interim measure granted by the European Court of Human Rights a breach under UK law.

James Cartlidge:

The Bill of Rights was introduced in the House of Commons on Wednesday 22 June 2022. Clause 24 section 3 of the Bill states that domestic courts may not have regard to interim measures when deciding whether to grant relief.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Bolton

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[18867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what percentage of defendants in Bolton require legal aid in their legal proceedings.

James Cartlidge:

The requested information is not centrally recorded. The Legal Aid Agency monitors access to public funding according to the location of the legal representative providing the service. Client location and court venue are not reliably captured for the majority of the criminal legal aid scheme and therefore accurate data based on these proxies is not available.

■ Prison Sentences

Jessica Morden: [\[19596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of converting existing Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences into determinate sentences and allow IPP prisoners to be released on licence for a period commensurate with their original minimum tariff.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government's long held view is that retrospectively abolishing the IPP sentence would give rise to an unacceptable risk to public protection. Converting IPP prisoners into determinate sentence prisoners, even with a potentially lengthy licence period, would mean that many potentially dangerous offenders would be immediately released into the community with no prior risk assessment.

Our primary responsibility is to protect the public. HMPPS remains committed to safely reducing the number of prisoners serving IPP sentences in custody by providing them with every opportunity to progress towards safe release by the Parole Board.

The IPP Action Plan remains the best way of achieving this and it is working. The number of IPP prisoners who have never been released stood at 1,554 in March 2022, down from over 6,000 at its peak.

■ Robbery: Criminal Proceedings

Steve Reed: [\[21204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many robbery cases were (a) received and (b) disposed of at each (i) magistrates court and (ii) crown court in England and Wales in each of the last five years for which data is available.

James Cartlidge:

Receipts and disposals for robbery by Crown Court is already published in the '[Crown Court cases received, disposed and outstanding tool](#)'. The tool provides quarterly data from 2014 to 2021 by Crown Court and can be adjusted to establish annual figures.

Magistrates courts' information relating to receipts, disposals and outstanding cases is not available by offence type. Identifying robbery offences for this PQ would therefore represent disproportionate costs.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Building Regulations: Fire Prevention

Daisy Cooper:

[\[18987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the National Regulator for Construction Products will have a statutory responsibility for overseeing compliance with Approved Document B.

Stuart Andrew:

The National Regulator for Construction Products, which is being established within the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), will oversee the construction products regulatory regime at a national level. Their role is to ensure that economic operators fulfil their obligations in bringing their construction products onto the market, a step before the incorporation of construction products into buildings. As such, this regulator will not have any statutory responsibilities concerning Approved Documents.

The person carrying out the work has to demonstrate compliance with the applicable requirements of the Building Regulations, including Part B on Fire Safety in Schedule 1, to the relevant building control body, who check building work for compliance with building regulations' requirements. The approved documents are guidance on how applicants may be able to comply with building regulations' legal requirements.

Under the Building Safety Act 2022, the National Regulator for Construction Products and the Building Safety Regulator when established will work closely together on potential safety issues posed by construction products.

■ Construction: Materials

Daisy Cooper:

[\[18988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department plans to take steps to monitor the exercise of professional judgement by building designers in decisions on whether to use combustible materials in buildings above 11 metres in height.

Stuart Andrew:

The person carrying out the work has to demonstrate compliance with the applicable requirements of the Building Regulations, including Part B on Fire Safety, to the relevant building control body, who check building work compliance. Government does not collect data on these individual decisions. One duty of the Building Safety Regulator, established by the Building Safety Act 2022, will be to facilitate improvement of the competence of industry and building inspectors, as part of

meeting its statutory duty of securing the safety of people in or about buildings. Statutory instruments supporting the implementation of the Act will also introduce new requirements on designers to be competent for their role.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[18989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he intends to issue further restrictions on the use of combustible materials on buildings above 11 metres in height.

Stuart Andrew:

In 2018 the Government banned the use of combustible materials in and on the external walls of blocks of flats, hospitals, and student accommodation more than 18 metres in height, with a commitment to review the ban's effectiveness annually. Following the 2019 review, we consulted on proposals to amend it. The Government response to this consultation, published on 1 June 2022, took the proportionate approach of keeping the outright ban for buildings over 18 metres while introducing statutory guidance for buildings between 11 metres and 18 metres.

We will continue to review and monitor the ban.

The consultation as well as the Government response to it is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-ban-on-the-use-of-combustible-materials-in-and-on-the-external-walls-of-buildings>

■ Council Tax: Energy Bills Rebate

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[17944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what instructions his Department has provided to councils on paying residents the £150 council tax rebate for those households which do not pay council tax via direct debit; and what alternatives methods are available for paying the rebate other than it being paid directly into a bank account.

Kemi Badenoch:

[Holding answer 20 June 2022]: My Department has issued guidance and FAQs to help councils administer the council tax rebate. These set out that councils should contact eligible households that do not pay their council tax by direct debit to arrange a payment method. They also suggest secure payment options for households without a bank account, for example voucher-based payments and council tax account credits.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Communication

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[20340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much expenditure was allocated by his Department in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to (a) internal communications and (b) the employment of staff to work on internal communications.

Eddie Hughes:

We are unable to provide the pay costs for staff dedicated to internal communications as this could potentially identify specific staff member salaries owing to the small numbers involved. The Department routinely publishes the combined salary cost of its Communication function as part of its quarterly organogram which can be found [here](#).

Rachel Hopkins: [21333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many individuals were employed by his Department to work on internal communications in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

For each of these years, five members of staff were employed on internal communication.

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Consultants**Rachel Hopkins:** [20338]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department has spent on external management consultants in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021; and which projects or work areas in each of those financial years required the largest proportion of expenditure on support from consultants.

Eddie Hughes:

Figures for consultancy spend are included each year in the Department's annual report. The corresponding figure for FY2021-22 is expected to be published by the end of July 2022.

Across the last three financial years, the top area for consultancy spend has been on the Building Safety Programme, primarily on support services for delivery of new cladding remediation funds.

Rachel Hopkins: [20339]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department spent in total on external recruitment consultants in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021; whether any full-time equivalent posts were filled as a result of that expenditure; and whether any of those posts were filled by individuals recruited from outside the civil service.

Eddie Hughes:

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

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Media**Rachel Hopkins:****[21334]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much expenditure was allocated by his Department in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021 to (i) the production of digital and video content, (ii) the employment of in-house staff to produce digital and video content, and (iii) the payment of external companies and individuals to produce digital and video content.

Eddie Hughes:

The information requested is published as part of the department's transparency data and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mhclg-departmental-spending-over-250>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dluhc-departmental-spending-over-250>

■ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Public Opinion**Rachel Hopkins:****[20337]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how much his Department spent on (a) focus groups and (b) polling services in 2021.

Eddie Hughes:

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

■ Derelict Land: Bolton South East**Yasmin Qureshi:****[21158]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of brownfield sites in Bolton South East constituency.

Stuart Andrew:

Our National Planning Policy Framework places great emphasis on the use of brownfield land and promoting effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. However, brownfield sites vary greatly, and local planning authorities are best placed to assess the suitability of each site for development.

Local planning authorities are required to prepare, maintain, and publish a register of brownfield (previously developed) land suitable for housing. For new homes, brownfield sites should be suitable, in planning terms, available for development and achievable within 15 years.

■ Home Information Packs**Mr Richard Holden:** [19723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will take steps to ensure that homebuyer reports include information on (a) whether or not water supply is connected to mains water and (b) whether sewerage is connected to the mains sewers or to a septic tank.

Stuart Andrew:

Homebuyer reports are undertaken by qualified surveyors, and the report contents will depend upon the nature of the property and the type of report commissioned. Prior to commissioning a survey, buyers should check the terms and scope carefully to ensure it meets their needs.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme**Gavin Robinson:** [21205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 8 June 2022 to Question 8018, on Homes for Ukraine Scheme, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements in place for making payments to sponsors.

Eddie Hughes:

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive will manage payments to sponsors.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Greater London**Sir David Evennett:** [19578]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many people have arrived in (a) Bexley Borough and (b) Greater London through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme as of 16 June 2022.

Eddie Hughes:

The most up to date data on arrivals through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority> .

■ Housing: Bolton**Yasmin Qureshi:** [18868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has conducted a safety assessment of The Cube student premises in Bolton.

Stuart Andrew:

Soon after the fire, we commissioned the Building Research Establishment to investigate the fire at The Cube building. Information from the report has been shared with the Expert Panel, Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC) and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) applies to non-domestic premises, including the common parts of multi-occupied residential buildings. The FSO requires the person responsible for the premises to undertake and review regularly a fire risk assessment of the premises. Fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) are the enforcing authorities for the FSO within their area.

■ Leasehold

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[21254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will commit to a deadline on bringing forward legislative proposals to assist existing leaseholders.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government remains committed to creating a fair and just housing system that works for everyone. We have already made great strides with the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022, which will come into force from 30 June 2022. This Act is the first part of major two-part legislation this parliament to implement leasehold and commonhold reforms. In the next parliamentary session we will legislate to reform the leasehold system, including by supercharging leaseholders' ability to buy their freeholds, helping millions of households genuinely to own their own home.

■ Leasehold: Ground Rent

Tracey Crouch:

[\[18872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to ensure that the second package of leasehold reforms on ground rent will be introduced in the 2022-23 Parliament.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to creating a fair and just housing system that works for everyone. This includes our comprehensive programme of reform to improve fairness and transparency in the leasehold market. We will bring forward the second part of our leasehold reforms in the next session of this Parliament.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[19005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department is taking steps to protect existing leaseholders from regularly doubling ground rents which may eventually result in unaffordable costs.

Eddie Hughes:

The Government is committed to protecting leaseholders from abuse and poor service.

We have already taken action to end unfair practices in the leasehold market, beginning with the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022, which will come into force on 30 June. The Act makes homeownership fairer and more transparent for

thousands of future leaseholders, by preventing landlords under new residential long leases from requiring a leaseholder to pay a financial ground rent.

We understand the difficulties some existing leaseholders face with high and escalating ground rents. This is why we asked the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to investigate potential mis-selling of homes and unfair terms in the leasehold sector

The CMA has secured commitments from Aviva, Persimmon, Countryside Properties and Taylor Wimpey to amend their practices, including commitments to remove lease terms that led to doubling ground rents, houses sold as leasehold and to support leaseholders to buy the freehold at the original price quoted. This is a hugely important step and demonstrates our determination to support affected leaseholders. We welcome this action and urge other developers to follow suit.

■ **Mortgages: Government Assistance**

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[19600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what support the Government is providing for Section 106 scheme potential home owners to obtain a mortgage.

Stuart Andrew:

In many cases, developers provide affordable homes through section 106 agreements associated with housing developments. The homeowners would apply for mortgages in the same way as other buyers, by applying to mortgage lenders such as banks and societies. Some providers of affordable housing may refer buyers to mortgage brokers for support with finding a lender. There are a wide variety of mortgage products available in the UK and borrowers may therefore find it useful to speak to a broker who can advise on the products and lenders best suited to their circumstances.

On 9 June the Prime Minister announced a review of the mortgage market to boost access to finance for first-time buyers.

■ **Owner Occupation**

Gary Sambrook: [\[19693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a gradual homeownership scheme; and if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of adding gradual homeownership to existing property purchasing arrangements ahead of the Autumn Statement.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government's £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme 2021-2026 aims to deliver up to 180,000 new homes, should economic conditions allow. Approximately half of these homes will be for affordable home ownership, including Shared Ownership. Shared Ownership enables a buyer to purchase an initial equity stake in

a home of between 10%-75% of its market value. Following purchase, the buyer can then gradually increase their equity stake in the home, as and when they can afford to do so, all the way up to full ownership, with some limited exceptions. In April 2021, the Government launched its new model of Shared Ownership. This new model will make Shared Ownership more consumer friendly, easier to access and fairer, leading to a better experience for a future generation of home owners.

Gary Sambrook: [\[19696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential role that gradual homeownership schemes could play in achieving the Government's ambitions for more people to be able to own their own home.

Stuart Andrew:

The provision of affordable housing is a key element of the Government's plan to end the housing crisis and provide aspiring homeowners with a step onto the housing ladder. Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme aims to deliver up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. Approximately half of these homes will be for affordable home ownership, including Shared Ownership. In April 2021, the Government launched its new model of Shared Ownership. This new model will make it easier for people to gradually increase the size of their equity stake in their Shared Ownership home, as and when they can afford to do so, all the way up to full ownership, with some limited exceptions.

■ Planning Permission

Andrea Leadsom: [\[21177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that local planning authorities are able to manage the planning demands of large scale developments and their impact on communities effectively.

Stuart Andrew:

Local planning authorities need to have the right skills to deliver for their communities. We have committed to developing a comprehensive skills strategy for the planning sector to set out solutions for training and capacity-building. We have also announced that we will consult on increasing planning fees for major and minor applications, by 35% and 25% respectively.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Employment

Stuart Anderson: [\[18053\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of employment in (a) the West Midlands and (b) the UK since 19 December 2019.

Boris Johnson:

The latest official statistics show the current (February-April 2022) employment level for West Midlands at 2.9 million – compared to 2.8 million in October-December 2019.

I trust that the following provides a comprehensive assessment and clarifies my previous answers about employment levels in the UK.

Further to my letter of 26 April 2022 to the Liaison Committee (a copy of which was placed in the Libraries of the House) and the Committee's letter of 20 May 2022 (a copy of which is available on its website) concerning my previous answers to the House on this issue (*Official Report contributions referenced in the letter of 20 May 2022; and also Official Report 1 December, column 911; 15 December, column 1052; and, 20 April, column 155*).

The latest labour market statistics show that the total UK employment level is currently at 32.7 million, compared to 32.9 million in October-December 2019.

They also show that payroll employment, as a measure of people in work, is again at a record high. It is now around 627,000 higher than before the pandemic. At the same time we have seen significant improvements in national unemployment rates, which are currently at 3.8% and lower than pre-pandemic levels. It is important that everyone has the opportunity and support to find a good job to help them get on in life. That is why we are delivering on our Plan for Jobs – increasing the number of work coaches, seeing over 162,600 Kickstart jobs started by young people, and offering free skills bootcamps. And we have launched Way to Work - a campaign that will focus on getting job-ready claimants into work and support employers to fill vacancies. Together we will boost this country's jobs-led recovery.

TRANSPORT**■ Department for Transport: Procurement**

Emily Thornberry: [\[21138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the work package request issued by his Department on 26 May that led to the proposal received by his Department from Rail People Solutions Ltd on 30 May and the contract agreed with that company under procurement reference TTWO0196 on 7 June 2022.

Andrew Stephenson:

We can confirm the department has stood up a team to manage the departmental operational response to manage possible disruption caused by industrial action. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the procurement and the awarded contract, the department does not wish to share the documents publicly.

Emily Thornberry: [\[21139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the statement of services, including the Option Z clauses, set out in Contract Data Part One of the contract agreed

by his Department with Rail People Solutions Ltd under procurement reference TTWO0196 on 7 June 2022.

Andrew Stephenson:

We can confirm the department has stood up a team to manage the departmental operational response to manage possible disruption caused by industrial action. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the procurement and the awarded contract, the department does not wish to share the documents publicly.

■ **Electric Scooters: Roads**

Jim Shannon:

[\[21181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide a summary of current legislation relating to the use of e-scooters on public highways in the UK.

Trudy Harrison:

As motor vehicles having fewer than 4 wheels and weighing less than 410 kg unladen, e-scooters are classed as motorcycles as defined in Section 185 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and, because of their low speed, within the subclass of moped. This means that e-scooters have to abide by the same road traffic legislation as mopeds and motorcycles.

The Electric Scooter Trials and Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) Regulations and General Directions 2020 (SI 2020/663) were introduced to allow the e-scooter trials to take place. The regulations remove or relax requirements for rental e-scooters being used in a permitted trial area, in a way which is proportionate to the vehicle type, to enable trials to take place on public roads.

The Traffic Signs (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2021 (SI 2021/75) further refined the application of the TSRGD to e-scooters being used in a trial to clarify where e-scooters are permitted for use within defined trial areas.

■ **Gatwick Airport**

Sarah Olney:

[\[21246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the (a) number and (b) dates of meetings that Ministers in his Department have had with senior staff at Gatwick Airport Limited in the last month.

Sarah Olney:

[\[21247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department issued guidance to Gatwick Airport Limited on reducing the number of daily flights from 900 to 825 per day.

Robert Courts:

The decision taken by Gatwick airport to reduce the number of daily flights throughout the summer is a commercial decision taken by Gatwick Airport Limited, who will continue to work with their airline partners to operationalise this cap. We have been clear with the aviation sector that they need to ensure they can service the flights they offer to the passengers.

This Government has always prioritised consumer rights and is continuing to make progress, to that end we have published the Aviation Consumer Policy Reform Consultation on 31 January, this is aimed at strengthening further air passenger rights and are publishing an Aviation Passenger Charter. Airlines are under an obligation to provide information to passengers on their rights in the event of a cancellation. In the event that a flight is cancelled where UK law applies, the consumers should be offered the choice between a refund within 7 days, or to be re-routed on similar conditions to their final destination, and they may be eligible for compensation.

We have been clear with airlines that they need to undertake this process as quickly as possible.

The Secretary of State and I regularly meet with the aviation sector. In addition to these regular meetings, Gatwick joined me and the Secretary of State on 1 June to discuss disruption over the Half Term and they have been a central member of the Strategic Risk Group which I chair weekly, and the Summer Resilience Group chaired by my officials weekly. Additionally, senior officials have been meeting regularly with Gatwick over the past month and this will continue over the summer.

■ High Speed 2 Line: West Coast Main Line

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhési: [\[21255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect the Government's cancellation of the Golborne Link component of HS2 has had on the overall cost-benefit analysis of HS2.

Andrew Stephenson:

On 20 June 2022 the Government announced in a Written Ministerial Statement laid in Parliament the publication of a Supplement to the January 2022 update to the High Speed 2 (HS2) Crewe to Manchester Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC): www.gov.uk/government/publications/hs2-crewe-to-manchester-impacts-of-removing-the-golborne-link. This provides analysis of the economic implications, including on the Benefit-Cost Ratio, of removing the Golborne Link from the High Speed Rail (Crewe to Manchester) Bill scheme.”

■ Highway Code: Pedestrians

Mr Richard Holden: [\[19722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the extent to which the new elements of the updated Highway Code published on 29 January 2022 promote safe walking for pedestrians, particularly in relation to cyclists.

Trudy Harrison:

The updates to the Highway Code made on 29 January 2022 were an extension to the existing advice and guidance.

The amendments simply reinforce the good behaviours that we would expect every road user to adhere to and drivers should already be following the rules of the road.

The changes will lead to improvements in road safety as they encourage more mutual respect and consideration for all road users.

■ London North Eastern Railway: Pay

Brendan Clarke-Smith: [\[21273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the average annual remuneration of train drivers on LNER in 2020-21.

Brendan Clarke-Smith: [\[21274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the average annual remuneration of train drivers on Northern in 2020-21.

Brendan Clarke-Smith: [\[21275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the average annual remuneration of train drivers on Hull Trains in 2020-21.

Brendan Clarke-Smith: [\[21276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an estimate of the average annual remuneration of train drivers on East Midlands Rail in 2020-21.

Wendy Morton:

Information relating to train drivers' salary is managed and set by the individual Train Operating Companies in line with their annual budgets.

The Office for National Statistics report that median gross annual pay for train and tram drivers in the UK was approximately £59,000 in 2021.

■ P&O Ferries: Redundancy

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[19690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of exercising the powers in the Harbours Act 1964 to issue Harbour Revision Orders in response to the actions against UK seafarers taken by P&O Ferries on 17 March 2022.

Robert Courts:

The use of Harbour Revision Orders was considered as part of the overall response to actions undertaken by P&O ferries. The use of Harbour Revision Orders, which as a process is primarily operated by the Marine Management Organisation, was judged not to be suitable as a response to this situation. As a harbour revision order applies only to a single harbour, and so for any unified response a Harbour Revision Order would need to be drafted for every port, this was deemed a less than ideal method for any potential government action.

■ Railway Signals

Stephen Hammond: [\[22385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to require Great British Railways to invest in digital signalling across the rail network as part of his next High Level Output Specification and Statement of Funds Available for Control Period 7.

Wendy Morton:

The Office of Rail and Road's Review Initiation Notice issued on 9 June binds the Department for Transport to provide its High-Level Output Specification and Statement of Funds Available by 28 October of this year, within which will be set out the Secretary of State's requirements. Work to produce these documents is ongoing.

■ Railway Stations: Access

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[21256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, by what date the national accessibility audit of all railway stations in Great Britain will conclude.

Wendy Morton:

The audit is progressing well with 1,629 stations across England, Scotland and Wales having been assessed to date.

■ Railways: East of England

Tom Hunt: [\[18992\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the average salary of a train driver employed by Greater Anglia.

Wendy Morton:

Each train operating company, including Greater Anglia, is responsible for its own employees and the Department does not hold this information.

However, the median gross annual pay for train and tram drivers was approximately £59,000 in 2021.

■ Railways: Trade Unions

Sarah Owen: [\[21293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he last held meetings with railway union representatives.

Wendy Morton:

Ministers last met railway union officials in March on the challenges facing the railways and the need for reform. [Since this meeting RMT's General Secretary has stated that they would not meet this Government.] Ministers encourage the unions to keep negotiating with the railway companies as the employers, to resolve this dispute. The Secretary of State outlined this clearly in his letter dated 16 June 2022 to the RMT General Secretary.

The Secretary of State is being updated by industry on a daily basis on the latest developments in negotiations. Ministers' top priority is to end the dispute and minimise disruption. That means joining daily calls with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat to improve readiness across government, including mitigations for impact on critical supply chains, and also considering policy options including legislating to minimise the impacts of future strikes.

The simplest way to resolve the dispute is for unions to return to the negotiating table.

■ **Travel: Bolton South East**

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[21159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate his Department has made of the amount of funding allocated for investment in active travel in Bolton South East constituency.

Trudy Harrison:

Details of active travel funding allocations to all local authorities in England are available via gov.uk.

■ **Travel: Cross Border Cooperation**

Neale Hanvey: [\[20319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what mechanisms his Department has in place to evaluate the (a) value for money and (b) cost of the measures implemented in relation to the management of cross-border travel following the outbreak of covid-19.

Neale Hanvey: [\[20320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to assess the effectiveness of the management of cross border travel following the outbreak of covid-19; and what estimate he has made of the costs of those measures in each of the financial years since they were introduced.

Neale Hanvey: [\[20321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) performance, (b) expenditure, (c) exposure to fraud and (d) risk management of the management of cross border travel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Neale Hanvey: [\[20324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of implementing the cross border travel measures taken in response to covid-19 in (a) 2020-21 and (b) 2021-22.

Robert Courts:

Implementation of COVID-19 border health measures for international travel was undertaken through department-led programmes. The costs of implementing individual measures were considered at a departmental level and tracked through standard budget management procedures. The Department for Transport did not

incur any direct programme costs in 2020-21 and 2021-22 from implementing COVID-19 border health measures.

TREASURY

■ Business Rates: Reform

Rachael Maskell: [\[18958\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming business rates.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government published the final report of the Business Rates Review at Autumn Budget 2021. The conclusion reaffirms the importance of business rates for raising revenue for essential local services and announced a package of measures worth £7 billion over the next 5 years.

This included a freeze in the multiplier, new support for improvements and green technology, and further relief for high street businesses. The Government is also committing to more frequent revaluations, which represents significant reform of the system and will ensure that liabilities are more responsive to changing conditions.

■ Department for Work and Pensions and Revenue and Customs: Public Expenditure

Emma Hardy: [\[19663\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the (a) budgets and (b) returns were from the compliance units of (a) HMRC and (b) the Department for Work and Pensions for each year between 2015 and 2021 inclusive.

Lucy Frazer:

For HMRC, the value of compliance work goes beyond generating yield, and also includes mitigating harm, ensuring a level playing field for those who pay their taxes correctly, and deterring non-compliance from taking place.

In this context, there are some indicative figures HMRC can provide to give a sense of scale. In the financial year 2020-21, HMRC delivered a total of £30.4 billion of compliance yield with an expenditure of £1,166.5 million on the Customer Compliance Group (CCG). CCG brings in the majority, but not all, compliance yield. Equivalent figures for CCG from 2016-17 (the first year of CCG reporting following an internal reorganisation) are provided in the table below. Equivalent figures for before 2016-17 are not readily available and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

YEAR	COMPLIANCE YIELD (£BILLION)	COST (£MILLION)
2016-17	£28.9	£1,040.8
2017-18	£30.3	£1,139.2

YEAR	COMPLIANCE YIELD (£BILLION)	COST (£MILLION)
2018-19	£34.1	£1,127.7
2019-20	£36.9	£1,192.2
2020-21	£30.4	£1,166.5

The information requested on the Department for Work and Pensions Compliance is not readily available and could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

■ Energy: Taxation

Peter Aldous: [\[18890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral statement of 26 May 2022 on Economy Update, Official Report, column 451, what method his Department is using to carry out the evaluation of the scale of extraordinary profits in certain parts of the electricity generation sector; and what estimate his Department has made of the scale of such profits.

Peter Aldous: [\[18891\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral statement of 26 May 2022 on Economy Update, Official Report, column 451, what representations he has received from energy investors on the energy profits levy.

Peter Aldous: [\[18892\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral statement of 26 May 2022 on Economy Update, Official Report, column 451, if he will take steps to ensure that such a policy is (a) fair and equitable given and (b) reflects the comparative complexity of the oil and gas sector.

Peter Aldous: [\[18893\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral statement of 26 May 2022 on Economy Update, Official Report, column 451, if he will take steps to ensure that any policy proposals take full account of investments being made by electricity generators to deliver net zero.

Peter Aldous: [\[18894\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral statement of 26 May 2022 on Economy Update, Official Report, column 451, if he will make an assessment of the likely impact of the energy profits levy on (a) investor confidence in the energy sector, (b) additional costs of capital for future electricity generation projects and (c) the costs faced by electricity bill payers in the next 10 years.

Lucy Frazer:

As the Chancellor announced in the Economy Update 2022, the Government is introducing the Energy Profits Levy, a new 25 per cent surcharge on the extraordinary profits the oil and gas sector is making.

The new Energy Profits Levy will raise around £5 billion over the next year which will go towards supporting people with the new cost of living measures, also announced by the Chancellor.

Within the Levy, a new 'super-deduction' style relief is being introduced to encourage firms to invest in oil and gas extraction in the UK. The new 80 per cent Investment Allowance will mean businesses will overall get a 91 pence tax saving for every £1 they invest.

The Levy ensures the extraordinary profits that oil and gas companies have benefited from are taxed fairly, and provides a significant incentive for companies to invest. Officials and Ministers regularly engage with representatives from the sector.

Within the Economy Update, the Chancellor also set out that the Government is urgently evaluating the scale of extraordinary profits in the energy generation sector and the appropriate next steps.

As part of this process, officials are urgently engaging with industry stakeholders on this matter to gather evidence on energy generators' level of profitability and the operation of their business models. The Government remains committed to achieving a Net Zero Economy and to fully decarbonising the power system by 2035, subject to security of supply. As we transition to net zero, we will make sure the costs of doing so are distributed fairly. The Government will take these factors into consideration when deciding on the appropriate action with regard to energy generators' profits.

■ Joint Unit for Waste Crime**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[18815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many employees of HM Revenue and Customs are currently permanently deployed to the Joint Unit on Waste Crime.

Lucy Frazer:

HMRC has no permanently deployed resource to the Joint Unit of Waste Crime (JUWC), and do not feel that a permanently deployed resource to the JUWC would be needed at this time. The JUWC is mainly resourced with staff from the Environment Agency, and the main focus of the JUWC work is not tax compliance.

■ Members: Correspondence**Robert Largan:**[\[19026\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the enquiry of the hon. Member for High Peak, dated 28 April 2022, reference RL38513.

Lucy Frazer:

A response was sent to the hon. Member for High Peak on 17 June 2022.

■ Owner Occupation

Gary Sambrook: [\[19694\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending section 71A of the Finance Act (2003) to include gradual homeownership.

John Glen:

Section 71A of the Finance Act 2003 provides tax relief for financial institutions who purchase property which is subject to alternative financing arrangements. The rules prevent a double tax charge applying so that the tax outcome for purchasers is the same as if they had used conventional mortgage financing. The product referred to as 'gradual homeownership' uses arrangements which are not substantially similar to conventional mortgage financing and therefore the same requirements for relief are not present.

The Government keeps all tax policy under review.

■ Pensions: Debts

Charlotte Nichols: [\[21303\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an estimate of the number of people who have accessed their pension pots to repay debt in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

HMRC does not collect data on how individuals use their funds when they access their pension. The Financial Conduct Authority's Financial Lives 2020 survey and the Office for National Statistics Wealth and Assets survey both collect some data on how individuals have used pension lump sum payments.

To help people in problem debt, the government continues to maintain record levels of debt advice funding for the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), bringing the budget for free debt advice in England to over £90 million in 2022-23. In addition to this, the government launched the Breathing Space scheme in England and Wales last year. The scheme gives eligible people in problem debt who receive professional debt advice access to a 60-day period in which enforcement action is paused and most fees, charges and interest are frozen.

The government also continues to develop the Statutory Debt Repayment Plan (SDRP), a new statutory debt solution that will enable a person in problem debt to combine the majority of their debts into a single repayment plan, with payments made over a manageable time period, while receiving legal protections from creditor action for the duration of their plan. The government launched a public consultation on draft regulations for the SDRP on 13 May 2022 and is aiming to lay those by the end of 2022. Following this, the government intends for the scheme to commence in 2024.

■ Red Diesel

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21311\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential economic merits of permitting the use of red diesel in the (a) construction industry and (b) timber industry in response to rising oil prices.

Helen Whately:

At Budget 2020, the Chancellor announced that he would remove the entitlement to use red diesel from most sectors from April 2022.

The Government recognised that this would be a significant change and ran a consultation to gather information from affected users on the expected impact of these tax changes and make sure it had not overlooked any exceptional reasons why other sectors should be allowed to continue to use red diesel beyond April 2022.

Following the consultation, the Chancellor announced at Spring Budget 2021 that the Government would grant further entitlements to use red diesel after April 2022 for a limited number of users. However, having assessed the cases made by other sectors to retain their red diesel entitlement, including the construction sector, the Government did not believe that they were compelling enough to outweigh the need to ensure fairness between the different users of diesel fuels, the Government's long-term environmental objectives and the need for the tax system to incentivise the development of greener alternatives to polluting fuels.

Rebated fuel can be used in permitted vehicles and machines for accepted purposes relating to forestry, but not for the further processing or use of timber. Further guidance is available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/using-rebated-fuels-in-vehicles-and-machines-excise-notice-75-from-1-april-2022

■ Small Businesses: VAT

Mr Richard Holden: [\[21313\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to increases in the cost of living, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of raising the VAT threshold for small businesses.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government recognises that accounting for VAT can be a burden on small businesses. This is why the UK maintains the highest VAT registration threshold in the OECD and as compared to EU Member States at £85,000. This keeps the majority of UK businesses out of VAT altogether.

Views on the VAT registration threshold are divided and the case for change has been regularly reviewed over the years. While some businesses have argued that a higher threshold would reduce administrative and financial burdens, others contend that a lower threshold would provide a fairer competitive environment.

Whilst the Government keeps all taxes under review, it was announced at Budget 2021 that the VAT threshold will be maintained at its current level of £85,000 until 31 March 2024.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax: First Time Buyers

Gary Sambrook:

[\[19695\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason people buying a home for the first time under the gradual homeownership model are not subject to first-time buyers Stamp Duty relief.

John Glen:

In 2017, the Government permanently increased the price at which a property becomes liable to Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) to £300,000 for first time buyers. Since its introduction, over 673,000 people have benefitted from the relief.

Consumers using a product referred to as 'gradual homeownership' do not buy a share in a property but instead invest in a partnership along with a set of investors who are seeking a profit on that investment. This form of ownership means that the purchase does not meet the statutory conditions for relief.

■ Workplace Pensions: Low Pay

Rob Roberts:

[\[21306\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent steps he has taken to close the pension benefits loophole affecting workers with net pay pension schemes who earn between £10,000 and £12,500.

Mr Simon Clarke:

At Autumn Budget 2021, the government announced that it will introduce a system to make top-up payments in respect of contributions made in 2024-25 onwards directly to low-earning individuals saving in a pension scheme using a Net Pay Arrangement. These top-ups will help to better align outcomes with equivalent savers saving into a pension scheme using Relief at Source. An estimated 1.2 million individuals could benefit by an average of £53 a year. The government will set out more detail on the implementation of this policy in due course.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Equality: Minority Groups

Rachael Maskell:

[\[19633\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps she is taking to tackle inequalities for people from minoritized communities due to their protected characteristics.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 17 March 2022 I published 'Inclusive Britain', which sets out a ground-breaking action plan to tackle negative ethnic disparities, promote unity and build a fairer Britain for all.

Work is under way to deliver the 74 actions in Inclusive Britain, which will help to close outcome gaps between ethnic groups in education, employment, health and the criminal justice system.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Canada: Reciprocal Arrangements**

Daisy Cooper: [\[18065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with her Canadian counterpart on a reciprocal social security agreement with Canada.

Guy Opperman:

There are two separate social security arrangements in place between the UK and Canada, made in 1995 and 1998. The UK Government is not intending to change the social security relationship with Canada.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: MG OMD

Emily Thornberry: [\[21134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2022 to Question 13668 on Department for Work and Pensions: Media, whether all payments over £25,000 made by her Department to Manning Gottlieb OMD under the invoice cost centres (a) Comms Spare 1 and (b) Comms External Campaigns between November 2018 and May 2022 took place under the Media Buying framework agreement RM6003.

Guy Opperman:

The media buying framework RM6003 was the only media buying framework available at that time.

■ Long Term Unemployed People

Geraint Davies: [\[21075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the prevalence of speech, language and communication needs among the long-term unemployed in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mims Davies:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer given to [PQ15249](#).

■ Social Security Benefits: Tribunals

Kate Osamor:

[\[17999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the findings of Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: January to March 2022, published on 9 June 2022, on the proportion of Social Security and Child Support disposals cases in 2021-22 that had the initial decision revised in favour of the claimant, what recent assessment she has made of (i) the reasons for those decisions and (ii) the implications of those decisions for her Department's policies.

Chloe Smith:

The main reasons that decisions are overturned on appeal are: tribunals drawing a different conclusion based on the same evidence, cogent oral evidence given by the individual, or new written evidence provided at the hearing.

It has always been our aim to make the right decision at the earliest opportunity so that claimants do not have to appeal. Consequently, and learning from tribunal decisions, we have introduced a new approach to decision making at both the initial decision and the Mandatory Reconsideration stage, giving Decision Makers additional time to proactively contact claimants where they think additional evidence may support the claim. A similar approach applies at the appeal stage where new evidence is provided that may alter the decision.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

Stephen Morgan:

[\[19675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the findings of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's (PHSO) investigation into the way her Department communicated changes to women's State Pension age, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of that investigation's findings that her Department was guilty of maladministration in its handling of changes to the State Pension Age for women; and what steps she plans to take in response to those findings.

Guy Opperman:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has not completed his investigation. This a multi staged process and the report published on 20 July 2021 concluded stage-one of the investigation.

It would not be appropriate to comment whilst the investigation is ongoing; and section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

■ Way to Work Scheme

Jane Hunt:

[\[19742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people had gained employment through the Way to Work scheme as of 13 June 2022.

Mims Davies:

As of 21 June, we estimate that at least 485,000 unemployed Universal Credit claimants and Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants have moved into work during the Way to Work Campaign between 31 January and the end of 19 June 2022.

This total figure is composed of our into work measure to the end of May (over 386,000) and our internal management information up to 19 June (46,000). We are now also able to include JSA claimants who have moved into work between 31 January and 9 June 2022 (29,000) into our total. Furthermore, we have also included those claimants with a sanction in place that moved into work during the period of the campaign up to 19 June (24,000). Both these figures were not part of our previous reported totals as the data was not available. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics but is provided in the interests of transparency and timeliness.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[18039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of police responses to reported antisocial behaviour incidents in Newport West constituency.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 22 June 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Kit Malthouse:

There are various offences relating to illegal e-scooter use that the police can enforce with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN): uninsured driving can result in a FPN of £300 and 6 penalty points on a driving licence; riding without a driving licence can result in a FPN of £100 and 3-6 penalty points on a driving licence; while riding on the pavement can result in a FPN of £50.

Section 165 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 provides the power to seize privately owned e-scooters for driving without insurance or a driving licence.

Enforcement of road traffic law and deployment of available resources to tackle illegal riding of e-scooters is an operational matter for Chief Officers according to local policing plans.

I refer the Hon Lady to the answer to her question that I gave on 27 April (UIN 156588)

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Kwasi Kwarteng): **[\[HCWS137\]](#)**

Government will shortly lay before Parliament two Statutory Instruments: the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Liability of Trade Unions in Proceedings in Tort (Increase of Limits on Damages) Order 2022.

Removal of regulation 7 of the Conduct Regulations 2003

The recruitment sector is regulated by the Employment Agencies Act 1973 and the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003 (“the Conduct Regulations”). Regulation 7 of the Conduct Regulations makes it a criminal offence for an employment business to knowingly (or having reasonable grounds for knowing) provide temporary workers to an employer to perform the duties of workers taking part in an official strike or other industrial action.

Repealing these burdensome legal restrictions, will give businesses impacted by strike action the freedom to tap into the services of employment businesses who can provide skilled, temporary agency staff at short notice to temporarily cover essential roles for the duration of the strikes.

We believe the changes we are making will help mitigate the impact of future strikes, such as those seen on our railways this week, by allowing trained, temporary workers to carry out crucial roles to keep trains moving. The change in law, which will apply across all sectors, is designed to minimise the negative and unfair impact of strikes on the British public by ensuring that businesses and services can continue operating. For example, strikes in public services such as education can often mean parents have to stay at home with their children rather than go to work, or rail sector strikes stopping commuters getting to work or to other businesses.

It should be noted that removing this regulation does not put in place any new barriers on an individual’s right to take part in lawful industrial action. Employment Businesses will not be required to supply agency workers to businesses, rather the change that we are making simply provides the freedom to do so should they wish to. Similarly, a key part of our protections for agency workers is that they cannot be compelled to take on assignments and removing this regulation does not alter existing health and safety requirements.

Increase to the damages cap for unlawful strikes

When they are considering legal claims against unions which organise or authorise unlawful strikes, employers may decide to bring a claim for damages against the union.

The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 sets the upper limits to the damages that can be awarded based on the size of the union that organised the unlawful strike action. The levels of damages have not been reviewed since 1982 and are significantly out of date.

Increases the existing caps for damages awarded against trade unions for organising unlawful strike action in line with inflation, using the Retail Price Index (RPI) as the measure of inflation.

Unions who comply with the statutory balloting framework and wider trade union legislation will be unaffected by this change. This statutory instrument does not affect the right to strike. So long as unions follow the law, they will continue to be protected from damages claims as they are now. The Government is simply increasing the damages caps for unlawful strike action to broadly the levels they would have been at, had they been updated regularly since 1982.

HOME OFFICE

■ **HMICFRS's Inspection Report: An inspection of the National Crime Agency's effectiveness at safeguarding vulnerable people**

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):

[\[HCWS132\]](#)

The National Crime Agency (NCA) leads the fight against serious and organised crime. It has the power to task other law enforcement partners and a capability, with local to international reach, to disrupt the impact of serious and organised crime on the UK.

This is the tenth HMICFRS inspection of the NCA and examines the effectiveness of the Agency's existing safeguarding policies, structures and processes, the training provided and the safeguarding leadership and culture within the Agency.

I have asked HMICFRS to publish the report. It will be published today and will be available online at www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Inspection found that the NCA has policies for both child and adult safeguarding and that officer guidance is comprehensive and easily accessible, though the understanding of these varies by Directorate. The inspectors were encouraged by the work of the Child Protection and Safeguarding team, particularly its Child Protection Advisers, finding that those who used their services valued their work. However, Inspectors found that the primacy of the Investigations Directorate in delivering safeguarding had led some officers to view it solely as the duty of investigators or other specialists, with a small team relied upon to take forward this work. The Inspectorate has recommended that the NCA should develop a safeguarding plan by no later than 30 September 2022, to make clear how it intends to put safeguarding at the heart of its work.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**Local Government Update****Minister of State for Equalities, Local Government, Faith and Communities (Kemi Badenoch):** [\[HCWS135\]](#)

All Hon Members will recognise the critical role local councils play in providing essential statutory services to their residents and being accountable to the communities they serve. That is why the situation at Nottingham City Council is of such concern.

Despite significant support, Nottingham City Council has struggled to resolve serious governance and financial issues. In November 2020, following a number of issues raised in a Public Interest Report published in August 2020 by the Council's external auditors Grant Thornton, a rapid non-statutory review was conducted into the Council to review the serious governance and risk management issues associated with its energy company Robin Hood Energy. The report presented by Max Caller CBE highlighted serious governance failings, poor risk management and the pursuit of commercial ventures which had resulted in a significant budget gap and low levels of reserves.

The former Secretary of State appointed an independent Improvement and Assurance Board in January 2021, chaired by Sir Tony Redmond and made up of independent experts, to offer the Council advice, expertise and challenge as it sought to address these failings. The Board have provided regular assurance reports to the Secretary of State on the Council's progress throughout this time.

In December 2021, the Council discovered unlawful accounting practices associated with its ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), covering the period 2014/15 to 2020/21 and totalling £15.86 million. In response, the Council issued Section 114 and Section 5 notices and commissioned independent reports from an LGA associate (Richard Penn) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to understand the scale of the unlawful expenditure and decision-making processes that ultimately led to this situation. These comprehensive reports ("the Reports") can be found at:

<https://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/documents/s133381/Key%20Findings%20Report%20for%20Nottingham%20City%20Council.pdf>

<https://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/documents/s133382/NCC%20HRA%20Phase%202%20Final%20Report%20260422%20002%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

The Reports paint a deeply concerning picture of serious historic financial and governance failings. This includes the failure of the Council and its wholly-owned company Nottingham City Homes (NCH) to maintain the integrity of its HRA ringfence, and NCH operating without strategic oversight given poor client management and governance by the Council. The Penn report does not conclude that unlawful accounting practice was a deliberate mechanism to divert funds from the HRA to support the General Fund, but provides evidence of cultural failings and a reluctance to escalate issues appropriately, which led to the situation remaining unchallenged over several years. The scale of the unlawful expenditure may also be more substantial than originally thought, with CIPFA now estimating that it could be up to £40 million.

In light of this evidence, the Secretary of State is satisfied that Nottingham City Council is failing to comply with its best value duty, and is minded to implement the intervention package set out below to secure compliance with that duty. To that end, and in line with procedures laid down in the Local Government Act 1999, officials in my department have today written to the Council seeking representations on the Reports and on the proposed intervention package.

I want to place on record that the Secretary of State recognises the actions taken by the current Chief Executive to address the unlawful HRA expenditure since it was first identified in December last year. He has worked closely and constructively with the Improvement and Assurance Board since January 2021 in addressing the many challenges the Authority faces. However, whilst the building blocks of recovery have been put in place, there are many difficult decisions ahead and the scale of the challenge cannot be underestimated. The Secretary of State agrees with the Board's assessment that the HRA issue represents a 'serious setback' and is concerned that further serious issues may yet be uncovered which could have a severe impact on the Authority's ability to maintain and increase the momentum of the required improvements. This lack of assurance, along with the risk of progress stalling or slowing, is significant and the proposed intervention is therefore both necessary and expedient to secure compliance with the best value duty.

The proposed package is centred on the appointment of Commissioners to exercise certain and limited functions as required, for two years. It is envisaged this will be a shorter and narrower intervention than has been seen previously due to the Council being subject to a non-statutory intervention since January 2021. The proposal is for the Council, under the oversight of the Commissioners, to re-appraise its Improvement Plan within the first three months of the intervention and report on the delivery of that Plan to the Secretary of State every six months.

It is important that the Council leads their recovery but that it does not lose momentum in making the necessary improvements. Sir Tony Redmond has forged constructive working relationships with the Council leadership and has an intrinsic understanding of the scale and nature of the challenges facing the City. The Secretary of State is therefore minded to appoint Sir Tony Redmond as Lead Commissioner, subject to representations received on the proposed intervention package.

Given the gravity of the Reports' findings, the Secretary of State is, consequently, proposing to direct the transfer to Commissioners all functions associated with:

- the governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Authority;
- the strategic financial management of the Authority under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions the holders of which are to be designated as statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972.

I hope it will not be necessary for the Commissioners to use these powers, but they must be empowered to do so if they consider that required improvement and reforms are not being delivered.

I am inviting representations from the Council on the Reports and the Secretary of State's proposals by 7 July 2022. We want to provide the opportunity for members and officers of the Council, and any other interested parties, especially the residents of Nottingham, to make their views on the Secretary of State's proposals known. Should the Secretary of State decide to intervene along the lines described here, he will make the necessary statutory directions under the 1999 Act and appoint Commissioners. I will update the House in due course.

The Government does not take these steps lightly and recognises and respects the role of local councils in our communities and our democracy. The Government also recognises the importance of councils having an effective relationship with their local auditor. I urge all councils to consider whether they could be doing more to ensure they are delivering the good governance that residents deserve, including considering the governance risk and resilience toolkit developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Despite rare cases like Nottingham, as a whole, local authorities in England have a good record of service delivery, transparency, probity, scrutiny, and accountability. It is a reputation worth protecting. Local councils must continue to act to benefit the communities they serve.

TREASURY

■ **Central Government Supply Estimates 2022-23, Main Supply Estimates HC 396**

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Lucy Frazer): [\[HCWS134\]](#)

I have today laid Central Government Supply Estimates 2022-23, Main Supply Estimates HC 396. This is a replacement for HC 53 laid on 12 May which has today been withdrawn. This replacement includes updates as a result of the government's cost of living announcement made to the House on 26 May, ensuring Parliament has the most recent information available. Updates have been made to the Estimates of the Department for Work and Pensions, the Ministry of Defence, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

■ **Cost of Living Payments and the Welfare Cap**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): [\[HCWS136\]](#)

In accordance with HM Treasury's obligations to operate the welfare cap, set out in the Charter for Budget Responsibility, the Treasury is required to determine items of welfare expenditure within scope of the welfare cap. Today, I would like to inform the House that the Cost of Living Payments, which I announced to this House on 26th May 2022, are outside the scope of the welfare cap.

The welfare cap plays a key role in the fiscal framework, underpinning the government's commitment to sustainable public finances over the medium term by setting a predetermined cap for welfare expenditure in a target year, together with a pathway and margin for welfare spending to reach that point. The cap, margin and pathway were last set out by the government at Autumn Budget 2021.

The cap will be breached if spending in scope exceeds the cap plus margin at the point of formal assessment, which will next occur in 2024-25.

The welfare cap is designed to support the management of the more predictable elements of benefit expenditure. It already categorises benefits most directly linked to the economic cycle, such as Universal Credit payments to jobseekers, as outside the scope of the cap.

The Cost of Living Payments are one-off payments, designed to support millions of the most vulnerable households facing cost of living challenges as a consequence of acute global economic pressures. Given their temporary and exceptional nature, we have therefore taken the decision to categorise these payments as outside the scope of the welfare cap. As the Cost of Living Payments are outside the scope of the cap, they will not form part of the expenditure that will be formally assessed by the OBR against the cap and pathway.

■ Financial services update

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS133\]](#)

I can today inform the House that the government has announced an extension to its existing trading plan to sell part of the government's shareholding in NatWest Group (NWG, formerly Royal Bank of Scotland, RBS) for a further 12 months from 12 August 2022. This is a further step forward in the government's plan to return NWG to the private sector.

Rationale

It is government policy that where a government asset no longer serves a public policy purpose, the government may choose to sell that asset, subject to being able to achieve value for money. This frees up public resource which can be deployed to achieve other public policy objectives.

The government is committed to returning NWG to full private ownership, given that the original policy objective for the intervention in NWG – to preserve financial and economic stability at a time of crisis – has long been achieved. At Budget 2021, the Chancellor set out the government's intention to fully dispose of its NWG shareholding by 2025-26

The government only conducts sales of NWG shares when it represents value for money to do so and market conditions allow. This extension represents continued progress in exiting the assets acquired as a result of the 2007 to 2008 financial crisis and returning NWG to private ownership.

Trading plan

A trading plan involves selling shares in the market through an appointed broker in an orderly way at market value over the duration of the plan. Trading plans are an established method of returning government-owned shares to private ownership, while protecting value for the taxpayer. This method was used in the sell-down of the government's stake in Lloyds Banking Group (in that case, from a lower starting point in terms of the government's percentage ownership).

The trading plan for the government's NWG shareholding will be extended for 12 months, terminating no later than 11 August 2023. Shares will only be sold at a price that represents fair value and delivers value for money for the taxpayer. The final number of shares sold will depend on, amongst other factors, the share price and market conditions throughout the duration of the trading plan.

Since the trading plan was established, it has successfully sold approximately 703.5 million ordinary shares for total proceeds of approximately £1.6 billion as of 22 June 2022. The government currently has a c. 48.5% shareholding in NWG.

UK Government Investments and HM Treasury will keep other disposal options open, including by way of further directed buybacks and/or accelerated bookbuilds. The decision to extend the trading plan does not preclude the government from using other disposal options to execute future transactions that achieve value for money for taxpayers, including during the term of the trading plan.

I will update Parliament with a further statement at the end of the trading plan.