

Daily Report

Thursday, 8 September 2022

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 September 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:52 P.M., 08 September 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

■ Attorney General: Data Protection

Ruth Jones:

[\[46067\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many data incidents her Department (a) recorded and (b) reported to the Information Commissioner's Office in (i) 2018-19, (ii) 2019-20 and (iii) 2020-21.

Michael Ellis:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE HAVE HAD NO DATA INCIDENTS RECORDED OR REPORTED TO THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE IN (I) 2018-19, (II) 2019-20 AND (III) 2020-21.

■ Committee of Privileges

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47398\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether her office was consulted on the decisions by the Cabinet Office to (a) spend public funds on obtaining the legal opinion by Lord Pannick QC and Jason Pobjoy of Blackstone Chambers relating to the proposed conduct of the House of Commons Privileges Committee and (b) place that legal opinion in the public domain.

Michael Ellis:

THE DECISION IN ANY CASE AS TO WHETHER TO INSTRUCT COUNSEL, WHO TO INSTRUCT, AND WHETHER TO WAIVE PRIVILEGE IN RESPECT OF THAT ADVICE, LIES WITH THE INSTRUCTING GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT. WHEN A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT WISHES TO INSTRUCT A QC, OTHER THAN FIRST TREASURY COUNSEL OR STANDING COUNSEL, IT SHOULD SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR A NOMINATION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE. THIS PROCESS WAS FOLLOWED, AND THE REQUEST APPROVED, IN RELATION TO THE INSTRUCTION OF LORD PANNICK QC IN THIS CASE.

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Staff

Ruth Jones:

[\[46135\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many staff were employed by the Crown Prosecution Service in each of the last 10 years.

Michael Ellis:

THE NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED BY THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS) DURING THE PERIODS SPECIFIED IS AVAILABLE IN THE TABLE BELOW. DURING THIS PERIOD THE CPS HAS UNDERTAKEN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNISATION PROGRAMMES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS. THESE INCLUDED DIGITALISATION, DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL RESOURCING MODEL, STANDARD OPERATING PRACTICES, RESOURCE EFFICIENCY MEASURES, SMARTER/REMOTE WORKING PRACTICES, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF REMOTE TEAMS. AS A NATIONAL SERVICE FOR ENGLAND AND WALES, THE CONSEQUENCE OF THESE MEASURES IS THAT WE NOW HAVE THE ABILITY TO SHIFT WORK TO WHERE CAPACITY RESIDES WHICH IS BOTH MUCH MORE EFFICIENT, AND ALSO FAIRER ON THE WORKFORCE. FINANCIAL YEAR Q1 AVERAGE FULL TIME EQUIVALENT STAFF

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
137,093	146,568	156,034	165,708	175,505	185,594	195,554	205,589	215,790	226,414

2022-23 67,114 *THE SYSTEM REPORTS DATA AS AT THE LAST DAY OF THE MONTH RATHER THAN THE FIRST OR ANY DATE IN-BETWEEN THEREFORE THE TABLE IS PRESENTED TO THE NEAREST REPORTABLE DATE TO THE QUESTIONS ASKED. THE DATA HAS BEEN EXTRACTED FROM THE CPS ORACLE HR DATABASE AND IS ACCURATE AT POINT OF ENQUIRY ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2022. CONSEQUENT CHANGES TO DATA INPUT MAY MEAN THAT THIS DATA WILL CHANGE AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE

■ Crown Prosecution Service: Standards

Ruth Jones:

[\[46136\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many of the cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision in each of the past five years were still awaiting a charging decision after six months.

Michael Ellis:

DATA IS COLLATED BY THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS) SHOWING THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL PRE-CHARGE CONSULTATIONS THAT ARE RECORDED AS TAKING LONGER THAN 180 DAYS (SIX MONTHS). THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF THESE IN EACH OF THE LAST FOUR YEARS – THIS DATA WAS INTRODUCED FROM APRIL 2018.

2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	TOTAL
288,319	289,529	299,587	253,836	CONSULTATIONS OVER 180 DAYS (6 MONTHS)
1,336	507	461	491	% OVER 180 DAYS (6 MONTHS)
0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	CPS CONSULTATION DATA COUNTS THE NUMBER OF CONSULTATIONS SUBMITTED FOR A FULL CODE OR THRESHOLD TEST, ALSO KNOWN AS PRE-CHARGE REVIEWS, RECORDED ON THE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

■ Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation**Andy Slaughter:** [\[45309\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) spent on the (a) prosecution trials brought against ENRC and (b) SFO defence against ENRC counter claims lawsuit.

Michael Ellis:

THE SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE (SFO) HAS AN ONGOING INVESTIGATION INTO ENRC. THERE ARE NO PROSECUTIONS, AND THEREFORE NO ASSOCIATED COSTS, AT THIS STAGE. THE ENRC HAVE BROUGHT TWO CIVIL ACTIONS FOR ALLEGED MISFEASANCE AGAINST THE SFO. THIS MATTER REMAINS ONGOING AND AS SUCH THE FINAL COSTS ARE NOT YET DETERMINED.

Andy Slaughter: [\[45321\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Serious Fraud Office spent on the (a) Employment Tribunal and (b) subsequent appeal brought by a former ENRC case-controller who was dismissed.

Michael Ellis:

AN EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNAL HAS NOT BEEN BROUGHT BY A FORMER ENRC CASE-CONTROLLER AGAINST THE SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE.

■ Rape: Prosecutions**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[45119\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many (a) males and (b) females have been charged with the offence of rape in England in each of the last three years.

Michael Ellis:

THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS) DOES NOT HOLD ANY DATA WHICH SHOWS THE NUMBER OF SUSPECTS CHARGED WITH THE OFFENCE OF RAPE. HOWEVER, MANAGEMENT INFORMATION IS HELD SHOWING THE NUMBER OF SUSPECTS CHARGED, BY SEX, FLAGGED AS INVOLVING ALLEGATIONS OF RAPE WHERE THE CPS AUTHORISED A CHARGE AND A PROSECUTION HAS COMMENCED IN EACH OF THE LAST THREE YEARS ENDING MARCH 2022. THE TABLE BELOW SHOWS THE NUMBER OF DECISIONS TO CHARGE, IN RAPE FLAGGED CASES BY THE SEX OF SUSPECTS, WHERE THIS HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED. 2019-2020 2020-2021 2021-2022
FEMALE 224 124
MALE 1,831 1,905 2,179
DATA SOURCE: CPS CASE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM
DECISIONS TO CHARGE ARE WHERE CPS IS SATISFIED THAT THE LEGAL TEST FOR PROSECUTION, SET OUT IN THE CODE FOR CROWN PROSECUTORS IS MET: THERE IS ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO PROVIDE A 'REALISTIC PROSPECT OF CONVICTION' AGAINST EACH DEFENDANT AND THE PROSECUTION IS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

■ Serious Fraud Office

Andy Slaughter:

[\[45319\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much her Department spent on the (a) Calvert-Smith review and (b) Altman review of the Serious Fraud Office.

Michael Ellis:

The costs of Sir David Calvert-Smith's independent review into the Serious Fraud Office's (SFO) handling of the Unaoil case (*R. v Akle & Anor*), which was commissioned by the Attorney General, are still being finalised. The costs to date to the Attorney General's Office are £84,571.90. There are some costs outstanding, but it is anticipated these will not increase the overall cost of the review significantly. The total costs will be recovered from the SFO.

The cost of Brian Altman QC's independent review of the collapse of *R v. Woods & Marshall*, which was commissioned by the Director of the SFO, was £359,442.37. This was paid for by the SFO.

Both reviews presented valuable recommendations and the implementation of these remain a priority for the Law Officers and the Director of the SFO.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Coronavirus: Surveys

Mr David Davis:

[\[47340\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 21 April 2022 to Question 153746, on Coronavirus: Surveys, if he will publish the timetable for sharing information on polling commissioned by the Government at the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Cabinet Office is working with suppliers to finalise campaign evaluation reports. This is a complex process given the amount of data generated during the Covid-19 pandemic and we want to avoid any misleading publication of findings. We aim to begin publishing reports by the end of the year.

■ **Future of Work Review****Imran Hussain:**[\[45482\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to publish the report of the Future of Work Review.

Edward Argar:

On 12 May 2022, the former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, asked Matt Warman MP to lead a review into how the government can best support a thriving future UK labour market. Matt Warman MP's response was published on GOV.UK on 1 September 2022. This response is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-work-review-matt-warman-mp-response>

DEFENCE■ **19 Brigade****Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[45163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the responsibilities of the new 19th Light Brigade will be.

James Heappey:

19th Light Brigade, whose headquarters was established in June 2022, has been designed to command and force generate ten Army Reserve combat units. The Brigade will prepare and deploy Army Reserve personnel for operations and activity, in support of 1(UK) Division and wider Defence tasks.

■ **Afghanistan: Refugees****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[45979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time was between application and approval for successful Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme applications in the latest period for which data is available.

James Heappey:

Not all ARAP applicants will receive an eligibility decision in the same timeframe. This could be due to the complexity of the case, the need to conduct checks with other Government Departments, or the length of time it takes an applicant to respond to follow-up queries. As such, it is not possible to provide the data requested as the timeframes can vary considerably.

I recognise the great concern all applicants to the scheme have for their safety and wellbeing. As such, considerable amounts of time, resources and personnel have been, and continue to be, deployed to ensure that applications are considered as quickly efficiently, accurately and fairly as possible.

■ **Armed Forces: Parachuting**

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[45161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel are on a waiting list to attend the Basic Parachute Course as of 2 September 2022.

James Heappey:

I am withholding the number of personnel on the waiting list , as disclosure would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness, or security of the Armed Forces.

■ **Armed Forces: Radiation Exposure**

John Healey:

[\[45717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has taken steps to increase the UK's stockpiles of anti-radiation medication since February 2022.

James Heappey:

The Department of Health and Social Care maintains a stock of Stable Iodine for the UK. The UK Armed Forces also holds supplies of Stable Iodine sufficient for a Joint Medium Force. The military has not taken steps to increase its supply of Iodine or any other radioprotectants.

■ **Army: Employment**

John Healey:

[\[45183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Defence Command Paper published on 22 March 2022, what discussions he has held with the Prime Minister since February 2022 on that paper's objective of reducing the number of British Army personnel by 9500.

James Heappey:

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence hold discussions on force structure and Defence's capabilities on an ongoing basis. The 2021 Integrated Review and Defence Command Paper made clear that we must focus on capabilities rather than troop numbers. Through Future Soldier, the Army will have a whole force of over 100,000 comprising of 73,000 Regular Service Personnel and 30,100 Army Reserve.

The Army is re-organising and re-equipping to face future threats, however, as the Secretary of State has stated, including to the Prime Minister, as the threat changes, we need to change with it. In line with the agile planning and delivery mechanisms developed following the Integrated Review, Defence will continue to review our capabilities and readiness levels accordingly.

■ Babcock International: Secondment

Kenny MacAskill: [\[47677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many officials in his Department have been seconded to Babcock International Group; and for what purposes.

James Heappey:

It will take time to collate the information needed to answer the hon. Member's question. I will write to him shortly.

■ Defence Estates: Energy

Rachael Maskell: [\[40846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure the MOD estate achieves the best possible rate from their energy suppliers.

Alec Shelbrooke:

The MOD procures gas and electricity for the majority of its supplies through a framework with Crown Commercial Services (CCS). CCS allows members to buy gas and electricity through the wholesale energy market often purchasing energy years in advance and securing bulk purchase discounts. The MOD (and thereby Service personnel) benefit from the competitive rates achieved.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

John Healey: [\[47344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much the Government has budgeted to build fleet solid support ships in its current defence budgets.

John Healey: [\[47345\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much additional funding (a) is required and (b) has been earmarked by his Department to transition fleet solid support ships into service.

Alec Shelbrooke:

As with all defence equipment procurement programmes, the Fleet Solid Support ship budget will be set at the main investment decision point, which will provision for both the Manufacture contract and transitioning the ships into service including the completion of capability assessment trials.

It would be inappropriate, during an ongoing commercial competition, to disclose details of any estimates the Department has made of the likely cost of various build strategies, as to do so would be prejudicial to the commercial interests of the Department.

We have been very clear that the ships need to be integrated in the UK with a significant proportion of the build work carried out in the UK.

■ Hercules Aircraft: Boxer Vehicles

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[45188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many BOXER APC's can be carried on a Hercules.

Alec Shelbrooke:

There are no plans to use the RAF's Hercules (C-130J) fleet to transport the Boxer when it enters UK service. Trials for the air transportation of Boxer by the Atlas (A400M) and the Globemaster (C-17) are planned for later in 2023.

■ Iraq: Security

John Healey: [\[45189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his Iraqi counterpart on UK security interests in that country since June 2022.

James Heappey:

The UK Ministry of Defence has continued to discuss security matters with senior Iraqis over recent months. The UK remains hopeful that Iraq will find a peaceful and sustainable solution to the current political stalemate and that our two nations may continue our collective efforts to secure the enduring defeat of Daesh.

John Healey: [\[45715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of political instability in Iraq on UK security interests.

James Heappey:

We keep Iraqi internal stability under regular review and have noted the recent upsurge in violence with concern. Whilst the spike of large-scale unrest has dissipated since the end of August, the atmosphere in central and southern Iraq remains tense and further protests could occur.

The UK remains committed to the counter-Daesh mission, working alongside the Global Coalition at the continued request of the Government of Iraq. We remain hopeful that Iraq will find a peaceful and sustainable solution to the current political stalemate and that the Iraqi government will continue to support this vital work to ensure the enduring defeat of Daesh.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[47374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 11 August 2022 from the hon. Member for East Londonderry on the International Air Show at Portrush.

Mr Ben Wallace:

A reply was sent to the hon. Member's letter on 6 September 2022. I am grateful for his invitation but I am unfortunately unable to join him at the International Air Show at Portrush.

■ Moldova: Joint Exercises**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[45384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of pursuing a joint military exercise with Moldova, in the context of the situation in Ukraine and Russia's actions.

James Heappey:

The UK values its important relationship with Moldova. In the context of the situation in Ukraine, we will continue to work with our partner to protect common values, promote regional security and develop capacity to defend their sovereignty through a variety of Defence engagement.

■ Navy: Irish Sea**Mr Tobias Ellwood:**[\[45659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with his Irish counterparts on increasing co-operation in joint naval patrolling of the Irish sea.

James Heappey:

The Royal Navy (RN) continues to have a good working relationship with the Irish Naval Service. However, there has been no recent requirement for me to engage personally with my Irish counterparts regarding joint patrolling in the Irish Sea.

As my right hon. Friend will be aware, as part of a routine response, RN vessels recently monitored Russian surface vessels in the Irish Sea.

Escorting the Russian task group demonstrated that the RN is committed to maintaining maritime security and to co-operating with our allies and partners.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[47554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the National Strategy for Maritime Security, published on 15 August 2022, on (a) operational capacity and (b) crewing levels in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Alec Shelbrooke:

There has been no direct assessment of the impact of the National Strategy for Maritime Security against the operational capacity or crewing levels for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA). The RFA continues to deliver against its commitments for defence, and adjusts its workforce structure accordingly to meet the current and future operating plan.

■ **Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Crew**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[47555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his policy is on the recruitment and retention of civilian crew in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

James Heappey:

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) is a significant employer of UK professional seafarers. To ensure workforce recruitment and retention, the RFA constantly reviews the terms and conditions of service in accordance with department policy.

■ **Russia: Georgia**

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[45507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department is taking steps to support Georgia against Russian aggression.

James Heappey:

We seek to maintain a strong defence relationship with Georgia, bilaterally as well as through NATO. UK bilateral support for Georgia's defence and security is being complemented by an additional package of tailored support, announced at the NATO Madrid summit.

The UK has also increased funding to strengthen Georgia's resistance to cyber attacks and will continue to work with Georgia to defend our common values, counter shared threats and support our partners to build their resilience to state threats including participation in regional exercises such as Noble Partner.

■ **Taiwan: Weapons of Mass Destruction**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[47386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of Taiwan's CBRN resilience in light of the recent escalations at the Taiwan border.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) routinely investigates ways to improve security cooperation and build capacity in CBRN resilience and response with partners across the region, however, in line with Government policy, the MOD has no official relationship with Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense and it would neither be appropriate nor practicable to undertake an assessment of their CBRN resilience.

■ **Ukraine: Military Aid**

John Healey:

[\[45192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has plans to provide further Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) to Ukraine.

James Heappey:

For reasons of operational security we cannot comment on options for future gifting to Ukraine. We continue to liaise closely with the Armed Forces of Ukraine to help meet their requirements.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:[\[45289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will take steps to train Ukrainian pilots in the UK on NATO aircrafts.

James Heappey:

We are not currently training Ukrainian pilots in the UK on NATO aircraft. However, the UK will continue to arrange training for specific capabilities that are being provided to Ukraine.

The current focus of UK training is on infantry skills for the Ukrainian army, to help them increase their ability to defend against Russian aggression.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**Commonwealth Games 2022****Ruth Jones:**[\[46039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to help ensure that the 2022 Commonwealth Games delivers a legacy for people in (a) Newport West constituency, (b) Wales and (c) the United Kingdom.

Nigel Huddleston:

Ensuring that the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games leaves a lasting legacy for the host city and region, and the whole of the UK, has been our top priority in delivering the Games. Birmingham 2022 has played a crucial role in our levelling up agenda, creating opportunities for individuals, communities and businesses all over the UK, from contracts let to businesses, to participation in the Commonwealth Collective of volunteers, to the world-class facilities, opportunities and inspiration for athletes from all the home nations. The Games have been an important means of bringing the nation together this summer in a landmark year for major cultural and sporting events in the UK.

Commonwealth Games 2022: Charitable Donations**Julian Knight:**[\[45861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an estimate of the amount of sports equipment that will be given to sporting groups in the West Midlands following the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Nigel Huddleston:

Based on discussions between the Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee and Sport England, my department estimates that over 16,000 items of sports equipment

will be given to community organisations in the West Midlands following the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. This includes items such as boxing gloves, martial arts mats, netball bibs, basketballs and T20 cricket equipment as well as a number of items of general non-sport specific equipment. A full list of the equipment on offer is available via Sport England's [sports equipment gifting legacy catalogue](#).

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Trade Competitiveness

Damien Moore:

[\[45112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure British farmers remain globally competitive.

Mark Spencer:

The Government is committed to encouraging a thriving, innovative, and globally competitive farming sector where farms can be profitable and environmentally sustainable without subsidy.

In addition, the Government is supporting investment in productivity-boosting equipment, technology, and infrastructure. The Farming Investment Fund opened in November 2021 and provides grants to farmers, foresters, and growers (including contractors to these sectors) that will help their businesses to prosper.

Innovation also ensures British farmers remain globally competitive. Through our £270 million Farming Innovation Programme, farmers and growers in England can apply for funding to develop new, innovative methods and technologies. Amongst others, we are funding projects to develop robots that can pick fruit, vertical farms, and new ways to process slurry to convert it into fertiliser.

■ CF Industries: Billingham

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[46202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact on (a) national fertiliser supplies, (b) food security, and (c) carbon dioxide supplies for abattoirs and the food and drink sector of the CF Fertilisers halting ammonia production at the Billingham plant.

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[46203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to take steps to help mitigate the consequences of CF Fertilisers UK halting ammonia production at the Billingham plant, the sole fertiliser and carbon dioxide plant in the UK.

Mark Spencer:

It is disappointing that CF Fertilisers has taken the decision to halt ammonia production at Billingham. However, since last autumn the CO2 market's resilience has improved, with additional imports, further production from existing sources such

as anaerobic digestion and bioethanol, and better stockpiles. We expect the supply of ammonia (from imports by CF Fertilisers), nitric acid and fertiliser to the UK market to be unaffected. While the Government continues to examine options for the market to improve resilience over the longer term, we urge industry to do anything it can to meet demand, which is in the best interest of businesses and the public.

National Fertiliser Supplies

CF Fertilisers produces ammonium nitrate fertiliser and nitric acid in the UK at Billingham. The Company expects to fulfil all ammonia and nitric acid contracts and all orders of Ammonium Nitrate contracted for delivery in the coming months. The supply and price of these products is a commercial matter for CF Fertilisers and we expect supply to continue.

Food Security

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain, as demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 response. It is well equipped to deal with situations with the potential to cause disruption. Our high degree of food security is built on supply from diverse sources; strong domestic production as well as imports through stable trade routes. We produce 61% of all the food we need, and 74% of food which we can grow or rear in the UK for all or part of the year, and these figures have changed little over the last 20 years.

Defra has well established ways of working with the industry and across Government to monitor risks that may arise. This includes extensive, regular and ongoing engagement in preparedness for, and response to, issues with the potential to cause disruption to food supply chains.

Carbon Dioxide Supplies

The resilience of the UK's CO₂ supply has improved since last autumn and Defra do not expect any significant disruption to essential food supplies, such as meat production. We are in regular contact with representatives from the farming, food and drink sectors to help manage the situation. We will monitor the situation carefully and we are working with the meat industry to ensure that supplies of CO₂ to the pig and poultry processing sector are maintained.

Defra is working with sector stakeholders to encourage contingency planning and resilience and understand that various CO₂ supply companies in the UK are working on or have secured additional CO₂ to mitigate shortages. We are confident CO₂ stocks are secure for the coming winter. Since last autumn, the market's resilience has improved, with additional imports, further production from existing domestic sources and better stockpiles.

■ Farming Investment Fund

Mr Mark Harper:

[45752]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the article entitled Farming Investment Fund – new slurry infrastructure grants coming in

autumn 2022, published by his Department on 9 June 2022, when his Department plans to publish (a) further details and (b) guidance on how to apply for the slurry storage grant.

Mark Spencer:

The Government has committed to launch a slurry infrastructure grant in autumn 2022. We will publish full guidance shortly.

■ **Food: Waste**

Naz Shah:

[45318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish a timetabled plan for ensuring that food retailers and producers make as much left-over food produce as possible available to foodbanks and other charities.

Mark Spencer:

Businesses are required to follow the food and drink waste hierarchy. This lays out a prioritised list of options to reduce waste. From preventing surplus and waste arising in the first place, to redistribution to charities and commercial redistributors, followed by sending to animal feed.

Food and drink waste hierarchy: deal with surplus and waste - GOV.UK
(www.gov.uk)

Businesses are aided in this through following the Defra supported Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) led Food Waste Reduction Roadmap. This sets out a plan for businesses to reduce their food waste and increase redistribution through a Target, Measure and Act approach. By measuring and acting on waste, businesses can take targeted action and more surplus will be redistributed.

To date, 314 businesses have committed to the Roadmap. Recent data from WRAP stated that in 2021 over 106,000 tonnes was redistributed, worth over £330 million and the equivalent of over 253 million meals. Over 40,000 tonnes from the retail sector alone. Data from businesses implementing Target, Measure, Act revealed that they were collectively responsible for 90% of the increase in surplus redistributed between 2018 and 2020 redistributing almost 26,000 tonnes more food between them in 2020 than in 2018.

A consultation on options to improve the reporting of surplus and waste by large food businesses in England has recently closed. Defra will publish a government response in due course.

[WRAP Food waste measurement roadmap 2021 Progress report](#)

In order to bolster the capability and capacity of the redistribution sector to take advantage of the increase in surplus made available by businesses, nearly £13 million has been awarded to over 250 redistribution organisations since 2018 across the country. This funding has provided important infrastructure such as additional warehousing, vehicles, fridges and freezers.

■ Pipelines: Repairs and Maintenance

Navendu Mishra:

[\[47694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he expects Ofwat to instruct water companies to expedite the repairing and replacement of their pipe networks.

Mark Spencer:

Through our Strategic Policy Statement for Ofwat (SPS), Government has been clear about its expectations for water company action to renew and replace the water network. Our SPS sets out an expectation that Ofwat will promote good asset management and challenge companies to better understand the health of their assets and adopt a strategic and long-term approach.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Africa: Climate Change

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41972\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure that international climate finance delivered to African countries reaches the communities most affected by climate crises.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[41974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report entitled *Dying to Adapt* published by Tearfund, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of that report's finding that 11 African countries could face climate adaptation costs up to five times higher than their national spend on healthcare.

Vicky Ford:

The UK recognises the importance and urgency of ensuring that those most vulnerable to climate change can adapt to the climate risks they face. The UK has committed to providing £11.6 billion of climate finance over 2021-26, striking a balance between mitigation and adaptation. We are working with other countries to build on the commitments made at COP26 (including the Glasgow Climate Pact) and make progress on the Glasgow-Sharm el Sheikh work programme (to deliver on the Global Goal on Adaptation) and the Glasgow Dialogue on Loss and Damage.

At COP26, the UK has committed a further £143.5 million of support to African countries for adaptation through the Africa Regional Climate and Nature Programme, the Climate Adaptation and Resilience research programme, premium financing to pay for drought insurance, the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program, and the Shock Response Programme. The UK and 11 other donors also committed \$1.5 billion for the protection of Congo Basin Forests. Additionally, a landmark \$8.5 billion deal involving the UK, France, Germany, the US and the European Union is supporting South Africa's Just Energy Transition away from coal.

Furthermore, the 'Room to Run' Guarantee Agreement is expected to unlock up to \$2 billion of African Development Bank (AfDB) funding to help countries to adapt to climate change and build green economies. This includes a guarantee commitment of \$1.6 billion from the UK to the African Development Bank.

■ Chad: Politics and Government

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[47492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she will take to support the authorities in Chad to ensure the country's national dialogue is inclusive of opposition groups.

Vicky Ford:

The UK seeks to promote Chad's transition back to civilian and constitutional rule in line with the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué of 14 May 2021. The UK has taken several steps to support the Chadian authorities to ensure the National Dialogue is inclusive. The UK is a member of the African Union's International Support Group for the Transition and has contributed to the United Nations Development Programme fund for the transition to support the inclusion of women and youth in the National Dialogue, which opened on 20 August 2022. I [Minister Ford] also wrote to the Chadian Minister for Foreign Affairs congratulating him on the Doha Agreement which was signed by the Transitional Military Council and rebel groups. In this letter, I set out the UK position on the transition, and encouraged the Minister to ensure the National Dialogue is as representative and inclusive as possible, particularly of unarmed opposition and civil society groups. We are closely monitoring the transition in Chad and use our diplomatic presence to relay key messages, in co-ordination with the international community, on inclusion within the National Dialogue and the organisation of free and fair elections according to the terms agreed by the African Union.

■ Development Aid: Health Services

Christine Jardine:

[\[47629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will take steps to help ensure investment in universal and comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is prioritised within the upcoming Women and Girls strategy.

Vicky Ford:

A Women and Girls Strategy would build on the May 2022 International Development Strategy, which framed our work on women and girls through the 3Es (Educating girls, Empowering women and girls, and Ending violence against women and girls). It included a strong commitment to drive progress on universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Epidermolysis Bullosa: Medical Treatments and Research****Dr Rupa Huq:****[45315]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding he is providing for (a) research into and (b) treatment for epidermolysis bullosa on the NHS.

James Morris:

The Department funds research into rare diseases such as epidermolysis bullosa (EB) through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). In the last five years, the NIHR has funded two studies into EB with a total award value of £3,022,759 and supported the delivery of over 25 studies via the NIHR's infrastructure.

NHS England commissions a national EB service to provide diagnosis and assessment of infants, children, adolescents and adults with suspected or known EB, with treatment and long-term support. The service is commissioned from four providers with a total value of £4.4 million.

NHS England is aware that a number of innovative treatments for EB are either in trials or being considered by National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). If any treatments are recommended for use in the National Health Service by NICE, NHS England will ensure that service provision is in place to deliver these treatments.

HOME OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Asylum****Mr Toby Perkins:****[45775]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to help support (a) people who worked for the previous administration supporting British personnel and (b) other people in Afghanistan to claim asylum in the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: We are committed to working in step with the international community and continue to do all we can to enable those who are eligible to relocate to the UK.

Operation PITTING was the largest UK military evacuation since the Second World War, during which we evacuated c.15,000 individuals to the UK. In the year since Op Pitting a further c. 5,000 have arrived in the UK via neighbouring countries. This is in addition to c.2000 arrivals under Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) between the end of June 2021 and when the evacuation began on 14 August 2021.

Any current or former staff directly employed by the UK Government and assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life are eligible to apply for ARAP. So far - we have

relocated around 10,300 eligible Afghan citizens and their family members under the ARAP scheme since it opened in April 2021 – and the scheme remains open.

For those who are not eligible for relocation under the ARAP, 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 resettlement and re-build their lives in the UK.

Since the scheme launched, in January this year, we have, through ACRS Pathway 1, granted Indefinite Leave to Remain to some of those already evacuated to the UK under Op PITTING.

More recently, under ACRS Pathway 2 – which opened in June - we have now begun to receive the first referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), of Afghans who have already fled their country and are seeking resettlement in the UK. We look forward to welcoming the first new arrivals under this pathway in due course.

And, under ACRS Pathway 3 – which also opened in June - the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) launched an online system on Monday 20 June, through which eligible individuals were able to express interest in UK resettlement.

The window for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) under ACRS Pathway 3 closed on 15 August 2022. The FCDO is in the process of reviewing EOIs in the order they were received and those who have submitted one will be informed of the outcome of the process and next steps, via email.

Beyond the first year of the ACRS, we will work with international partners and NGOs to welcome wider groups of Afghans at risk.

Finally, we intend to establish a diplomatic presence in Afghanistan as soon as the security and political situation in the country allows. We are coordinating this effort with allies. This will enable us to deliver on our commitment to the people of Afghanistan, including through the provision of humanitarian aid and by bringing more vulnerable Afghan people to the UK through the ARAP and the ACRS

■ Anti-social Behaviour

Colleen Fletcher:

[47562]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of anti-social behaviour in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England in each of the last three years; and what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour in those areas.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent ASB can have on both individuals and the wider community. Last year the [Beating Crime Plan](#) laid out the Government's plan

for tackling crime and ASB and committed to working with local agencies and partners to drive down ASB using the full range of powers and tools in the '2014 Act'.

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides a range of flexible tools and powers to local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour. Local areas decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. The Office for National Statistics annually publishes anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police by Police Force Area and no further lower level breakdown is currently available.

Police recorded ASB incidents for West Midlands were on a steady decline pre-Covid-19 with a 40% fall in 2019-20 when compared to 2016-17. The overall number of ASB incidents in England & Wales also fell (24%) pre-Covid-19 but to a lesser degree than in West Midlands. The year to March 2022 reports a drop in ASB incidents for both England & Wales (-6%) and West Midlands (-17%) when compared to the 2019-20 (pre-Covid-19) period.

Home Office statutory guidance, which was updated this year, supports local areas to make effective use of these powers, setting out the importance of focusing on the needs of the victim and the local community, as well as ensuring that the relevant legal tests are met.

The Home Office announced in March that ASB would be one of the primary crime and issue types being targeted in the next rounds of the Safer Streets Fund. We announced the outcome of Round Four of the Safer Streets Fund in July, investing £50 million to support 111 projects across England and Wales, aimed at increasing the safety of public spaces for all with a particular focus on addressing neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour and tackling violence against women and girls.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Stephen Kinnock:

[45081]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will investigate the circumstances under which worms were reportedly contained in food provided to a child in a Serco-run Midlands hotel for asylum seekers; and what steps she plans to take to ensure that the food provided at (a) that hotel and (b) other asylum accommodation is of a standard suitable for consumption.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 6 September 2022]: The Home Office expects clear standards from our accommodation providers and monitors them closely to ensure those standards are met.

Evidence submitted to the Independent Chief Inspector showed that the accommodation providers were complying with the contractual requirement to have menus nutritionally validated and were providing a varied menu – usually rotating menus every 3 weeks. In addition, when physically visiting accommodation sites, inspectors noted menus on display at the sites appeared to be well balanced and

showed that food options were rotated to create variety. They also found all the properties required to supply meals, provided the required number as stipulated in the contract requirements.

Service providers are also required to provide specialist meals as needed and that they should cater for special dietary, cultural or religious requirements. Inspectors saw evidence that specialist meals were provided and that dietary needs were considered.

We are aware of an isolated incident involving a fish which was freshly caught, the customer was immediately provided with an alternative meal as soon as hotel staff were made aware. This was an isolated incident and was dealt with appropriately at the time.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Naz Shah:

[45442]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25th May 2022 to Question 5436 on Asylum: Rwanda, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of cuts to legal aid for asylum applications on the ability of people to adequately make representations where they feel deportation to Rwanda would be detrimental to their physical or mental wellbeing.

Tom Pursglove:

Decisions on whether to relocate individuals to Rwanda are made on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual circumstances at the time, and in accordance with the inadmissibility guidance available at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inadmissibility-third-country-cases>.

Everyone considered for relocation will be screened and have access to legal advice, and nobody will be removed if it is unsafe or inappropriate for them.

No changes have been made to legal aid for asylum applications or appeals. Legal aid has been, and will always be, available in asylum cases.

The Government is investing over £8m in legal aid through the Nationality and Borders Act, where legal aid will be available for potential victims of modern slavery and where individuals have been served with a priority removal notice.

■ Crimes of Violence

Colleen Fletcher:

[47561]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of serious violent crime in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last three years; and what steps her Department is taking to tackle serious violent crime in those areas.

Jeremy Quin:

The Home Office uses data on NHS hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object for under 25 year olds as our primary metric for levels of serious violence. In

the West Midlands, hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object for under 25s have increased 13% from March 2020/21 to March 2021/22, although they remain 8% lower than in the year to March 2020.

Across England, hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object for under 25s have decreased 3% from March 2020/21 to March 2021/22, and remain 13% lower than the year ending March 2020. It is important to note that many crime types were suppressed during 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of public health restrictions. This makes meaningful year on year comparisons challenging.

The Government is determined to tackle the underlying causes of serious violence and are redoubling our efforts with a twin-track approach, combining tough enforcement with programmes that steer young people away from crime.

That is why we have made £130m available this financial year (22/23) to tackle serious violence, including murder and knife crime. This includes

£64m for our network of 20 Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) which bring together local partners to tackle the drivers of violence in their area, and £30m for our targeted police programme, Grip. Together, these programmes have prevented an estimated 49,000 violent offences in their first two years of activity.

To support the prevention of violence in the West Midlands, we have provided the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) c.£16 million since 2019, including a c.£5.9 million allocation for this financial year (2022/23).

In addition, we have provided West Midlands Police with c.£19 million of funding between 2019 – 2022 to support their operational response to tackling serious violence via the Grip ‘hot spot’ policing programme. This includes a c.£3m allocation this financial year (2022-23).

As at 30 June 2022, West Midlands Police have recruited 899 additional police officers as part of our commitment to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers across England and Wales by March 2023.

■ **HM Passport Office: ICT**

Ian Byrne:

[40994]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the Application Management System at HM Passport Office has not yet been replaced with Digital Application Processing.

Tom Pursglove:

The full roll out of the Digital Application Processing service has taken longer than originally anticipated. This is due in part to the response required to COVID-19, unexpected complexity involving transforming ways of working, and similar impacts for deliveries on which the service is dependent.

HM Passport Office has transitioned 75-85% of applications to the new Digital Application Process to date. In addition, the availability of two stable systems has

enabled HM Passport Office to mitigate some of the risks in processing record numbers of applications during this period of exceptionally high demand.

Ian Byrne:

[41000]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people were employed by the Digital Application Processing development programme in HM Passport Office on 1 November 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

The number of people engaged in developing the Digital Application Service as of 1 November 2021 was 61.

■ **HM Passport Office: Staff**

Stephen Morgan:

[42188]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of reductions in the number of civil servants, announced by the Government in May 2022, on the operation of HM Passport Office and its service delivery.

Tom Pursglove:

HM Passport Office staffing numbers have been increased by over 1200 since April 2021. This has delivered the operational capacity needed to process applications in record numbers, at approximately one million each month.

Under current plans HM Passport Office will continue to recruit to cover attrition, ensuring it remains fully resourced.

■ **Home Office: Agency Workers**

Jon Trickett:

[41952]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much her Department has spent on (a) agency workers and (b) agency retainer fees in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

Agency workers, more commonly referred to as contingent labour or temporary workers, are subject to a Cabinet Office controls framework to ensure robust governance of spending in this area. See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contingent-labour-spend-control>

The Home Office does hold information on contingent labour spending and reports this in the Annual Report and Accounts by financial year (April to March).

You can refer to the links and pages below for the available published information that relates to contingent labour costs:

Pages 107-108 of the 2021-22 Home Office Annual Report and Accounts

[Home Office ARA 21-22 Final - Gov.uk.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Pages 99-101 of the 2020-21 Home Office Annual Report and Accounts

[HO annual report and accounts 2020-21 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Pages 88-89 of the 2019-20 Home Office Annual Report and Accounts

[Home Office annual report and accounts 2019 - 2020 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

We have interpreted your reference to agency retainer fees as the fees charged at the commencement of the provision of a search recruitment service; this is only applicable when recruiting for a permanent or fixed term post.

Agency retainer fees are not applicable to the contingent labour market. The Home Office does not pay agency retainer fees.

■ India: Visas

Navendu Mishra:

[46190]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking (a) to offer E-visa facilities to Indian nationals (b) to agree reciprocal arrangements with New Delhi for British nationals.

Tom Pursglove:

I direct the hon member to my previous response on this topic published on 5th September 2022.

[Written questions and answers - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

■ Migrant Workers: Agriculture

Alex Cunningham:

[45228]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to introduce visas for people seeking permanent entry-level roles in the (a) agricultural and (b) horticultural sectors.

Alex Cunningham:

[45819]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to include entry-level permanent roles in the (a) agricultural and (b) horticultural sectors in the points-based immigration system.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: A range of agricultural and horticultural occupations are already eligible for the Skilled Worker route including farmers, growers, market gardeners and poultry processors. However, the Government has no plans to introduce a general immigration route allowing recruitment at or near the minimum wage with relatively short or no work-based training requirements.

Investment and development of the UK's domestic labour force should take priority, rather than seeing cheaper migrant labour as the solution to recruitment difficulties. Those businesses facing recruitment issues should therefore engage with the

Department for Work and Pensions in the first instance about the support they can provide.

Stephen Kinnock:

[45826]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking steps to tackle unlicensed brokers operating in the farming sector in order to prevent migrants from being victims of potential debt bondage as a result of having been required to pay their own recruitment fees.

Tom Pursglove:

The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) operates a licensing scheme in the agriculture sector to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation. Under the conditions of the GLAA licence, a licence holder must not charge a fee to a worker for any work finding service. Labour providers must hold a licence to legally operate in these sectors and are subject to ongoing checks and inspections to ensure compliance.

The GLAA will investigate allegations of non-compliance and take robust enforcement action where needed. In addition, Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings and Orders were introduced in the Immigration Act 2016 to give enforcement bodies the tools to tackle businesses who repeatedly or recklessly commit labour market offences. Breach of a Labour Market Enforcement Order is a criminal offence and carries up to a two-year prison sentence.

The GLAA is working in partnership to raise awareness and prevent exploitation of workers. For example, the GLAA and seasonal worker pilot operators have jointly launched a new video designed to increase awareness of employment rights for those arriving in the country for the first time. The GLAA has published specific guidance about how licensing applies to businesses outside of the UK. Finally, the GLAA is working with UK embassies to engage more closely with in-country government agencies and ensure local laws and regulations are met, in relation to recruitment of overseas workers.

■ Migrant Workers: General Practitioners

Patrick Grady:

[45885]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to ensure that immigration rules are not a barrier to international trainee GPs remaining in UK general practice after completing training.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 6 September 2022]: The Home Office have already delivered a range of measures to support the health and care sector. The Home Office launched the Health & Care visa in 2020, which makes it easier, cheaper, and quicker for health workers – including GPs - to come to the UK to work compared to other immigration routes.

International medical graduates may use the time between the end of their training and the end of their visa to apply for work and are eligible for the skilled worker route. The sector and its membership bodies are best placed to help match these individuals with those vacant positions, so should focus on identifying even more effective methods to improve this mechanism.

We strongly encourage more GP surgeries to become Home Office approved sponsors, as this is the best way for the sector to retain international medical graduates as GPs, providing them with the ability to continue to renew their visa while living in the UK and to qualify for permanent settlement in due course.

Sponsorship is straightforward and business-friendly, the majority of sponsors on our register are SMEs, much like GP surgeries are likely to be. The Government is working to increase the number of GP Practices registered as Home Office sponsors.

■ Migrants: Children

Sarah Green:

[45522]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her department is taking to support the welfare of children whose parents are subject to No Recourse to Public Funds.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: Temporary migrants are generally required to support themselves and any accompanying family members, including children, in the UK without recourse to public funds. This is a well-established principle which protects taxpayer-funded public services from becoming overburdened.

There are, nonetheless, strong and important safeguards in place to ensure migrants receive support where they are destitute, at risk of destitution, or have community care needs, including issues relating to human rights or the wellbeing of children.

People with leave under the Family, Private life and Human Rights routes that engage Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and those who have been granted leave on the Hong Kong British National (Overseas) route can apply, for free, to have their NRPF condition lifted by making a 'change of condition' application. An individual can apply if they are destitute or at risk of imminent destitution, if the welfare of their child is at risk due to their low income, or where there are other exceptional financial circumstances.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a general duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of "children in need" in their area. Support provided to a child by local authorities under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 is not dependent on the immigration status of the child or their parent(s).

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration status, if it is established there is a genuine care need which does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where they are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question.

Status holders who have made the necessary national insurance contributions can also claim contributory benefits such as contribution-based Jobseekers Allowance, statutory sick pay and state pension.

■ **Police Stations: Energy**

Sarah Jones:

[\[47628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the cost to the public purse was of (a) heating and (b) electricity for police stations in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

Jeremy Quin:

The Home Office does not collect data on the cost of heating or electricity for police stations in England and Wales.

Decisions on how to use funding and resources are an operational matter for Chief Constables, and Police and Crime Commissioners are best placed to make decisions on the management of the police estate.

■ **Refugees: Afghanistan**

Ian Byrne:

[\[42293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the oral evidence session of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee of 29 June 2022, how many of the 6,500 people identified for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme were already residing in the UK prior to the launch of that scheme on 6 January 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 6 September 2022]: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) launched on 6 January 2022 and will see up to 20,000 people from Afghanistan and the region resettled to the UK over the coming years.

We helped over 15,000 people to safety in the biggest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history and we have continued to bring people to the UK, with over 4,000 people helped to enter since the evacuation. We have been clear from the outset this will include some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme. Around 6,500 people brought to safety in the UK during and after the evacuation are eligible for the ACRS under Pathway 1. They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British Nationals and members of the LGBT community.

Work is underway to assure information relating to all the individuals relocated under the ARAP and ACRS on case-working systems. Once this work concludes, statistics on both schemes - including the number of people resettled under each - will be included in the published Immigration Statistics.

Seema Malhotra:

[45074]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals have been resettled to the UK via a referral from a UNHCR centre in a third country as part of Pathway 2 of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme as of 25 July 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) launched in January, and this will provide up to 20,000 women, children, and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle and re-build their lives in the UK over the coming years.

The ACRS is not application-based. Instead, eligible individuals will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through one of three referral pathways.

Under ACRS Pathway 2, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will refer refugees - who have already fled Afghanistan - for resettlement to the UK. Those referred will be assessed for resettlement by the UNHCR, using their established processes.

We have now begun to receive the first referrals for resettlement under pathway 2 of the ACRS – which opened in June – from the UNHCR. It is anticipated that we will receive referrals for up to 2,000 refugees during the first year of this pathway, although this number will be kept under review – and we look forward to welcoming the first new arrivals under this pathway in due course.

Further information on UNHCR referrals is available at:

[UNHCR UK Information and Links on Afghanistan Situation - UNHCR United Kingdom](#)

Anne McLaughlin:

[45559]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan child refugees who arrived in the UK since 15 August 2021 are in full-time education as on 2 September 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: Afghans resettling in the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be supported in accessing accommodation and the vital health, education, and support into employment they need, to fully integrate into society.

The Department for Education have confirmed that individuals resettling under these schemes who wish to access higher education, are eligible for home fee status and student support from the 2022/23 academic year – putting them on the same footing as refugees. At this time, the Home Office is working to improve the data it holds on those who have accessed higher education among those being temporarily accommodated in hotels.

All children who were evacuated during Op Pitting have been enrolled in school - and school places are offered on a rolling basis, as more children arrive in the UK. .

As stated in the recently published, ['Afghan Resettlement: Operational Data'](#) factsheet, at 12 Aug 2022, the UK:

- Has welcomed 21,450 people to the UK from Afghanistan - or a neighbouring country - since June 2021. Whilst we believe that around half of this number are children, we are unable, at this time, to provide an accurate breakdown of arrivals by age, in order to determine how many children are in full-time education.
- Is providing temporary accommodation for 9,667 people in hotels.

Officials are working at pace to assure information relating to the individuals resettling in the UK under our bespoke schemes for Afghans on case working systems. Once this work concludes, the Home Office will include Afghan resettlement statistics in its [quarterly Immigration Statistics publications](#).

Until then the factsheet will be updated every quarter – with the next iteration scheduled for publication on 24 November 2022.

Anne McLaughlin:

[45891]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan refugees who arrived in the UK since 15 August 2021 are living in hotel accommodation as on 2 September 2022.

Anne McLaughlin:

[45892]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan child refugees who arrived in the UK since 15 August 2021 are not in full-time education as on 2 September 2022.

Anne McLaughlin:

[45893]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of female Afghan refugees who arrived in the UK since 15 August 2021 are in full-time education as on 2 September 2022.

Anne McLaughlin:

[45894]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Afghan refugees who applied to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme remain in Afghanistan as on 2 September 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: Afghans resettling in the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) will be supported in accessing accommodation and the vital health, education, and support into employment they need, to fully integrate into society.

The Department for Education have confirmed that individuals resettling under these schemes who wish to access higher education, are eligible for home fee status and student support from the 2022/23 academic year – putting them on the same footing as refugees. At this time, the Home Office is working to improve the data it holds on

those who have accessed higher education among those being temporarily accommodated in hotels.

All children who were evacuated during Op Pitting have been enrolled in school - and school places are offered on a rolling basis, as more children arrive in the UK. .

As stated in the recently published, ['Afghan Resettlement: Operational Data'](#) factsheet, at 12 Aug 2022, the UK:

- Has welcomed 21,450 people to the UK from Afghanistan - or a neighbouring country - since June 2021. Whilst we believe that around half of this number are children, we are unable, at this time, to provide an accurate breakdown of arrivals by age, in order to determine how many children are in full-time education.
- Is providing temporary accommodation for 9,667 people in hotels.

Officials are working at pace to assure information relating to the individuals resettling in the UK under our bespoke schemes for Afghans on case working systems. Once this work concludes, the Home Office will include Afghan resettlement statistics in its [quarterly Immigration Statistics publications](#).

Until then the factsheet will be updated every quarter – with the next iteration scheduled for publication on 24 November 2022.

■ Refugees: Ukraine

Ian Blackford:

[45844]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether relationship breakdown due to (a) domestic abuse, (b) bereavement and (c) other reasons would affect a person's entitlement to a visa (i) under the Ukraine Family Scheme, (ii) as the third-country national family member of a Ukrainian and (iii) other visa schemes for Ukrainian refugees.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 6 September 2022]: Where a person has already entered the UK using a visa issued under the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme or has had their leave extended under the Ukraine Extension Scheme, should they become the victim of domestic abuse or become bereaved, the leave granted to them under the relevant scheme would remain valid.

Where the person has yet to make an application to one of the schemes, whether they are in the UK or abroad, they will still need to meet the requirements of the relevant scheme. Under each of the schemes, decision makers are able consider any exceptional circumstances and apply discretion where appropriate.

■ Seasonal Workers: Ukraine

Paul Blomfield:

[45788]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what immigration options to remain in the UK beyond the end of (a) September and (b) December 2022 will be

available to Ukrainian Seasonal Worker visa holders who entered the UK after 18 March 2022; and whether those visa holders will be required to leave the UK and apply for a separate visa to re-enter the UK.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: Following the Russian incursion into Ukraine, the Home Office quickly created the Ukraine Extension Scheme to support Ukrainian nationals who were already lawfully in the UK on visas that had or may expire.

These Ukrainian nationals are able to extend their permission to stay to 36 months. In line with the two other Ukraine schemes, and have all the rights and access to benefits in line with those schemes.

The Home Office is constantly keeping these schemes under review.

■ **Sexual Offences**

Jess Phillips:

[47559]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police forces in (a) England and (b) Wales contain operational rape and serious sexual offences units.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is committed to ensuring that victims and survivors of rape and sexual offences have their case treated seriously from the point of disclosure.

We recognise that having police officers with the right skills is critical in ensuring cases are managed appropriately and effectively. We are supporting the police to ensure this is the case through:

- funding Operation Soteria, which includes reviewing the learning and development on rape and sexual offences to officers and sharing learning nationally;
- supporting the National Police Chiefs' Council and the College of Policing to design and pilot the Rape and Other Sexual Offences Investigative Skills Development Programme for police officers;
- funding the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme, run by the National Police Chiefs' Council, which drives improvement in the policing response to all safeguarding crimes (including adult sexual offences); and
- the three-year Spending Review settlement secured an additional £550m for the Police Uplift Programme to fund the remaining officers in the third year of the programme, support the full 20,000 officer uplift, delivering on this Government's commitment to recruit additional officers and keep the public safe.

The structuring of police forces is an operational matter for Chief Constables and information on the number of specialist units is not collated centrally.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Fleur Anderson: [45010]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to create a more effective working relationship with the French Government to reduce illegal channel crossings.

Fleur Anderson: [45020]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to help create a more effective working relationship with the French Government to reduce deaths and injury resulting from illegal channel crossings.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: The UK maintains regular contact with the Government of France on our joint cooperation to tackle illegal migration at the shared border. The UK has committed several funding packages to support this work, including a bilateral arrangement which was reached between the UK and France on 20 July 2021.

This year, through our partnership and collaboration, over 19,000 crossing attempts were prevented – around 85% more than to this point in 2021. We remain committed to addressing this issue which requires long term and ambitious action

■ Visas: Applications

Jessica Morden: [45586]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average time taken by her Department was to process a Standard Visitor visa in (a) 2019, (b) 2020, (c) 2021 and (d) January to August 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: Average processing times for a Standard Visitor Visa are not captured in our published data. To capture the requested data would incur a disproportionate cost.

The current average processing times for Standard Visitor Visas can be found on the GOV.uk webpage: [Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk)

The Home Office's published data on its performance against its service standard historically can be found in our transparency data: [Migration transparency data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/migration-transparency-data)

■ Visas: Children

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [46148]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's target is for the time taken to approve a Standard Visitor visa for a person under 18.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: Visit visa applications for a person under 18 are processed in-line with all visitor visa applications. The published target time for standard Visit visas is 3 weeks.

Following a surge in demand as international travel restrictions were reduced, visit visas, including standard visitor visa applications, are currently taking on average 7 weeks to process, however some applications might take longer.

UKVI are working hard to process applications to get back to the 3-week service standard; resources are focussed on reducing the current processing times and will continue to prioritise urgent compelling or compassionate cases across all workstreams.

UKVI encourages all customers to apply in good time ahead of intended travel dates, and customers can also make use of UKVI's optional priority visa services for visit visas in certain locations.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[46149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the requirement for children to apply for a visa to visit the UK when accompanied by a parent or guardian who is a British citizen.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: The Immigration Rules - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor> - set out the requirements to visit the UK, usually for up to six months. The requirements apply to all visitors to the UK including children. Applications for visit visas or for entry as a visitor are considered on their merits regardless of the nationality of the applicant.

The Home Office has a statutory duty to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. Decision makers must ensure a child's welfare is taken into account when considering applications from someone under 18 years of age, irrespective of the parents' nationality.

JUSTICE**■ Administration of Justice****Alex Cunningham:**[\[47529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has made a recent assessment of the extent of the (a) financial and (b) psychological impact on people who experience difficulties in accessing (i) legal support and (ii) the civil justice system.

Miss Sarah Dines:

We understand the importance of access to justice and that unmet legal needs can increase financial and psychological pressures for people. We are also interested in improving our understanding of the state of legal need further, and we will be running a Legal Problem and Resolution Survey beginning this financial year. This nationally representative survey of 10,000 adults living in households in England and Wales will gather data on the prevalence of legal need, people's willingness to engage with the courts and tribunals and factors that encourage or deter people from doing so.

We are also already committed to helping people to resolve their legal problems as early as possible, which is why the MoJ spends approximately £760 million a year on civil legal aid, and why, since 2014, we have channelled over £20 million in grants through not-for-profit organisations who provide specialist legal advice.

■ Civil Proceedings: Dispute Resolution**Alex Cunningham:****[47528]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential impact on efficiency of implementing best practice for effective dispute resolution derived from ombudsman systems, such as the Financial Ombudsman Service, in the organisation and operation of the English and Welsh civil courts.

Miss Sarah Dines:

We continue to keep all methods of dispute resolution under review to explore opportunities to increase take up both before and after legal proceedings are started. The Ministry of Justice is working to increase the number of legal issues resolved without the need for a judicial decision. In 2021, we carried out a Call for Evidence which included questions on the quality of outcomes of different dispute resolution processes, and on the cost savings for parties. We are currently consulting on making it compulsory for parties to a small claim (up to £10,000) to attend a free, one-hour mediation session with the Small Claims Mediation Service.

■ Criminal Proceedings**Alex Cunningham:****[47526]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Sir Brian Leveson's 2015 analysis of efficiency in criminal proceedings in England and Wales, if he will provide an update on the 56 recommendations in that report including which ones (a) are already implemented, (b) are in progress and (c) have been rejected.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Government did not reject any of the recommendations and has implemented all those for which it has responsibility. A significant number were solely for the judiciary to implement. The recommended changes to Criminal Procedure Rules have all been completed.

■ **HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Sick Leave**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[47616]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the rate of sickness absence was for (a) legal advisers, (b) court associates and (c) court clerks in each month since the Common Platform was introduced in the workplaces of those staff broken down by (i) role and (ii) grade.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The MoJ does not hold the information in the scope of the question. The data held in the HR database does not fully reflect the specified job titles, and as such the information in respect of sickness absence for the specified roles at Common Platform sites cannot be extracted.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[47617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of the average rate of sickness absence was for (a) legal advisers, (b) court associates and (c) court clerks in each of the last 21 months broken down by (i) role and (ii) grade.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The MoJ does not hold the information in the scope of the question. The data held in the HR database does not fully reflect the job titles specified and as such the sickness absence information in respect of the specified roles cannot be extracted.

■ **Injunctions: Disclosure of Information**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[47619]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment his Department made of the adequacy of the level of publishing by civil courts of judgements for breaches of civil injunctions in each year since 2014.

Miss Sarah Dines:

At present, information pertaining to specific categories of published judgment can be obtained only at a disproportionate cost to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service. This applies also to the number of published judgments for breaches of a civil injunction. This is because comprehensive data on published judgment type is not currently held centrally and would require a manual effort to compile from individual court files. In April 2022, The National Archives became responsible for the storage and publication of judgments for England and Wales, increasing access to, and preservation of, case law. Over the coming months, the Ministry of Justice will continue to work with The National Archives and the judiciary to consider expanding coverage of what is published and made accessible to the public, including judgments from the lower courts and tribunals.

■ Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation

Steve Reed: [\[47551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Written Statement of 20 July 2022, HCWS 244 on Call for Evidence Response on SLAPPs, when his Department plans to legislate to tackle Strategic Lawsuits Against Public participation.

Miss Sarah Dines:

In our Call for Evidence response, published on 20 July, the Government set out its intention to tackle Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) to ensure protection for free speech and those speaking out in the public interest.

The Government is currently exploring opportunities to legislate against SLAPPs.

■ Support Through Court: Finance

Steve Reed: [\[47550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department plans to continue providing funding to the charity Support Through Court.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Ministry of Justice does not directly fund the charity Support Through Court. Since 2014, the MoJ has invested more than £20 million in support for litigants in person in both the civil and family courts, which has mostly been administered on behalf of the department by the Access to Justice Foundation.

Successful applications for the Help Accessing Legal Support Grant, which the MoJ is funding and will inject £3.2 million into the legal advice sector by March 2023, will be informed by the end of September.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Private Rented Housing: Asylum

Luke Pollard: [\[47648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the new proposed Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector will cover accommodation used for the housing of asylum seekers and refugees as funded by the Home Office.

Paul Scully:

We are proposing that the Decent Homes Standard will apply in the private rented sector when the property is occupied by persons as their only or main residence, in line with the Housing Act 2004, but we recognise there may be types of accommodation where it is not appropriate. This is why we launched our consultation on 2 September 2022, which asks about types of privately rented accommodation that should be required to meet the standard.

The consultation closes on Friday 14 October 2022 and the views received will help inform our decisions on scope.

■ **Visas: Ukraine**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[46195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of allowing an applicant to transfer an individual from the family visa scheme to the Homes for Ukraine scheme following a change in circumstances.

Paul Scully:

We continually review our immigration policy and schemes to ensure they deliver the intended aims.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Females: Discrimination**

Peter Kyle:

[\[47608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the 2018 Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, what steps he has taken to implement those recommendations in relation to Northern Ireland, since the Abortion (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022 came into force on the 20 May 2022.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government is fully committed to ensuring that all of the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW Report) are implemented in Northern Ireland. This includes ensuring that women and girls can access abortion services in Northern Ireland and that CEDAW-compliant Relationship and Sexuality Education is made compulsory for adolescents in Northern Ireland.

On the provision of abortion services, the Regulations laid in May take a dual approach by placing a duty on the Department of Health to act as soon as is reasonably practicable, and taking powers that provide me with the same powers as the Minister of Health for the purpose of implementing these recommendations.

On 20 May, 6 June and 6 September, Northern Ireland Office Ministers wrote to the Minister of Health requesting that he provide a clear and unambiguous commitment that he will comply with the obligations on the Department of Health. The Minister of Health has sought legal advice on this matter which he is considering.

A small team of experts has been established within the Northern Ireland Office, and is working closely and at pace with the Department of Health to prepare a commissioning plan should the Government need to intervene.

SCOTLAND■ **EU Law**

Stewart Hosie: [\[45750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has had recent discussions with the Prime Minister on legislative proposals for the amendment of retained EU law.

Mr Alister Jack:

I discuss the benefits of boosting the competitiveness of the UK economy whilst maintaining high standards, including by reforming retained EU law, with my Cabinet colleagues on a regular basis.

Stewart Hosie: [\[45751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he has had recent discussions with the Minister for Brexit Opportunities on legislative proposals for the amendment of retained EU law.

Mr Alister Jack:

I discuss the benefits of boosting the competitiveness of the UK economy whilst maintaining high standards, including by reforming retained EU law, with my Cabinet colleagues on a regular basis.

■ **Scotland Office: EU Law**

Stewart Hosie: [\[45599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how many officials in their Department are working on Retained EU Law legislation.

Mr Alister Jack:

Officials in my Department support the UK Government's legislative programme across all legislation, including on the development of legislation reforming retained EU law, but there is not a specific FTE allocation of time against individual bills.

TRANSPORT■ **Avanti West Coast: Finance**

Navendu Mishra: [\[47693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to DfT payments to passenger rail operators under emergency agreements and National Rail Contracts data, for what reason a decision was made to pay Avanti West Coast £4 million for (a) operational performance, (b) customer experience and (c) acting as a good and efficient operator in financial years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Robert Courts:

Under both the previous and current operator contracts, both of which are publicly available, the operator receives a fixed fee and has the ability to earn a performance-based fee.

Performance is independently evaluated against set criteria and considers all elements within the operator's control. Performance Fees paid were based on the outcome of the independent evaluation of Avanti's performance, noting that for the period September 2020 to March 2021 Avanti were given a score of 1 in customer experience and earned nothing (£0).

Biofuels**John Spellar:**[\[47339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2022 to Question 40733, on Petrol: Ethanol, what is the current percentage of biofuels that are (a) waste-derived and (b) crop-based.

Robert Courts:

The feedstock used to produce biofuel rewarded under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) is reported by suppliers and published quarterly on gov.uk.

The latest full year's verified data indicates that in 2020, seventy-seven percent of biofuels were derived from wastes and residues and twenty-three per cent were crop-based.

Blue Badge Scheme: EU Countries**Luke Pollard:**[\[47650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had discussions with his EU counterparts on ensuring UK blue badges for disabled drivers are accepted in the equivalent schemes in EU countries.

Robert Courts:

The Department for Transport has undertaken discussions with individual countries regarding continued recognition of the UK Blue Badge across the EU.

Department for Transport: Aviation**Louise Haigh:**[\[45928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on how many occasions he has taken a (a) scheduled domestic and (b) chartered domestic flight within Great Britain in the course of his duties in each year since his appointment.

Robert Courts:

The department does not hold a consolidated record of scheduled or chartered domestic flights taken by ministers. From records currently available and in the time available, the former Secretary of State, Grant Shapps, had taken at least one commercial domestic flight since his appointment.

■ East Coast Main Line

Kenny MacAskil: [\[47676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the proposed timetable for changes to the East Coast Main Line service will be finalised.

Robert Courts:

The public consultation on the proposed major timetable change on the East Coast Main Line, which proposed significant improvements to LNER services, received over 9000 responses and invaluable feedback and insight from local communities. In order to address thoroughly all the concerns raised, the major timetable upgrade is now targeted for 2023 at the earliest. The feedback received through the consultation has now been reviewed and work is continuing towards a plan for the implementation of revised proposals for a new, reliable timetable on the East Coast Main Line; one that more closely aligns with stakeholder feedback, ensures passengers experience the benefits of the £1.2billion invested in the East Coast upgrade and is appropriate for the rail industry's financial position following the spending review. The Department will be able to share the outcome of that work once it completes later this year.

■ Infrastructure: North Wales

Virginia Crosbie: [\[47710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is taking steps to assess the potential wider impact of (a) HS2 and (b) other infrastructure projects on regional economic activity in North Wales.

Robert Courts:

By improving regional connectivity, the Integrated Rail Plan will unify labour markets so that people can access a much wider range of jobs; bring businesses closer together; and improve access to key international gateways and markets so that they become even more attractive locations for business investment. The Crewe Northern Connection would improve connections from North Wales to the HS2 network, potentially bringing many passengers within 2 hours 15 minutes of London. Our plans will enhance connectivity to much of the West Midlands, Cheshire and North Wales not directly served by HS2.

■ Shipping: Medical Certificates

Hywel Williams: [\[47370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department reviewed the regulations governing seafarer medical certificates.

Robert Courts:

The regulations are kept under continuous review, but in particular, implementing the Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) (Medical Certification) Regulations, 2010, provided the opportunity for a review of the process to ensure compliance with the international Conventions. Further amendments were made in 2018. A statutory post-implementation review is currently underway, due for publication in due course.

Hywel Williams:

[\[47371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending the seafarer medical certificate regulations in order to reduce (a) complications, (b) delays and (c) additional expense for seafarers obtaining medical certificates.

Robert Courts:

The seafarer medical certificate infrastructure and procedure is under continuous assessment by the medical administration team at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) for compliance with the relevant international Conventions, to ensure sound clinical decision making and for provision of a quality service.

Hywel Williams:

[\[47372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment has he made of the impact of the requirement for doctors issuing Seafarer medical certificates to be approved by the Maritime Coastguard Agency on the ability of seafarers to obtain those certificates.

Robert Courts:

The impact of requiring doctors to be approved by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency has not been assessed as this is necessary to comply with the relevant international Conventions.

TREASURY

■ Azure Services: Loans

Patricia Gibson:

[\[47574\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to support a cross-party investigation into the Financial Conduct Authority's handling of the mis-selling of timeshares by Azure Services Limited.

Patricia Gibson:

[\[47726\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that customers of Azure Services Ltd who were impacted by the mis-selling of loans for timeshares at the Golden Sands Resort in Malta are able to access financial redress.

Alan Mak:

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has been established as an independent regulator responsible for the supervision and regulation of conduct in financial services. The FCA's independence from Government does not mean it can act arbitrarily, rather it must operate within the framework of statutory duties and powers agreed by Parliament. As well as being required to operate within this framework, the FCA is fully accountable to Parliament for how it discharges its statutory functions.

This direct accountability to Parliament reflects the FCA's statutory independence and the fact that it is solely responsible for everyday operational decisions without

Government approval or direction, and so it is primarily accountable for them. The Government has no plans to support a cross-party parliamentary investigation into the FCA's handling of issues relating to Azure Services Limited, as this would be a matter for Parliament. That notwithstanding, the Treasury plays an important role in holding the FCA accountable, including through engaging closely with the FCA across all levels of seniority.

The Government recognises the impact on consumers as a result of Azure Services' business practices whilst it operated as a credit broker without the relevant Office of Fair Trading (OFT) licence and, later on, FCA authorisation. However, the Government notes the decision by Barclays Partner Finance to refund over £210m to customers who took out a loan following an introduction by Azure Services. Barclays Partner Finance is currently putting in place the necessary arrangements for this programme of remediation and has committed to contact impacted customers before the end of the year to set out the next steps.

■ Religious Buildings: Energy

Rachael Maskell: [\[47590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he will take steps to provide funding to places of worship to support with rising energy costs.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises the vital role played by places of worship in our communities. Today the PM announced that the Government will introduce a six-month scheme to support businesses, charities and public sector organisations including places of worship that are registered charities. This will protect them from soaring energy costs and provide them with the certainty they need to plan their business through the acute crisis this winter.

The Government has also continued to fund the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which gives grants that cover the VAT incurred in making repairs to listed buildings in use as places of worship, and recently renewed the Churches Conservation Trust funding order up to 2025. Places of worship that are registered charities were also able to benefit from the unprecedented multi-billion-pound package of support for Britain's charities that the Government provided during the pandemic, including £750 million of dedicated funding that helped more than 15,000 organizations across the country respond to the impact of Covid-19.

■ Sunscreens: VAT

Amy Callaghan: [\[47673\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT on sunscreen, sunblock and other sun safety products.

Amy Callaghan: [\[47674\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department last made an assessment of the adequacy of the level of VAT on sunscreen products.

Amy Callaghan:

[\[47675\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason high factor sunscreen products currently incur VAT.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government keeps all taxes under constant review.

Under the current VAT rules, sun protection products are subject to the standard rate of VAT. High-factor sunscreen is on the NHS prescription list for certain conditions and therefore is provided VAT free when dispensed by a pharmacist.

More widely, the Government's approach to this matter is to support safety campaigns that ensure that sunscreen is placed within its proper context; as one of the precautions that people can take against the harmful rays of the sun, but one that does not provide 100 per cent protection. Advice from leading cancer charities recommends a range of steps people can take for protection, which includes avoiding long periods of exposure, staying in the shade at peak hours, and protecting themselves with a hat and sunglasses.

WALES

■ Energy: Wales

Jo Stevens:

[\[47573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment his Department has made of the differential in domestic energy costs between Wales and the rest of the UK.

Sir Robert Buckland:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) publishes annual estimates of gas and electricity bills along with statistics on household expenditure of fuel. The most recent statistics published by BEIS regarding average variable unit costs and standing charges for gas demonstrates that in 2021, in North Wales and Merseyside the average variable unit price (£/kWh) was on par with the average across Great Britain, while in South Wales the average was £0.0006 per kWh higher. Similarly, in 2021, the most recent statistics published by BEIS regarding average variable unit costs and standing charges for standard electricity saw those in South Wales see an average variable unit price (£/kWh) on par with the UK average, with those in North Wales and Merseyside paying £0.01 more than the UK average. This Government is committed to ensuring that all regions pay a fair price for energy.

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and today, the Prime Minister set out further measures of support that this government will be providing as we deal with these global challenges. Action taken by this government will see a typical household in Great Britain pay no more than £2,500 on their energy bills from October for each of the next two years. This will save a typical household £1,000 a year and comes in addition to the non-refundable £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme.

■ Migrants: Gender Based Violence

Gerald Jones: [\[45328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, with reference to the Written Ministerial Statement of 17 May 2022 on Ratification of the Istanbul Convention, HCWS34, and the decision to apply a reservation to Article 59 of that Convention, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of safeguards for protecting migrant women in Wales from gender-based violence.

Sir Robert Buckland:

On 21 July, the UK Government ratified the Istanbul Convention, sending a strong message across the UK, and around the world, that this Government is committed to tackling violence against women and girls.

As outlined in the Written Ministerial Statement of 17 May 2022, we decided to apply a reservation to Article 59, which relates to residence permits for migrant victims of domestic abuse, to enable us to ratify, pending the evaluation findings of the Support for Migrant Victims (SMV) scheme pilot. We will carefully consider the findings of the SMV pilot to inform any future policy decisions as soon as is practicable.

We are committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of immigration status. £1.4 million of funding has been allocated in 2022-23 to continue to fund support for migrant victims of domestic abuse.

■ Northern Ireland Protocol: Wales

Ruth Jones: [\[46093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the Government's proposals for the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Sir Robert Buckland:

I discussed a range of issues with the First Minister of Wales when we met last month, including the UK Government's legislative programme, and discussed this issue briefly with him this week.

I look forward to further discussions with the First Minister and his Ministerial team in the coming months, and trust that the Welsh Government will work with me constructively on matters which include a devolved interest.

This includes the Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, which will fix the practical problems the protocol has created whilst avoiding a hard border, and protect the integrity of the UK and EU Single Market.

■ Railways: Wales

Gerald Jones: [\[44998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Transport on the impact of the Integrated Rail Plan on Wales.

Sir Robert Buckland:

I have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues about transport infrastructure in Wales. The UK Government has already invested over £340 million in rail infrastructure in Wales, including the electrification of the Severn Tunnel and improvements to Cardiff Central Station.

By improving regional connectivity, the Integrated Rail Plan will unify labour markets, so that people can access a much wider range of jobs; bring businesses closer together; and improve access to key international gateways and markets so they become even more attractive locations for business investment. Crewe Northern Connection would improve connections from North Wales to the HS2 network, potentially bringing many passengers within 2 hours 15 minutes of London.

The Hendy Review also recommended a number of connectivity improvements for Wales. The UK Government is considering these recommendations carefully and will respond later this year.

Virginia Crosbie:[\[47711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether he has had recent discussions with the Welsh Government on establishing a new Wales Rail Board to bring forward Welsh rail projects, including upgrading the North Wales mainline.

Sir Robert Buckland:

In response to a recommendation from the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, the UK and Welsh Governments agreed to establish a Wales Rail Board. The Board met for the first time in March and continues to meet regularly. It will establish a strategic programme with an agreed prioritisation for the future progression of rail schemes in Wales. This includes improvements to the North Wales main line for which we expect to receive an Outline Business Case from Network Rail early next year.

■ Safer Streets Fund: Wales**Gerald Jones:**[\[45323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of funding for Safer Streets Fund projects in Wales; and what assessment the Government has made of the impact of that funding on levels of reported crime in Wales.

Sir Robert Buckland:

In total, Wales have been awarded approximately £9 million through the first 4 rounds of the Safer Streets Fund to take forward a variety of interventions aimed at targeting neighbourhood crime, violence against women and girls in public, and anti-social behaviour. On 29 July 2022, we announced that 7 bids from Welsh Police and Crime Commissioners were successful in Round 4, totalling £4.1 million investment. Further details of the funding can be found below.

DYFED PCC	WALES	£292,761.00	1 PROJECT
Gwent PCC	Wales	£746,706.00	1 project
North Wales PCC	Wales	£1,568,917.35	3 projects
South Wales PCC	Wales	£1,497,668.35	2 projects

All rounds of the Safer Street Fund are subject to independent evaluation to ensure we learn lessons about what works in preventing crime and informing future government policy and funding. The evaluation of Round One of the Fund is now complete, and we intend to publish in due course.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Newport West**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Shared Prosperity Fund on people living in Newport West constituency.

Sir Robert Buckland:

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a key part of the UK Government's ambitious Levelling Up agenda and a significant component of our support for places in Wales and indeed across the whole of the UK. It provides £2.6 billion of new funding UK-wide for local investment up to March 2025.

Communities in Newport will benefit from a share of the £278 million in UKSPF which has been allocated to the Cardiff Capital Region. This investment will boost productivity, jobs and living standards whilst empowering local leaders to restore local pride and a sense of community.

■ **UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Wales**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, when he last held discussions with the Welsh Government on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Sir Robert Buckland:

I have regular contact with the First Minister of Wales and his Ministerial team on a range of issues, including how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up communities in Wales.

The UK Government has engaged with each devolved administration on the design of the UKSPF, at both official and ministerial levels. This has helped inform the most appropriate mix of interventions and funding allocations for each nation. We remain committed to engaging with the devolved administrations as the UKSPF is implemented.

■ Wales Office: Energy**Ruth Jones:**[\[46126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how much his Department spent on energy in each of the last three years.

Sir Robert Buckland:

The Office of the Secretary of State for Wales spend on energy in the last three years is provided below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SPENT ON ENERGY (£)
2019-20	17,155
2020-21	13,648
2021-22	12,186

■ Wales Office: Public Expenditure**Ruth Jones:**[\[46046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what the total budget was for his Department in each year since 2010.

Sir Robert Buckland:

The total budget for the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales since 2010 is provided below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET (£M)
2010-11	5,700
2011-12	6,736
2012-13	6,870
2013-14	5,922
2014-15	4,954
2015-16	4,412
2016-17	4,728
2017-18	5,236
2018-19	4,952
2019-20	5,375
2020-21	5,417

FINANCIAL YEAR	TOTAL BUDGET (£M)
2021-22	6,144
2022-23	5,687

■ Wales Office: Termination of Employment

Ruth Jones: [\[46102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many members of staff have left his Department since 12 December 2019.

Sir Robert Buckland:

37 staff have left the Department in the period 12 December 2019 to 6 September 2022. This excludes agency staff.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme

Hywel Williams: [\[47373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average length of time is between a claim being submitted for the Access to Work programme and claimants being contacted by her Department for an assessment of their claim in (a) Wales, (b) England, and (c) Scotland.

Julie Marson:

The current average time between claim submission and first contact is 47.3 days. This is the average of total claims and as we do not hold the information broken down by (a) Wales, (b) England, and (c) Scotland.

Please note that the data supplied is derived from unpublished management information, which was collected for internal Departmental use only, and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

■ Bereavement Support Payment

Ruth Cadbury: [\[45430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of people who would be eligible to receive Bereavement Support Payments each year if people who had been cohabiting before one partner died but who were not married or in a civil partnership were entitled to receive such payments.

Julie Marson:

We do not have an estimate of the total number of people who would be eligible to receive BSP each year if people who had been cohabiting before one partner died but who were not married or in a civil partnership were entitled to receive such payments.

We have published estimates of the number of bereaved cohabiting partners who would receive BSP, if eligibility were extended to cohabitees – that is, those surviving cohabiting partners who we estimate would claim BSP if they were to become eligible. This is given below and was published in January 2020 as part of an ad hoc statistical release.

Table 1: Estimated number of bereaved cohabiting partners who would receive BSP, if eligibility were extended to cohabitees

YEAR	TOTAL
2022 to 2023	15,000
2023 to 2024	15,000
2024 to 2025	15,000

The numbers in Table 1 are rounded to the nearest 5,000.

Source: Figures taken from DWP ad hoc statistical release and can be found at found at:

[Bereavement Support Payment: forecast on the effect of extending eligibility to cohabitees, April 2020 to March 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/bereavement-support-payment-forecast-on-the-effect-of-extending-eligibility-to-cohabitees)

■ **British Nationals Abroad: State Retirement Pensions**

Patricia Gibson:**[45889]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment they have made of the potential impact of its policy on up-rating UK State Pensions overseas on 48 commonwealth countries, in relation to the Government's Global Britain vision.

Julie Marson:

The UK State Pension is payable worldwide and is up-rated annually in countries where there is a legal requirement to do so. This is a longstanding policy, which has been supported by successive governments for over 70 years. The Government has no plans to change the policy.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Agency Workers**

Jon Trickett:**[41941]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much her Department has spent on (a) agency workers and (b) agency retainer fees in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) 2022.

Julie Marson:

(a) Agency workers (more commonly referred to as “Contingent Labour” or “Temporary Workers”) are subject to a Cabinet Office controls framework to ensure robust governance of spending in this area. [Contingent Labour Spend Control - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contingent-labour-spend-control)

Commentary on Contingent Labour usage, if applicable, is available in departmental annual reports. [Annual Reports and Accounts for Central Government Departments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-reports-and-accounts-for-central-government-departments)

The Crown Commercial Service provides two frameworks specifically for the supply of Contingent Labour which are used by central government departments. These are:

RM3749 - Public Sector Resourcing.

[Public Sector Resourcing - CCS \(crowncommercial.gov.uk\)](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/public-sector-resourcing) - This provides a managed service for departmental use including low supplier margins, regular pay rate benchmarking, comprehensive tracking and reporting of contingent labour assignments, full time sheeting and approvals technology and onboarding, contracting and payroll services.

RM6160 - Non Clinical Temporary and Fixed Term Staff.

[Non Clinical Temporary and Fixed Term Staff - CCS \(crowncommercial.gov.uk\)](https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/non-clinical-temporary-and-fixed-term-staff) - This provides access to a range of generalist, specialist and niche contingent labour agencies offering a wide range of suppliers, maximum margins, free transfer to permanent after 12 weeks and onboarding, contracting and payroll services.

Use of these frameworks provides robust governance, visibility, value for money and flexibility in meeting departmental contingent labour needs.

(b) We have interpreted your reference to agency retainer fees as the fees charged at the commencement of the provision of a search recruitment service, this is only applicable when recruiting for a permanent or fixed term post.

■ Pension Credit**Wendy Chamberlain:****[47660]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 11 July 2022 to Question 31232 on Pension Credit and the Answer of 11 July 2022 to Question 31233 on Pension Credit, what estimate she has made of the number of people eligible for Pension Credit who have not yet applied; and what assessment she has made of the potential reasons for people not applying for Pension Credit.

Julie Marson:

The latest published estimates for the number of people eligible for Pension Credit relate to the financial year 2019 to 2020 and show that up to 850,000 pensioner households were eligible for but not claiming Pension Credit. These are available in the *Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up* publication which can be found on the statistics section of gov.uk. Income-related benefits: estimates of take-up: financial year 2019 to 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Previous DWP research found that the main reason pensioners don't claim Pension Credit is because they believe that they are not eligible – they may think they have too much income, have savings or own their own home. There does also appear to be a secondary barrier around perceived stigma. Further details are available in the 2012 Research report *Pension Credit eligible non-recipients: Barriers to claiming*. [Pension Credit eligible non-recipients: Barriers to claiming \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61242/pension-credit-eligible-non-recipients-barriers-to-claiming.pdf)

That is why one of the main objectives of our Pension Credit awareness campaign has been to dispel the myths around perceived ineligibility. Our messaging has also emphasised that even a small award of Pension Credit can open the door to a range of other financial support, including help with rent, Council Tax and heating costs, a free TV licence for those 75 or over and help with NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments.

It is also now more important than ever before to ensure that eligible pensioners claim Pension Credit, because a successful claim also qualifies them for the Cost of Living payments. That's why the work to raise awareness of Pension Credit and increase take-up is ongoing.

■ **Second State Pension Age Independent Review**

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[47661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish the outcome to the public consultation on the Second State Pension age review which closed on 25 April 2022; and if she will provide an interim update.

Julie Marson:

The call for evidence was undertaken by the Independent Reviewer. The Independent Review has not yet concluded and will be published in due course.

■ **Terminal Illnesses: Terminal Illnesses**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[47552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost of DS1500 forms is for patients; and from where patients can obtain that form.

Julie Marson:

Most claims made under the Special Rules for End of Life (SREL) are supported by a short medical evidence form, called either the SR1 or DS1500, completed by a clinician who is involved in their care. People nearing the end of their life are not required to pay for these forms or for their clinician to fill them out on their behalf. Patients can request one free of charge from a registered clinician such as a GP, hospital consultant, hospice doctor or a senior nurse involved in their care.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Energy Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): [\[HCWS294\]](#)

HM Government is acting to protect British households from the spiralling costs of energy. The Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) which will give people certainty with their bills. The EPG will apply from 1 October and will discount the unit cost for gas and electricity use.

This guarantee, which includes the temporary suspension of green levies, means that from the 1st October a typical household will pay no more than £2500 per year for each of the next two years. This will save the typical household £1000 a year. It comes in addition to the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme.

The scheme will start on the 1st October 2022, when Ofgem's new price cap is due to come into effect. Cost projections for the delivery of the EPG are uncertain as they depend upon usage levels (which are highly dependent on weather patterns) and, for future three-month periods, the wholesale price of energy.

The new guarantee will apply to households in Great Britain, with the same level of support made available to households in Northern Ireland.

HM Government will also support all business, charities and public sector organisations with their energy costs this winter, offering an equivalent guarantee for six months.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer will set out the expected costs as part of the fiscal statement later this month.