



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 21 September 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (02:40 P.M., 22 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

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Agricultural Products

Caroline Lucas: [47503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, on what dates he has met representatives of (a) Cargill, (b) Archer Daniels Midland, (c) Bunge and (d) Louis Dreyfus since March 2022; and if he will publish (a) details of what was discussed and (b) minutes of those meetings.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Ministers regularly meet with external stakeholders. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published quarterly and can be found on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/beis-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-travel-and-meetings>.

The latest published data covers January to March 2022, further data will be published in due course.

■ Business: Disability

Jonathan Reynolds: [45263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to implement the Government's National Disability Strategy.

Dean Russell:

The National Disability Strategy set out the Government's ambitions to improve the lives of millions of disabled people. In January 2022, the High Court declared it was unlawful because the UK Disability Survey, which informed it, was held to be a voluntary consultation that failed to comply with the legal requirements on public consultations.

My Rt. Hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions sought permission to appeal the High Court's declaration. Whilst awaiting a decision on permission to appeal from the Court of Appeal, we are required to take steps to comply with the Court's declaration. We have therefore paused a limited number of policies which are referred to in the Strategy or are directly connected with it.

■ Business: Energy and Inflation

Rachael Maskell: [47594]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with the Confederation of British Industry on (a) the impact of (i) inflation and (ii) increases in energy costs on businesses and (b) steps he is taking to help ensure that businesses continue to operate.

Graham Stuart:

My rt. hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has regular engagement with the CBI as well as many other stakeholders, including other business organisations and individual businesses. Those discussions frequently focus on the current economic climate and the opportunities and issues that businesses are facing, including inflation and increases in energy costs.

Business: Investment**Alexander Stafford:**[\[45164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that (a) venture capital and (b) private equity firms continue to invest in (i) small and medium size enterprises and (ii) other British businesses.

Dean Russell:

Through the British Business Bank (BBB), the UK's largest venture capital investor, the Department helps to ensure access to investment for businesses throughout the United Kingdom.

The BBB invests in well-established funds through British Patient Capital and in new fund managers through its Enterprise Capital Funds programme. The BBB also co-invests directly in companies alongside private investors through Future Fund: Breakthrough. These interventions, together with a supportive tax and regulatory environment, help to maintain the UK's finance ecosystem as the most mature and successful in Europe.

Clothing: Manufacturing Industries**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[48368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the terms of reference are for the review of Operation Tacit by the Director of Labour Market Enforcement; what estimate he has made of when that review will be completed; and if he will publish the findings of that review.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The Director of Labour Market Enforcement is an independent statutory office holder. The terms of reference, timing, and publication of her review are matters for her.

Companies House: Finance**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[45226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of funding for Companies House, in the context of the reforms envisaged in the Corporate Transparency and Register Reform White Paper, CP 638, published on 28 February 2022.

Dean Russell:

The Government provided £63 million to Companies House at the last Spending Review to fund the work needed to implement our reforms. We are committed to ensuring that Companies House has the resources it needs to carry out its functions, and the Government is looking closely at the funding requirements arising from the reforms as we take them forward.

■ Conditions of Employment**Dan Carden:**[\[45635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the recommendations of the Good Work Plan published in December 2018, how many of those recommendations (a) have been implemented, (b) are in the process of being implemented by (i) legislation and (ii) other means and (c) are still under consideration.

Dean Russell:

The Government is committed to building a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy. We have made significant progress in implementing the recommendations of the Good Work Plan and continue to consider what further reforms are necessary.

■ Conditions of Employment: Enforcement**Stephen Kinnock:**[\[45829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the document entitled Establishing a new single enforcement body for employment rights: Government response, published in June 2021, whether it is still his Department's policy to establish a single enforcement body for employment rights.

Dean Russell:

The creation of a single enforcement body for employment rights requires primary legislation which will only be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

The creation of this new body will be a substantial organisational change, so it is right that we take our time to thoroughly consider all aspects of this reform before proceeding.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[48367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it remains the Government's policy to establish a single enforcement body for employment rights, as stated in its response of June 2021 to a consultation on proposals for such an enforcement body.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The creation of a single enforcement body for employment rights requires primary legislation which will only be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

The creation of this new body will be a substantial organisational change, so it is right that we take our time to thoroughly consider all aspects of this reform before proceeding.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry:

[47430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many payments were fraudulently charged to his Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22; and what the total value was of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

No payments charged to the Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards during financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21 and (c) 2021-22 were identified as fraudulent.

■ Disability

Jonathan Reynolds:

[48326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's National Disability Strategy, what the planned timetable is for announcing a new Ministerial Disability Champion for his Department.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

Given the recent changes in government, we are still in the process of finalising ministerial portfolios. We will make further updates in due course.

■ District Heating

Fleur Anderson:

[47687]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number and proportion of households that receive their heating from heat network systems in the latest period for which data is available.

Graham Stuart:

The most recently available experimental statistics on heat networks were published in March 2018, when there were 439,549 households that received their heating from heat network systems: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-trends-march-2018-special-feature-article-experimental-statistics-on-heat-networks>

[ONS statistics](#) showed that there were 27.6 million households in the UK in 2018.

Therefore, in 2018 approximately 1.6% of households received their heating from heat network systems.

■ Electrical Goods: Costs

Sarah Olney:

[45509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the affordability for people in households below

average national income of purchasing a fridge freezer with an energy rating system of D+ and above.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

Household refrigerators are subject to regulations that set minimum energy performance standards and mandatory energy labelling, both of which were updated in 2021 to improve the efficiency of appliances on the market, making them cheaper to run and helping consumers to choose the right product for them. In making those changes, the Department did not make the specific assessment referred to in the question.

■ **Electrical Goods: Energy**

Luke Pollard:

[\[47649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he will take steps to prevent the sale of low rating banded white goods to help cut energy consumption in households.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 9 September 2022]: In 2021 the Government introduced a new package of measures setting out standards to remove the worst performing fridges, washing machines, washer dryers and dishwashers from the market, as well as improvements to the energy labelling scheme to allow consumers to better identify the most efficient appliances.

The Government also published the Energy-Related Products Framework in November 2021, which set out our plans for developing further standards and improvements to labelling.

■ **Employment Agencies: Regulation**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[48369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) financial penalties and (b) criminal prosecutions there were for offences under the Employment Agencies Standards Regulations in each year since 2010; and how many and what proportion of prosecutions for such offences led to a conviction in each year since 2010.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The Employment Agencies Standards inspectorate (EAS) does not issue financial penalties as it's legislation does not include provisions to do so. Below is a table setting out the number of prosecutions finalised in each year since 2010 and the proportion of convictions based on Financial Years. The number is low as there are other routes used by EAS to achieve compliance with the legislation and prosecution is considered as a last resort:

YEAR	NUMBER OF PROSECUTIONS	PROPORTION RESULTING IN CONVICTION
2009/10	0	0
2010/11	0	0
2011/12	0	0
2012/13	4	50%
2013/14	2	100%
2014/15	2	100%
2015/16	1	100%
2016/17	0	0
2017/18	0	0
2018/19	3	100%
2019/20	2	100%
2020/21	3	100%
2021/22	5	100%

■ Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate: Staff

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[45827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many full-time equivalent staff were employed by the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate in each year since 2010.

Dean Russell:

The following table provides a year-on-year breakdown of full-time equivalent staff employed by the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate:

YEAR	NUMBER OF FULL TIME EQUIVALENT STAFF AS OF THE 1ST APRIL FOR EACH YEAR (UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)
2010/11	29 (as of 1 May 2010)
2011/12	23
2012/13	16

YEAR	NUMBER OF FULL TIME EQUIVALENT STAFF AS OF THE 1ST APRIL FOR EACH YEAR (UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)
2013/14	12
2014/15	2
2015/16	11
2016/17	11
2017/18	12
2018/19	12.6
2019/20	27.6
2020/21	17.5
2021/22	22.3
2022	30.4 (as of 31st August 2022)

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[45828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of the full-time equivalent staff employed by the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate work in front-line roles involving site inspections as on 2 September 2022.

Dean Russell:

As of 2nd September 2022, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate employ 27.4 FTE staff in frontline roles involving site inspections.

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[48366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of all full-time equivalent staff employed by the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate work in front-line roles involving site inspections as of 6 September 2022.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

As of 6th September 2022, the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate employ 27.4 FTE staff in frontline roles involving site inspections.

■ Employment: Regulation

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[45569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with external stakeholders on legislative proposals relating to employment in the last six months.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[45814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many officials in his Department are working on legislative proposals relating to employment as on 2 September 2022.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[45815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with which trade unions his Department has had discussions on legislative proposals relating to employment in the last 12 months.

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[45816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals on employment rights.

Dean Russell:

The Government is committed to building a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy. As part of this, on Friday 15 July, two Private Members' Bills were introduced into Parliament, backed by the Government, which will increase participation and help support vulnerable and low-paid workers. These were the Employment (Allocation of Tips) Bill and the Neonatal (Leave and Pay) Bill.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regularly engages with a wide range of stakeholders, including trade unions, as their views and input are essential to developing and delivering our policies.

The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy is appropriately resourced to deliver on this priority.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Caravan Sites

Nick Fletcher: [\[45658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether people living in mobile homes on caravan sites who do not have a conventional gas supplier but buy gas canisters will receive the £400 supplement under Energy Bills Support Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

On 29 July, the Government set out further details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and confirmed that further funding will be available to provide

equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the small percentage of domestic energy consumers not reached by EBSS, such as park homes residents.

The Government will shortly announce how these households will receive the £400 of support.

■ **Energy Bills Rebate: Park Homes**

Mark Pritchard:

[45003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to ensure that residents on park home sites in Shropshire receive the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount in circumstances where the site owner is the energy account holder and residents pay their energy bills to the site owner.

Graham Stuart:

On 29 July, the Government set out further details of the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and confirmed that further funding will be available to provide equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the small percentage of domestic energy consumers not reached by EBSS, such as park homes residents.

The Government will be announcing details in the Autumn for how these households will receive the £400 of support

This support will be provided alongside the 'Energy Price Guarantee' which will mean a typical UK household will pay, on average, no more than £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years.

■ **Energy: Price Caps**

Martyn Day:

[45948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives of (a) energy firms and (b) Ofgem on the potential merits of introducing an energy price cap for commercial customers.

Graham Stuart:

The Government regularly engages with energy firms and Ofgem to understand the impact rising energy prices have on businesses of all sizes.

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

Further details regarding the scheme will be published shortly.

■ Energy: Prices

Lee Anderson:

[\[45335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to resume fracking as a way of extracting shale gas; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of such a resumption on (a) energy prices and (b) the extent to which the UK is self-sufficient in meeting its energy requirements.

Graham Stuart:

The Government will end the pause on extracting shale gas.

It is right that all possible energy generation and production methods are kept on the table following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. Having domestic sources of gas makes us less dependent on foreign imports.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[47713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what long term steps he is taking to help prevent future energy price crises.

Graham Stuart:

To fix the UK's energy market for the long-term, a new Energy Supply Taskforce will agree long-term contracts with domestic and international suppliers to reduce the price of energy and increase the security of its supply. The Government will enhance the UK's energy security by boosting the production of domestic oil and gas, accelerating its ambitions for the deployment of technologies such as nuclear and offshore wind, and supporting innovation in emerging technologies

■ Energy: Standing Charges

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the impact that (a) reducing or (b) removing the standing charge on energy bills will have on alleviating cost pressures on consumers.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he take steps to reduce the standard charge on energy bills to alleviate financial pressure for consumers.

Graham Stuart:

Energy suppliers use standing charges to recover the on-going costs to provide a live supply, regardless of a consumer's usage.

The largest element of the standing charge is the cost of the electricity and gas transmission and distribution networks, which vary depending on different geographical area. Reducing or removing the standing charge would likely see the system costs being added to the unit price of energy. This could result in increased bills for high energy users, such as those with medical equipment used at home.

■ Fireworks: Regulation

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[45761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to review legislation on the sale of fireworks.

Dean Russell:

There is a comprehensive regulatory framework in place for fireworks which aims to strike the right balance for people to enjoy fireworks, whilst aiming seeking to reduce risks and disturbances to people, animals, and property.

The Government will continue to keep this area under review to ensure we promote the safe and considerate use of fireworks.

■ Freeports: Minimum Wage

Charlotte Nichols: [\[45265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the minimum wage will be the same in the Government's planned freeports as it is outside of these areas.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[45611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his policy that employment law and its application will be different in freeport areas compared to the rest of the UK.

Dean Russell:

Freeports are not exempt from the UK's high standards of employment laws and protections. The National Minimum Wage applies to all regions and sectors of the UK economy, including Freeports.

■ Health Hazards: Fossil Fuels

Caroline Lucas: [\[45762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the research by Clark, C. et al. entitled Unconventional Oil and Gas Development Exposure and Risk of Childhood Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia: A Case–Control Study in Pennsylvania, 2009–2017, published in Environmental Health Perspectives on 17 August 2022.

Graham Stuart:

Onshore exploration for oil and gas in the UK is strictly regulated by expert bodies including the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. This applies to both unconventional and conventional sources of oil and gas.

Those bodies are best placed to consider the applicability of studies from other countries with significantly different regulations and production contexts, to the UK, and to provide guidance accordingly.

The Government will continue to follow the expert advice of regulators to manage risks to the public appropriately.

■ Help to Grow Schemes

Seema Malhotra:

[\[47547\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses have (a) expressed interest in, (b) enrolled on and (c) completed the Help to Grow Management scheme in (i) each English region, (ii) Scotland, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland since August 2021.

Dean Russell:

Help to Grow: Management successfully launched in June 2021 and will support up to 30,000 small business leaders to access practical support to enhance their growth through world-leading business schools. Good progress has been made with the supply pipeline with 53 business schools delivering the programme across all regions of the UK. We intend to publish data on take up and completion of the Help to Grow Programmes later this year on the Gov.uk website.

Jonathan Reynolds:

[\[48327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses have successfully enrolled on (a) Help to Grow: Management and (b) Help to Grow: Digital.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

We intend to publish data on take up of the Help to Grow programmes later this year on the GOV.UK website. Help to Grow: Management will support up to 30,000 small business leaders to improve their leadership and management capability and enhance their growth through world-leading business schools. Help to Grow: Digital could help up to 100,000 eligible SMEs adopt new digital technologies over three years as it offers businesses targeted financial support.

■ Hospitality Sector: Energy

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[46177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to assist (a) pubs, (b) bars and (c) restaurants with rising energy bills.

Graham Stuart:

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

The Government is also supporting pubs with business rates relief, freezing alcohol duty rates on beer, cider, wine and spirits, and by increasing the employment allowance.

■ Low Pay: Inflation

Rachael Maskell:

[\[47592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Low Pay Commission on the impact of inflation on those on low pay; and if he will support an increase in the National Living Wage in the context of recent trends in inflation and rising energy costs.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

The Low Pay Commission are an independent and expert body. They draw on extensive economic and labour market analysis, including the current state of the economy, to inform their recommendations for the National Living Wage. The Government engage with the Low Pay Commission on these recommendations frequently. The Government has set a target for the National Living Wage to reach equal two-thirds of median earnings by 2024, taking economic conditions into account.

■ Migrant Workers: Conditions of Employment

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[45831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of UK labour market inspection performance against International Labour Organization benchmarks for (a) the number of labour market inspectors per 10,000 persons employed and (b) the average number of labour inspection visits conducted per inspector.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

This Government has an excellent record on enforcement of employment rights. As part of this we have more than doubled the budget for minimum wage enforcement and compliance, which is now over £27 million per year. In 2020/21 HMRC concluded over 2,700 minimum wage investigations, and returned more than £16.7m in arrears to over 155,000 workers. HMRC issued 575 fines totalling more than £14m to businesses who had failed to pay the minimum wage.

The Government also continues to invest in the work of the Employment Agency Standards inspectorate (EAS) and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) which protects vulnerable and exploited workers.

■ Parental Leave and Parental Pay

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[47719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Answer of 13 January 2022 to Question 100575 on Parental Leave, when he plans

to publish the report of his Department's evaluation of the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme.

Dean Russell:

Evaluating Shared Parental Leave and Pay is an important part of the policymaking process.

As part of the evaluation, we commissioned large, representative surveys of parents and employees which asked about a range of parental leave and pay entitlements as well as their experience of Shared Parental Leave specifically. We also consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay.

We are currently considering this information and will publish our findings in due course.

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[47720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total number of claimants of Statutory Shared Parental was in each year since 2015-16 broken down by gender.

Dean Russell:

Information provided by employers to HMRC show the number of individuals in receipt of Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP). This data provides a broad indication of SPL take-up but does not include anyone taking unpaid Shared Parental Leave.

Table 1: Individuals in receipt of ShPP by gender, 2015/16 to 2021/22

YEAR (APRIL TO MARCH)	NO. OF INDIVIDUALS IN RECEIPT OF SHPP		
	Women	Men	Total
2015-16	1,100	5,100	6,200
2016-17	1,600	7,100	8,600
2017-18	1,700	7,500	9,200
2018-19	2,200	8,500	10,700
2019-20	2,600	9,900	12,600
2020-21	2,600	8,600	11,200
2021-22	3,200	9,800	13,000

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
2. Figures are based on the total number of individuals in a given year, irrespective of when the payment first started. Some individuals will be counted across two years.

3. For 2015-16, those receiving Additional Statutory Paternity Pay cannot be distinguished from those claiming ShPP.

■ Parental Pay

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[47721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total amount paid was of (a) Statutory Maternity Pay, (b) Maternity Allowance, (c) Statutory Paternity Pay, (d) Statutory Adoption Pay and (e) Statutory Shared Parental Pay in 2020-21.

Dean Russell:

In 2020/21, Maternity Allowance expenditure was £384m.

The table below shows information provided by employers to HMRC on the total value of payments made to individuals in receipt of Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Shared Parental Pay in 2020/21.

	TOTAL VALUE OF PAYMENTS IN 2020/21
Statutory Maternity Pay	£2.8 billion
Statutory Paternity Pay	£50.2 million
Statutory Adoption Pay	£21.1 million
Statutory Shared Parental Pay	£19.5 million

■ Public Houses: Newport West

Ruth Jones:

[\[46132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help support pubs in Newport West constituency with increases in the cost of energy.

Graham Stuart:

The Government announced a new six-month scheme – the Energy Price Guarantee for Businesses (EPGB) – to protect all businesses and other non-domestic energy users from soaring energy costs. It will offer comparable support to that being provided for consumers and we expect the scheme to be available in the autumn. After this initial six-month scheme the Government will provide focused support for vulnerable sectors, targeted to make sure those most in need get support.

The Government is also supporting pubs with business rates relief, freezing alcohol duty rates on beer, cider, wine and spirits, and by increasing the employment allowance.

■ Royal Mail: Industrial Disputes

Charlotte Nichols:

[46182]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of (a) Royal Mail and (b) the Communications Workers Union to assist those parties to agree a pay deal.

Dean Russell:

Ministers and officials have discussions with different stakeholders on a range of issues however the dispute over pay is an industrial relations matter for Royal Mail, as a private company, and the Communication Workers Union to settle.

It is regrettable to see postal services being disrupted due to strike action and the impacts this will have on consumers, businesses and other users.

The Government is monitoring the situation closely and continues to strongly urge both sides to reach an agreement as soon as possible as talking is the best way to avoid industrial action.

■ Royal Mail: Postage Stamps

Julian Sturdy:

[45266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Royal Mail on the issue of counterfeit stamps; and whether the Government is taking steps to tackle the potential risk to customers.

Dean Russell:

The operation of Royal Mail's products and services, including measures to tackle counterfeit stamps, is a matter for the company's management and the Government is not involved in Royal Mail's operational decisions.

Royal Mail has published advice for consumers on identifying and reporting stamp fraud on its website: www.royalmail.com/report-stamp-fraud.

Royal Mail also introduced barcoded stamps earlier this year as part of its modernisation drive. Newly issued stamps will have an associated unique barcode which will help facilitate operational efficiencies whilst also enabling added security features to help tackle stamp fraud. More information on barcoded stamps is available on Royal Mail's website: www.royalmail.com/sending/barcoded-stamps.

■ Science and Research: Departmental Responsibilities

Jonathan Reynolds:

[47524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Government not having a Minister for Science, Research and Innovation in post since July 2022.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been, and continues to be, the primary decision maker and minister responsible for science research and innovation policy.

These policies remain a priority for this Government and BEIS have continued to make progress on science matters since July.

We are providing the fastest ever sustained uplift in R&D funding with government investment in R&D reaching £20 billion per annum by 2024-2025.

The appointment of Ministers is a matter for my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

■ **Small Businesses: Investment**

Alexander Stafford:

[45168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make a comparative assessment of the level of investment in SMEs by (a) the British Business Bank and (b) private equity or venture capital firms in the UK.

Dean Russell:

The British Business Bank's equity programmes operate through the market in partnership with the private sector, crowding in private sector investment into equity and venture capital (VC) funds in order to increase the amount and diversity of equity finance available to smaller businesses.

British Business Bank analysis of PitchBook data shows the British Business Bank to be the largest UK-based LP investor in UK VC funds between 2017 and 2022, based on amount committed and also the number of funds committed to. As at March 2022, the Bank had committed £3.836 billion into 357 equity funds, and these funds (including leveraged private sector funding) had invested £6.115 billion into 4,770 UK SMEs. The Bank estimates its equity programmes have supported around 14% of all announced equity deals between 2019 and 2021.

Alexander Stafford:

[45234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support the Government is providing to SMEs looking to attract finance from venture capital firms.

Dean Russell:

The UK has a robust R&D funding ecosystem, boasting the most mature venture capital market in Europe. At least £26 billion was raised in 2021 to start and grow innovative businesses, more than France and Germany combined. SMEs have access to a wide range of accelerator and incubator programmes and to the online Finance Hub provided by the British Business Bank, which includes information on how to pitch successfully for venture capital investment.

■ **Small Businesses: Rother Valley**

Alexander Stafford:

[45165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to attract venture capital investment to SMEs operating in Rother Valley constituency.

Dean Russell:

The £500m Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund (NPIF), managed by the British Business Bank, works with the private sector to provide and attract a mixture of debt and equity capital to northern-based SMEs at all stages of their development. NPIF covers the areas of the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber and Tees Valley (including the Rother Valley constituency).

As at July 2022, NPIF had directly invested £2.56 million into 6 SMEs in the Rother Valley constituency, leveraging in £1.42 million of private sector investment. £1.95 million of the NPIF investment took the form of equity, attracting £403,174 of private sector equity investment into two SMEs.

As part of the October 2021 Spending Review, my Rt. Hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £660 million for the next generation of the NPIF, including an expansion into the North East of England.

■ Supply Chains: Ukraine**Drew Hendry:****[42075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that UK commercial supply chains do not include (a) products, (b) minerals and (c) organic matter looted from areas of Ukraine occupied by Russia.

Jackie Doyle-Price:

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK Government has prohibited the import of all goods that come from non-government controlled Ukrainian territory in Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk.

HMRC is responsible for enforcement of UK Trade Sanctions and Strategic Export controls working closely with Border Force.

HMRC has implemented a number of measures which aim to prevent the exportation and importation of restricted goods and has a range of enforcement options.

The Government has published guidance pages on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) to ensure business activities are compliant with the current and any forthcoming sanctions against Russia.

Businesses seeking advice should approach the Export Support Service (ESS), a single point of enquiry for businesses and traders in relation to trading with Ukraine, Russia or Belarus.

■ Unfair Dismissal**Yasmin Qureshi:****[45084]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of returning the unfair dismissal qualification period to one year on employee's employment rights.

Dean Russell:

The qualifying periods for unfair dismissal are intended to strike the right balance between providing fairness to employees and to increase business confidence for recruiting and retaining staff. The UK now has record levels of payroll employees, and the unemployment rate is at 3.8%, which is below the pre-pandemic rate.

It is important to note that no qualifying period applies if a dismissal is for certain specified reasons, for example the right not to be unlawfully discriminated against. We believe this provides the right balance for employees and employers.

CABINET OFFICE■ **10 Downing Street****Emily Thornberry:**[\[48294\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the lectern used by the Prime Minister at her speech at 10 Downing Street on 6 September 2022, (a) by whom the lectern was supplied, (b) how much from the public purse was spent on its design and production, (c) when the Government decided to commission it and (d) by whom the decision to commission was made.

Angela Rayner:[\[48359\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will publish a breakdown of the full cost of the new Downing Street lectern.

Edward Argar:

There was no cost to the public purse; the lectern was provided by the governing party. The HM Government badge was an existing one owned by the Government.

■ **Christopher Pincher****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[47378\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what communications were made by his Department to the BBC between 29 June 2022 and 3 June 2022 concerning the conduct of the Rt Hon. Member for Tamworth.

Edward Argar:

There is no record of any communication from the Cabinet Office to the BBC regarding the Rt Hon. Member for Tamworth between 29 June and 3 July.

■ **Coronavirus: Death****Dr Philippa Whitford:**[\[45348\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of deaths in people's own homes since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

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

A response to the hon. Member's Parliamentary Question of 2nd September is attached. I have requested that a copy of the data summarising weekly home deaths is deposited in the libraries of both Houses in Parliament.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Data for 45348 [PQ45348_Requested_Data (1).xlsx]
2. UKSA letter response to 45348 [UKSA_Response_to_PQ45348 (1).pdf]

■ **Customs**

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[48386\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much public money has been spent on Border Control Posts, including through the port infrastructure fund, as of 6 September 2022.

Edward Argar:

Current Ports Infrastructure Fund (PIF) payments either paid (or in the payment system being processed) as of 6th Sept 2022 is £161,039,513.57 and this includes funding for border control posts. The information required to breakdown specific funding for border control posts is not readily available and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[48388\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential financial impact on border control posts of the Government's decision to delay physical border checks; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

We continue to analyse the financial impact of the decision to not impose physical borders checks in July and work on a port-by-port basis to address any issues or concerns they may have.

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[48389\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the value for money of the funding provided for border control posts.

Edward Argar:

The primary objective of the Port Infrastructure Fund was to assess and identify the projects that best ensure that the UK's borders can more fully facilitate EU trade. In assessing the value for money, amongst other factors, the Government took into consideration the level of benefits the project is expected to deliver in terms of avoiding trade disruption and other areas.

■ **Customs: Portsmouth**

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[48385\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much public money has been spent on the construction of the Border Control Post at Portsmouth as of 6 September 2022.

Edward Argar:

The Government allocated £17,155,151 to Portsmouth City Council for the construction of the Border Control Post from the Port Infrastructure Fund.

Ruth Cadbury:**[48387]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has received correspondence from (a) Ministers and (b) officials in the Department for International Trade on the construction of the border control post in Portsmouth.

Edward Argar:

The Cabinet Office does not have any record of correspondence from the Department for International Trade on the construction of the border control post in Portsmouth.

■ Future of Work Review**Florence Eshalomi:****[47722]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the 10 Downing Street press release on the Future of Work Review published on 12 May 2022, when he expects 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>

■ Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review**Stewart Malcolm McDonald:****[48400]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to update the Integrated Review.

Edward Argar:

Details on an update to the Integrated Review will be announced in due course.

■ Ministers: Meetings**Chris Bryant:****[48278]**

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what definition of a meeting is used for transparency reports on Ministerial meetings published by Government departments.

Edward Argar:

Section 8.14 of the Ministerial Code clarifies the scope of ministerial meetings for quarterly transparency returns. Detailed guidance provided to government departments is also available online.

■ National Security

Catherine West: [\[48453\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reviewing the national security implications of foreign-owned businesses employing former Government ministers.

Edward Argar:

The Government is reviewing the Business Appointment Rules, taking into account all relevant considerations, and will provide more information in due course.

■ Prime Minister: Balmoral

Alan Brown: [\[48401\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the total transport cost associated with the Prime Minister's trip to Balmoral was on 6 September 2022.

Edward Argar:

This information is not centrally held at this point in time.

DEFENCE

■ Air Force: Training

John Healey: [\[45723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons an internal inspection of the RAF's flying training has been launched; and what that inspection will look at.

James Heappey:

The audit of the military flying training pipeline was requested to provide impartial analysis of its ability to supply sufficient fast jet pilots to meet the operational demands set by the Defence Plan. This audit will be conducted by Defence Operational Capability who are independent of the Royal Air Force.

John Healey: [\[45724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many flying instructors does the RAF have for (a) Typhoons and (b) F35s as of 1 September 2022.

James Heappey:

The RAF have 10 flying instructors for Typhoon and 10 flying instructors for F-35.

Due to the small populations generated by this level of detail, the possibility of identifying individual personnel and in accordance with the Data Protection Act and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, data have been rounded to the nearest 10.

■ Aircraft Carriers: Damage

John Healey: [\[45197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many instances of damage to the starboard propeller shaft on Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers have been reported by the Royal Navy since 2015.

Alec Shelbrooke:

There have been no previous reports of damage to the propeller shafts on the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers since 2015, prior to the defect that HMS PRINCE OF WALES experienced upon sailing on 27 August.

A thorough technical investigation has commenced to allow us to understand the causes of the fault on HMS PRINCE OF WALES and prevent reoccurrence.

■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing

John Healey: [\[47348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the independent Millbrook trials for the Ajax armoured vehicles have resumed.

Alec Shelbrooke:

I refer the hon. Member to the written statement of 19 May (HCWS42) in which it was confirmed the independent Millbrook trials had concluded and that Millbrook continue to provide independent support to determine the effectiveness of the modifications proposed by General Dynamics.

User validation trials remain paused while investigations continue into the effectiveness of the internal communications system. They will resume once the Ajax safety panel is satisfied that it is right to do so.

John Healey: [\[47349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 19 May 2022, HCWS42, on Ajax Update, whether any further individuals working with Ajax have had long term restrictions on noise exposure recommended, beyond the 13 previously confirmed.

John Healey: [\[47350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 19 May 2022, HCWS42, on Ajax Update, whether any further personnel working on Ajax remain under specialist outpatient care for hearing and other ENT issues, beyond the five previously confirmed.

John Healey: [\[47351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Written Statement of 19 May 2022, HCWS42, on Ajax Update, whether any further personnel working on Ajax have been discharged on health grounds, beyond the four previously confirmed.

Alec Shelbrooke:

As at 22 June, of the 310 personnel identified as working with Ajax there has been no further increase to the number of individuals with long-term restrictions employment, under specialist care or medically discharge due to noise from those reported in the statement provided by the then Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin MP, on 19 May 2022, [HCWS42](#).

I will continue the commitment of my predecessor to update the House on the number of personnel affected by noise and vibration and on the progress of the Ajax programme and will give a statement to the House in the near future.

■ Armed Forces: Arctic

John Healey: [\[45721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the mobility of UK Land Forces in the Arctic region in comparison to Russia forces.

James Heappey:

The UK's Defence Contribution in the High North document, published in March this year, set out our assessment of the evolving security dynamic in the wider Arctic and High North, and the UK's planned approach to addressing the challenges unique to the region. In response to the broad spectrum of threats we face, the UK's commitment to investments in science and technology will ensure the UK possesses a range of capabilities to enable us to operate effectively with NATO and with our Arctic allies and partners.

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

John Healey: [\[47346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to extend the Defence Recruitment System contract with Capita beyond 2024.

James Heappey:

The Recruiting Partnering Project (RPP) contract is currently due to expire on 31 March 2024. As the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme (AFRP) is due to commence service from April 2025 detailed negotiations are currently underway with Capita to extend support until that date.

■ Armed Forces: Uniforms

Mr Tobias Ellwood: [\[44941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason British service members are not allowed to wear NATO issued medals on their uniforms.

James Heappey:

NATO medals have been approved for wear in the past, including for operations in the Balkans. Details of those medals that have been approved for wear are included in Chapter 8, Annex A of Joint Service Publication (JSP) 761 (Honours and Awards in

the Armed Forces): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/honours-and-awards-in-the-armed-forces-jsp-761>

However, some NATO medals have not been approved for wear, in particular where a UK medal is also awarded for the same service. In such circumstances, NATO medals are not approved for wear as allowing this would contravene the principle of no 'double-medalling' for the same service. An example of this was the NATO International Security Assistance Force medal in Afghanistan, which was not approved as UK Service personnel were already awarded the Operational Service Medal (Afghanistan).

■ Army Reserve

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[45615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of expanding the size of the Army Reserve.

James Heappey:

As part of Future Soldier, the Army Reserve will be better integrated with the Regular Army with a whole force of over 100,000, comprising of 73,000 Regular Service personnel and 30,100 Army Reserve personnel. This means the Army Reserve now has a dedicated warfighting role and has primacy for UK resilience tasks.

■ Army: Recruitment

John Healey:

[\[47347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment has he made of the value for money of the Army's recruitment system in comparison to the recruitment systems for the (a) RAF and (b) Royal Navy.

James Heappey:

A value for money assessment has not been undertaken comparing the Defence Recruitment System (DRS) against the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force's Recruiting IT System (RITS). Each of the Single Service recruiting operations deliver sufficient numbers of recruits to support the Armed Forces in meeting all of its commitments.

■ Clyde Naval Base

John Healey:

[\[48232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's Government Major Projects Portfolio Data 2022, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of delivering the Clyde Infrastructure Programme (a) on time and (b) on budget in the context of the Independent Projects Authority's rating of that project as red.

Alec Shelbrooke:

The Clyde Infrastructure Programme (CIP) consists of a complex set of individual projects which will re-capitalise existing assets and build new facilities in direct support of critical Defence outputs. The CIP will provide the fit for purpose

infrastructure assets required of His Majesty's Naval Base Clyde as the Royal Navy's Single Integrated Operating Base and Submarine Centre of Specialisation. The total investment is £1.8 billion over 15 years.

An Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) Review was undertaken on the CIP in June 2022 where the Delivery Confidence Assessment (DCA) was rated as AMBER. This is an improvement to the October 2021 DCA which was rated as RED.

■ Defence Business Services: Blackpool

Scott Benton:

[\[47690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of his decision to relocate more jobs in Blackpool through the North West Estate Defence Business Services consolidation plans on the local economy of Blackpool.

James Heappey:

The decision to consolidate the Defence Business Services northwest estate was based on qualitative benefits and through life costs of potential sites based on several factors including operational risk, sustainability, and compliance with key user requirements.

A regional economic impact assessment was undertaken during down selection, but did not form part of the decision making criteria. The consolidation into the Blackpool region brings an opportunity to bring circa 700 posts to Blackpool from our other northwest sites, and contributes to the redevelopment at Talbot Gate through the building of the new Government hub.

■ Defence: Technology

John Healey:

[\[48227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Business Relationship Managers will be employed on the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme.

Alec Shelbrooke:

Three Business Relationship Managers will be employed to work on the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP). These Business Relationship Managers will be supporting suppliers across the UK.

Business Relationship Managers will themselves be supported by the Defence and Security Accelerator's (DASA) existing network of Innovation Partners, and Access to Mentoring and Finance Partners who are based across all English regions and the Devolved Administrations to provide support to suppliers wishing to work with and access funding via DASA.

■ Estonia: Armed Forces

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[45276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will reassess the potential merits of turning Operation Cabrit into a medal awarding operational deployment.

James Heappey:

Operation CABRIT, like all operations, is kept under continuous review for medallic recognition and, if the situation was assessed to have changed, the case for medallic recognition could be made by the operational commander for review by the Permanent Joint Headquarters-led Operations Recognition Board. They would in turn make any recommendations through the Chiefs of Staff to Defence Ministers.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement

John Healey: [\[48222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate his Department has made of the total cost of building the fleet solid support ships in the UK.

Alec Shelbrooke:

I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave him on 8 September 2022 to Questions 47344 and 47345.

■ Future Combat Air System

John Healey: [\[47341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the estimated whole life cost of the Future Combat Air System is; and how that estimated cost compares to the estimate of the same cost from last year.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The Future Combat Air System programme is targeting an in-service date of 2035 and is exploring concepts for a next generation combat air system to operate into the second half of the century. The whole-life costs will be contingent upon the role that international partners take and key programme choices informed by the Concept and Assessment phase, which is currently underway and is due to complete in 2025.

■ Imperial Bank: Finance

John Healey: [\[48225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 143 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022, for what reason his Department listed £304,000 sent to the Imperial Bank of Kenya as a constructive loss.

Alec Shelbrooke:

The loss relates to an incorrect payment made to a supplier in Kenya that cannot now be recovered as the bank used to process the transaction has subsequently entered receivership and there is no credible recourse to the supplier. Lessons have been learnt to improve validation of future transactions in this geographical area.

■ **Merlin Helicopters: Early Warning Systems**

John Healey:

[\[48231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason the whole-life cost of the Crowsnest programme has increased by £9 million as a result of a VAT tribunal decision.

Alec Shelbrooke:

As a result of the VAT Tribunal ruling that the Crowsnest Contract is now considered a Contracted-Out Service for VAT purposes, the projected costs of the Crowsnest programme are forecast to reduce – in terms of project accruals - of around £25.3 million.

The £9 million referred to, is not a consequence of the VAT tribunal decision. It reflects a reprofile of budget allocation. Budget not consumed by CROWSNEST in the previous years which has been redistributed into future years. However, the overall programme accrued costs have reduced accordingly.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Public Expenditure**

John Healey:

[\[48224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 143 of his Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2021 to 2022, which overseas regions authority has failed to pay their invoice to his Department at the value of £645,000.

Alec Shelbrooke:

The loss relates to the non-payment for training courses provided by the Ministry of Defence to an overseas regional authority and subsequent conclusion reached that recovery is unlikely due to the political situation in the region. It is not considered appropriate to disclose the details of the regional authority concerned to avoid damage to the UK's relationship and potential future collaboration.

■ **National Grid Electricity Transmission: AAC Wattisham**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[45542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department plans to engage with National Grid's consultation on the East Anglia GREEN proposals in respect of Wattisham Air Base.

Alec Shelbrooke:

Wattisham Flying Station (WFS) are in consultation with the National Grid East Anglia Green project team. National Grid representatives attended a meeting at WFS on 14 July 2022 to outline the proposal to WFS stakeholders to understand the risks and issues that may arise due to low flying aircraft in proximity to the power lines. Future engagements will continue.

■ RAF Fairford: B52 Aircraft

Alex Sobel: [\[48489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many B52 strategic bombers have been deployed to RAF Fairford; and whether he has plans for those bombers to be equipped with nuclear weapons.

James Heappey:

Four B52 aircraft are currently deployed to RAF Fairford.

It remains longstanding UK and NATO policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at a given location or time.

■ RNAD Coulport: Trade Unions

Kenny MacAskil: [\[47681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with representatives from the (a) Unite and (b) Prospect unions at RNAD Coulport on redeployment and defence conversion skills.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence have had no discussions with Trade Union representatives at Royal Navy Armament Depot Coulport on redeployment and defence conversion skills.

■ Trident Submarines

Kenny MacAskil: [\[47679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with Babcock International Group on contingency plans to move Trident.

Mr Ben Wallace:

There have been no discussions with Babcock International Group about plans to move the nuclear deterrent from Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde.

■ Type 26 Frigates: Procurement

Mr Mark Francois: [\[48262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce the signature of a contract for Batch 2 of the Type 26 frigate; and if he will make a statement.

Alec Shelbrooke:

As negotiations for Type 26 Batch 2 are still in progress, it would not be appropriate to release any further information. The House will be updated in due course.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid

Drew Hendry: [\[45905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has had recent discussions with defence manufacturers on the provision of logistical support to help

ensure they have the necessary materials for the production of goods for the Ukrainian Government.

Drew Hendry:

[\[45906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has had recent discussions with defence manufacturers that are producing materials for the Ukrainian Government on their (a) energy consumption and (b) security of energy supply in future; and if he will make a statement.

Alec Shelbrooke:

I will write to the hon. Member with the requested information shortly.

■ **Ukraine: Nuclear Installations**

John Healey:

[\[45194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has held with his Ukrainian counterpart on the security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities since February 2022.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I regularly hold discussions with Defence Minister Reznikov on a range of issues. However, discussions on civil nuclear security in Ukraine are led by BEIS.

■ **Ukraine: Nuclear Power**

John Healey:

[\[45718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has held with his European counterparts on the potential impact of a civilian nuclear disaster in Ukraine on the security of the European continent.

Mr Ben Wallace:

I regularly hold discussions with my European counterparts on a range of issues. However, discussions on civil nuclear security in Ukraine are led by BEIS.

■ **USA: Trident Submarines**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[47680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had recent discussions with his US counterpart on extending the maintenance contract for Trident at Kings Bay in Georgia, USA.

Mr Ben Wallace:

The maintenance of Trident missiles is managed under the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement (amended for Trident in 1982) between the United States of America and United Kingdom. I have not discussed changing this maintenance arrangement with US colleagues.

Veterans UK

Justin Madders: [\[45868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer to the Question from the hon. Member from Midlothian on 14 July 2022, Official Report, column 488, when he plans to help ensure that veterans receive a better service from Veterans UK.

James Heappey:

Veterans UK is currently working hard to ensure that the best possible service is delivered to all its customers. A variety of improvements are already underway including a review of all correspondence issued, text message updates and the creation of a bespoke Veterans UK Customer Experience team, to capture trends and issues for Vets UK customers.

Further improvements will be delivered during 2023 which will include the forthcoming digital transformation of the paper-based process which will make a significant positive change to Veterans UK delivery.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**TikTok: Data Protection**

Chi Onwurah: [\[48331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the (a) safety and (b) security of Tik Tok's ability to track typed text inputs, clicked links, keystrokes, and screen taps.

Damian Collins:

The UK has strong safeguards and enforcement regimes to ensure that data is collected and handled responsibly and securely. Companies registered in the UK are subject to our legal framework and regulatory jurisdiction.

Wherever they are in the world, organisations that process the personal data of individuals in the UK for the purposes of providing goods and services or monitoring behaviour must comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18). Organisations which fail to comply may be investigated by the Information Commissioner's Office and where appropriate subject to enforcement action, including fines.

The Government is improving the privacy and security of all apps, including through an upcoming Code of Practice which sets baseline security and privacy requirements for app developers and app store operators.

EDUCATION

■ Agriculture: Apprentices

Julian Sturdy:

[\[45802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department has made available to help support agricultural businesses offer apprenticeships in the most recent period for which data is available.

Andrea Jenkyns:

In the current 2022/23 financial year funding available for apprenticeships in England is £2.6 billion. The government is increasing apprenticeships funding to £2.7 billion by the 2024/25 financial year.

Employers of all sizes and in all sectors can access the funding available for apprenticeships. The government continues to pay 95% of apprentice training costs for non-levy paying employers, often small and medium-sized enterprises, and meets 100% of training costs for the smallest employers (those with fewer than 50 staff) when they take on eligible young apprentices.

Employers in the agricultural sector have developed 41 high-quality apprenticeship standards to allow them to develop their workforces, including crop technician, livestock unit technician, and land-based service engineering technician. So far for the 2021/22 academic year, between August 2021 and April 2022, there have been 6,000 apprenticeship starts in agriculture, horticulture and animal care subject areas, an increase of 31% compared to the same period the previous year.

■ Alternative Education and Special Educational Needs

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[45218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's timescale is for publishing the results of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) green paper consultation.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[45760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department expects to publish the results of the SEND Green Paper consultation.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department will publish a national Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) improvement plan later this year, setting out our next steps for implementation and response to the consultation.

■ AQA: Industrial Disputes

Navendu Mishra:

[\[47695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has had discussions with the management at AQA on resolving the industrial dispute with UNISON.

Kelly Tolhurst:

It is for AQA to resolve the industrial dispute with UNISON. The department has not had discussions with AQA on the industrial dispute in question. As the independent regulator for qualifications, Ofqual works with exam boards to make sure that any potential risks to the timely and secure delivery of GCSE, AS and A levels are appropriately managed. Ofqual has been closely monitoring the situation and meeting regularly with senior staff at AQA to discuss their contingency plans. AQA has provided assurances that the ongoing industrial action will not impact on the delivery of GCSE, AS and A level results or post-results services.

■ BTEC Qualifications and T-levels**Mr Toby Perkins:****[48310]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students began but did not complete each (a) BTEC and (b) T Level course, broken down by institution and course, in 2021-22.

Andrea Jenkyns:

In 2021, the department published the number of students that began a T Level in 2021, which is approximately 5,450. Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-action-plan>.

The number of students by each T Level route is approximately:

- 1,150 on Construction T Levels.
- 1,200 on Digital T Levels.
- 1,500 on Education and Childcare T Level.
- 1,600 on Health and Science T Levels.

The department will publish more detailed figures in the 2022 T Level Action Plan in due course.

The department has published official data on 16 to 18 year olds' participation, which includes T Level student numbers. This is accessible at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-employment-2021>. This data is not available at institution level. However, the department also publishes data on 16-19 funding allocations at institution level. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-allocation-data-2021-to-2022-academic-year>.

Information on learner completions is provided to the department from schools and colleges through the Individualised Learner Record or School Census returns by the January following each academic year. Therefore, the department is currently unable to provide information on student retention or completions for 2021/22.

Information on BTEC student numbers by course is provided in the attachment.

Attachments:

1. 48310_table [48310_BTEC_enrolment.xls]

■ BTEC Qualifications: Assessments

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[47507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what immediate steps his Department took when it first identified that BTEC examination results were missing in August 2022.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[47508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of communication with (a) students and (b) colleges on the missing BTEC results in August 2022.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[47509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's preparedness for possible problems with BTEC results during summer 2022.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[47510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when his Department was first alerted about missing Level 2 BTEC exam results in summer 2022.

Andrea Jenkyns:

The department was notified on 18 August that some students had not received their level 3 BTEC results as they had expected on A level results day due to issues with finalising grades.

Officials from the department immediately contacted Ofqual as the regulator, who assured the department that they were meeting with the awarding organisation to resolve the issues. Daily updates were provided by Ofqual and relevant awarding organisations, and the department joined daily situation report calls with Ofqual and UCAS to ensure that we were aware of progress.

The former Secretary of State for Education, alongside some of the relevant awarding organisations and Ofqual also met to discuss progress addressing the issues on 24 August. The department was made aware that some level 2 results were not ready for issue and the actions already being taken to address this.

Problems with results and the actions awarding organisations take, including communications with students and colleges, are matters for Ofqual and I have asked its Chief Regulator, Jo Saxton, to write directly to the hon. Member. A copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Children in Care: Mental Capacity

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[48298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children are (a) in care and (b) subject to a deprivation of liberty Order as of 6 September 2022.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[48299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children subject to a deprivation of Liberty Order are of (a) black African and (b) Caribbean heritage broken down by gender.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department does not collect information on the number or characteristics of children subject to a Deprivation of Liberty Order.

However, the President of the Family Division has established a national Deprivation of Liberty Court, which is to be supported by the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. This aims to improve our understanding of the cases that are being heard by the Court, and to understand more about what can be done to better meet the needs of the children involved. More information is available at:

<https://www.nuffieldfjo.org.uk/news/nuffield-family-justice-observatory-to-monitor-data-from-new-national-dols-deprivation-of-liberty-court>.

The latest information on the number of children looked after is available in the statistical release 'Children looked after in England' available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions>.

■ Children: Social Services

Damien Moore:

[45108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that Sefton Council improves children's services in Southport following Ofsted rating those services inadequate.

Damien Moore:

[45126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to improve the standard of children services provision in Sefton.

Kelly Tolhurst:

A Statutory Direction was issued to Sefton on 24 May 2022 following the 9 May 2022 Ofsted report that judged children's services to be inadequate. The direction requires the Council to work with a commissioner appointed by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education. In addition, the commissioner is conducting an assessment of the Council's capacity and capability to improve itself and is in the process of finalising the report for submission to the department on the 30 September and later publication in October 2022. This report will help determine the best next steps to ensure improvements are made for vulnerable children and families.

■ Children's Social Care Independent Review

Damien Moore:

[45177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what legislative proposals the Government is planning to make to implement the Care Review.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department is now considering the recommendations of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care carefully with those with care experience and all interested stakeholders. This also includes recommendations relating to legislation.

The department will publish an implementation strategy later this year, which will set out how we will improve children's social care.

■ Construction: Training**Dr Luke Evans:****[48507]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is taking steps to support the (a) training of builders and insulators and (b) new recruits to that sector to support the insulation of homes.

Andrea Jenkyns:

The government is investing £3.8 billion more in further education (FE) and skills over the Parliament to ensure people have access to skills to build a fulfilling career in jobs the economy needs. The department's Skills for Jobs white paper sets out our plan to invest in opportunities for new entrants to the labour market, as well as upskilling opportunities for adults. These interventions are key to the country's transition to a net zero economy and our ambition to build roads, homes, and broadband faster.

Apprenticeships are at the forefront of this change. There are 97 high-quality apprenticeship standards in the construction and the built environment occupational route, which have been developed by employer trailblazer groups to ensure apprentices gain skills key to the sector. These include a range of standards relevant to insulation and retrofit, such as Industrial Thermal Insulation Technician at level 3, Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS) at level 4, and Low Carbon Heating Technician at level 3.

In addition to apprenticeships, the department is taking steps to strengthen vocational options for young people with the introduction of T Levels. These are two-year, technical qualifications designed with businesses and employers, and are equivalent in size to 3 A levels. The first T Levels in Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction were launched in 2020, with the first cohort having received their results this summer.

As we are strengthening progression pathways for career starters, the department is also investing in re-skilling and up-skilling opportunities to make sure adults, at any age, can upskill to reach their potential, transforming lives and delivering on the National Skills Fund commitment. As part of this investment, we have introduced the Free Courses for Jobs scheme, which enables learners without a level 3 qualification, or learners with any qualification level but earning below the National Living Wage, to gain a qualification for free. 72 qualifications in building and construction are currently on offer under this scheme. In addition, learners who want to upskill in their role, are looking for work, or are changing career can take part in Skills Bootcamps in construction and green skills.

The department is promoting and increasing awareness of our skills provision to learners and employers through the Skills for Life campaign, which targets employers, young people, and adults. Our campaign toolkits provide more information and can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/skills-campaign-toolkits>. Moreover, the department supports cross-government discussions on wider workforce challenges in the sector, for example through the Green Jobs Delivery Group. More information on this is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/green-jobs-delivery-steps-up-a-gear>.

■ Educational Psychology: Pay

Dr Rupa Huq: [45529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing pay for educational psychologists, in the context of the rising cost of food and domestic bills.

Kim Leadbeater: [46218]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is offering support to trainee educational psychologists with the rising cost of living including (a) access to educational bursaries and loans and (b) assistance with travel costs.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department does not currently plan to make an assessment on increasing pay for educational psychologists.

The department currently funds the tuition fees for the three-year training course for educational psychologists, as well as a bursary for the first year of the course, which is passed on to trainees. Trainees also receive a bursary for the second and third years of study, which is funded by the local authorities where trainees undertake their placements. The bursary can be used to assist with living and travel costs.

After graduation, specific employment terms, including pay, are governed by the education psychologist's contract of employment with their employer.

■ Employment and Further Education

Damien Moore: [44944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase collaboration between colleges and employers.

Andrea Jenkyns:

Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) will place employers at the heart of local skills systems and facilitate direct and more dynamic working arrangements between employers, colleges, and other skills providers.

Building on the experience from last year's trailblazers, the department is making good progress on rolling out LSIPs. On 1 September, we announced the designation of employer representative bodies to lead on the development of LSIPs in 37 of the

38 areas across the country. Once developed, LSIPs will set out the priorities for a local area to make technical education and skills training more responsive to employers' needs, and to help people develop the skills they need to get good jobs.

LSIPs will build on the excellent provider-employer collaboration that has already been developed through apprenticeships, T Levels, and our wider skills reforms.

■ Free School Meals

Sir George Howarth: [45077]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of Child Poverty Action Group, published on 9 June 2022, on the number of children living in poverty who are not eligible for free school meals, whether he is taking steps to ensure that all children living in poverty have access to healthy meals.

Sir George Howarth: [45079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will review the eligibility criteria for free school meals before the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

Sir George Howarth: [45377]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the analysis of Child Poverty Action Group, published on 9 June 2022, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings relating to the number of children living in poverty who are not eligible for free school meals.

Sir George Howarth: [45393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on the number of children claiming free school meals.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The provision of free school meals (FSM) to children from out-of-work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government. Under this government, eligibility for free school meals has been extended several times and to more groups of children than any other government over the past half a century. That includes the introduction of universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) and further education free meals, and a permanent extension to include some children of groups who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), subject to specified income thresholds.

The latest published statistics, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>, show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming a free meal in school at lunch time. This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021.

Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the UIFSM policy, the greatest ever proportion of school children, 37.5%, are now provided with a free meal at lunchtime, at a cost of over £1 billion a year.

The department continues to monitor the situation surrounding the rising cost of living whilst working with other government departments on support surrounding this issue. The department thinks it is right that provision is aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged, those out of work or on the lowest incomes. The department does not have any plans to extend universal provision, but it will continue to keep free school meal eligibility under review, to ensure that these meals are supporting those who most need them. In setting a threshold, the government believes that the current level, which enables children to benefit, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the right one. Extending free school meal eligibility to all pupils would carry a significant financial cost.

■ Further Education: Energy

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[48305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much each further education college in England spent on (a) electricity and (b) gas in (i) 2020-21 and (ii) 2021-22; and how much those colleges have budgeted to spend on (A) electricity and (B) gas in 2022-23.

Andrea Jenkyns:

The department does not hold this data at present, as this level of detail is not routinely collected. We have contacted further education colleges to request this information.

■ GCSE: Assessments

Chi Onwurah:

[\[48332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of comparative trends in the level of GCSE marks between the North East and other areas of the UK.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[48338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help increase the proportion of students in the North East achieving grades 7 and above at GCSE in line with national averages.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department remains committed to addressing regional disparities and levelling up education standards. The Schools White Paper, published in March 2022, set out a vision for a school system that helps every child fulfil their potential regardless of where they live.

The north-east and Yorkshire and Humber regions had the joint lowest proportion of entries at grade 7 and above (both 22.4%) in England. By comparison, London (32.6%) and the south-east (29.2%) have had the highest proportion of entries achieving grade 7 and above in England in 2022, which is a historic trend that has continued this year. However, between the north-east and all other regions excluding London and the south-east, there was only a small difference.

There are many issues that contribute to worse outcomes at key stage 4 in the north-east, such as disadvantage and school quality. The department has worked extensively to drive improvement in the north-east and will continue to do so. Opportunity North East (ONE) was a three-year programme from 2019 to 2022 that invested £12 million to improve secondary outcomes in the region. As a result of this investment, there are now more Good Ofsted rated secondary schools in the region. Across the north-east, the proportion of Good and Outstanding secondary schools has increased from 58% in 2018 to 71% this year.

The department is building on this success through further support in its Education Investment Areas (EIAs). 6 of the 12 local authorities in the north-east are EIAs: Darlington, Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland, with Middlesbrough and Hartlepool also being Priority EIAs eligible for additional investment.

■ Health and Science: T-levels

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[45776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the compatibility of first-year health and science T Level exams with the course content taught in schools and colleges in England; if he will make an assessment the adequacy of the amount of time between the availability of the textbook for that subject and the examination; and if he will make a statement.

Andrea Jenkyns:

Department officials are working urgently with Ofqual and the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education to review the relationship between the content of Health and Science T Levels and the assessments. The department expects to conclude this shortly.

There is no provision by the state for teaching materials. Textbook publishers decide whether they wish to provide them, and when to do so.

The NCFE, the awarding organisation, will provide further support to teachers ahead of this autumn's resits. This additional intervention will help to ensure students are supported to continue their T Levels and to reach their full potential.

■ Health: T-levels

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[48302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of students studying the Health T Level received an (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D, (e) E and (f) U grade in their Year 1 exams.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[48303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of students studying the Healthcare Science T Level received an (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D, (e) E and (f) U grade in their Year 1 exams.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[48304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of students studying the Science T Level received an (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D, (e) E and (f) U grade in their Year 1 exams.

Andrea Jenkyns:

It is accepted practice that results are published on completion of a qualification or programme of study. This ensures a full and accurate representation of students' attainment, rather than a partial and interim result which is subject to change through marking review, appeals, and in-programme retake opportunities. As such, the department would not, as a matter of course, publish partial results for T Level students who have a further year of study, including two retake opportunities.

For T Levels in Health, Healthcare Science, and Science, given issues identified by Ofqual with the core examination papers, the department has determined that the core component results need to be reissued to students. We are writing to providers with more details on the reasons for this decision and the measures to ensure the assessments in future series are high-quality.

■ **Kurdish Language: GCSE**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[48314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with exam boards on the introduction of a Kurdish language GCSE.

Kelly Tolhurst:

There are currently no plans to add additional modern foreign languages GCSEs to the existing range of subjects. However, there is no reason in principle why a new language GCSE could not be introduced if an awarding organisation considered that there was a strong case to do so. It is for awarding organisations to decide which qualifications they offer.

It is up to schools to decide which languages are taught as part of their curriculum. There are several supplementary schools in England which teach Kurdish to children and young people outside of their regular schooling, where parents may choose to send their children for Kurdish tuition.

■ **Languages: Schools**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[48197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much his Department spent on charitable and faith community-run weekend language schools in England in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Jonathan Gullis:

The Department does not provide any funding for charitable or faith community-run weekend language schools and has not done so in any of the last five years.

■ **LGBT+ People: Primary Education**

Lee Anderson:

[45555]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the appropriateness of learning materials provided by LGBTQ campaign groups for use in primary schools.

Kelly Tolhurst:

As part of compulsory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), all pupils should be taught LGBT content at a timely point during their education. Schools can use externally produced materials to support their lessons and are responsible for ensuring that what they use is factual, age appropriate and suitable for their pupils. Schools are also required to consult parents on the content of their RSHE curriculum and to provide examples of the content and resources that they plan to use.

The department is not planning to assess the materials schools use to teach about LGBT matters, but we have published non-statutory implementation guidance, which includes advice on choosing resources. This guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-your-relationships-sex-and-health-curriculum>.

Further guidance on working with external bodies and using their resources is included in the 'Political impartiality in schools' guidance, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools/political-impartiality-in-schools>.

We are also working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to develop new guidance to support schools specifically on transgender matters.

■ **Lydiat Primary School: Repairs and Maintenance**

Bill Esterson:

[45789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will (a) publish details of how much funding Lydiat Primary School is due to receive for the purpose of its refurbishment and (b) ensure that that funding is adequate for that purpose.

Jonathan Gullis:

On 12 July 2022, Lydiat Primary School was announced as one of 61 schools in round three of the School Rebuilding Programme.

The department will manage and fully fund the project to rebuild or refurbish those buildings at Lydiat Primary School which are in poor condition, subject to the school continuing to meet the programme criteria. We will establish the proposed scope of the project as part of a feasibility study, where we assess the condition of all the existing buildings on site. This will be completed by early 2023, after which we will commence work to procure a contractor.

The final budget for the works will be confirmed when we enter the building contract, before building work commences.

The department also allocates annual condition funding to schools and those responsible for school buildings to maintain and improve the condition of the school

estate. For the 2022/23 financial year, Sefton Council has been allocated £2,426,424 to prioritise across its maintained schools.

■ **Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre: Buildings**

Sir Stephen Timms: [45406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 23 November 2020 to Question 119161, what recent estimate he has made of when the former East Ham police station building will be back in use.

Jonathan Gullis:

Newham Planning Committee has resolved to approve the planning application for the East Ham Police Station, subject to the finalisation of a Section 106 agreement for a cycle scheme, carbon offset, travel plan and monitoring of employment/skills.

The department will enter into the building contract shortly. Once completed the building will be handed over to Newham Collegiate School. We anticipate this will allow the school to expand its places from September 2024.

■ **Pupils: Refugees**

Naz Shah: [45441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that school staff are adequately equipped to support the mental health of Afghan refugee children.

Kelly Tolhurst:

This financial year, the government is offering 7,800 schools and colleges in England grants to train a senior mental health lead in their setting. The training will equip senior mental health leads with the knowledge and skills to implement effective processes for identifying students, or specific groups, who need additional mental health support. Furthermore, we have provided additional funding to accelerate the roll out of Mental Health Support Teams linked to schools and colleges, who provide early intervention on mild to moderate mental health issues, to cover approximately 35% of pupils in England by 2023.

For those who need immediate access to specialist support or help, all NHS Mental Health Trusts are providing 24/7 support. Furthermore, to help parents and carers, front line workers and volunteers support children and young people in emergency or crisis situations, the UK Health Security Agency, formally Public Health England, has developed a psychological first aid e-learning training package. The training aims to support those working directly with children and young people to help them access appropriate support needed during and after crisis situations:

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/psychological-first-aid-for-children-and-young-people>.

■ Schools: Admissions

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[45378]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department are taking to encourage schools to increase the number of pupils admitted on pupil premiums.

Jonathan Gullis:

Admission arrangements are set and applied locally. Provided they are lawful and comply with the School Admissions Code, it is for the school's admission authority to decide what admissions criteria to set, and how they are applied.

In 2014, the Code was revised to allow school admissions authorities to choose to prioritise children in receipt of pupil premium in their admissions oversubscription criteria. The Department published guidance for schools on how they can best use this criterion.

The recent School's White Paper, 'Opportunity for All', made clear that trusts, as admission authorities, will be expected to act inclusively, providing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children with the opportunity to attend the best schools.

■ Schools: Air Pollution

Navendu Mishra:

[47692]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to fund a) air pollution monitors and b) air purification systems for schools in areas where air pollution levels exceed WHO guideline limits.

Jonathan Gullis:

The Department is not currently planning to fund air quality monitors or fund additional air cleaning units for schools in areas where air pollution levels exceed World Health Organisation guideline limits. More information on the number of air cleaning units delivered to schools with poor ventilation can be found at:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/delivery-of-air-cleaning-units>

The Department has published guidance in the Building Bulletin 101 (BB101), which provides guidelines on indoor and outdoor air quality in new and refurbished schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-bulletin-101-ventilation-for-school-buildings>[\(opens in a new tab\)](#). BB101 guidance promotes best practice in

controlling pollutants and setting maximum standards for levels of pollutants in indoors.

Outdoor air quality is the responsibility of local authorities who should prepare air quality action plans to ensure the level of pollutants is reduced. In January 2019, the Government published the Clean Air Strategy setting out plans to deal with all sources of pollution.

■ Schools: Collective Worship

Beth Winter: [45217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to conduct a review of the statutory requirements for daily collective worship in schools.

Beth Winter: [45370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his Department's policies on (a) the teaching arrangements for religious education and (b) collective worship in primary schools of the judgment of Mr Justice Colton of the Northern Ireland High Court handed down on 5 July 2022 relating to Christian-focused education in primary schools in Northern Ireland.

Jonathan Gullis:

Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

The Department has read and considered the legislative framework for teaching religious education in Northern Ireland and is of the view that it is not authoritative on the teaching of religious education or delivery of collective worship in England.

The Department currently has no plans to amend or repeal the legal duty on schools to provide a daily act of collective worship. The Government believes that the law in England is both inclusive and flexible in allowing all schools to tailor their provision to suit their pupils' needs and it provides a unique opportunity for schools to develop and celebrate their ethos and values. Collective worship also allows schools the opportunity to promote the moral and social development of their pupils in a way that best suits the needs of the community.

■ Schools: Discipline

Justin Madders: [45872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his timescale is for responding to his Department's consultation on Behaviour management strategies, in-school units and managed moves which closed on the 29 June 2021.

Jonathan Gullis:

The Department used the responses from the call for evidence on behaviour management strategies, in-school units and managed moves, which was launched on 29 June 2021 and closed on 10 August 2021, to inform the updated Behaviour in Schools guidance and Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance.

A public consultation on the updated Behaviour in Schools guidance and the Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance was launched on 3 February 2022 and closed on 31 March 2022. The updated Behaviour in Schools guidance, updated Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance and government response to the consultation were published on 13 July and can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revised-behaviour-in-schools-guidance-and-suspension-and-permanent-exclusions-guidance>.

■ Sign Language: Education

Daisy Cooper:

[47670]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) local and (b) national funding is available for parents and close family members for studying advanced British Sign Language courses that enable them to communicate more effectively with their children.

Daisy Cooper:

[47672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether under arrangements for Education, Health and Care Plans for Deaf children may include provision and specific funding to support parents and close family members of those children to learn British Sign Language.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Funding is available through the adult education budget (AEB) for qualifications in or focussing on British Sign Language (BSL) up to and including level 2. About 60% of the AEB has been devolved to Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority who determine which provision to fund for learners resident in their areas. Education and Skills Funding Agency provides the remaining funding for learners resident in non-devolved areas. Some providers of community learning offer BSL courses, and those providers determine the course fees, including levels of fee remission. For qualifications at level 3 and above, Advanced Learner Loans are available for certain BSL qualifications. BSL qualifications and the appropriate further education funding offer can be found here:

<https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/Search>. Eligible students will be able to apply for student support if their undergraduate course is designated for funding under The Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011. If undertaking a BSL qualification that leads to a masters level qualification, eligible students can access a postgraduate loan, as long as they have not previously accessed the postgraduate loan product, or already hold a level 7 qualification. Several universities and organisations offer such qualifications.

There is a statutory duty, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, for local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of 'children in need' in their area, including disabled children, by providing appropriate services to them. Services for disabled children provided under Section 17 will typically include short breaks for parent carers, equipment or adaptations to the home, and support for parents.

Section H1 of an education, health and care plan must specify all services assessed as being needed for a disabled child or young person under 18, under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. This may include services to be provided for parent carers of disabled children, including following an assessment of their needs under the Children Act 1989. Where this assessment judges that the family needs provision to learn BSL, it could be included here.

■ Special Educational Needs: Harrow

Gareth Thomas: [\[45701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average waiting time from the date of referral to appointment for a special educational needs assessment is in the London Borough of Harrow as of 1 September 2022; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Whilst the department does not hold this information, we do collect annual data on the performance of local authorities in relation to receiving a request for an education, health and care needs assessment, and if approved, to issuing an education, health and care plan, within the statutory period of 20 weeks.

From the latest information available, which covers activity during the 2021 calendar year, Harrow completed 55% of such assessments within the required timeframe. This is an increase from their 2020 figure, which was 38.4%, and covers a period affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The department will continue to monitor the annual data and act as and when appropriate to ensure that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are able to reach their full potential and receive the right support to succeed in their education.

■ Special Educational Needs: Pupil Exclusions

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[48500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential relationship between trends in the levels of school exclusions and education, health and care plans.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[48501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the level of implementation of education, health and care plans are consistent across the UK.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department publishes annual data on suspensions and permanent exclusions which include capturing those pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans. It has also published updated Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance in July 2022 so that headteachers have the information they need to use these sanctions properly and proportionately.

The updated guidance makes clear that headteachers should, as far as possible, minimise the use of permanent exclusion for any pupil with an EHC plan and that initial intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any special educational needs and disability that a pupil may have.

In March 2022, the department published the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper and Schools White Paper, which set out plans to make sure every child can reach their full potential. They set out a vision of an inclusive education system with excellent local mainstream provision that would improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, support those who need alternative provision, and those who need the additional support delivered through an EHC plan.

The Green Paper consultation closed on 22 July 2022 and the department is currently analysing the responses. Later this year, we will publish a national SEND and AP implementation strategy, setting out our response to the consultation and the next steps for implementation of system reform.

■ **Students: Cost of Living**

Steve McCabe: [\[48213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of financial challenges on the dropout rate amongst university students in the 2022-23 academic year.

Steve McCabe: [\[48214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) financial challenges being experienced by university students and (b) potential impact of those challenges on students' ability to undertake their studies.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that students are able to afford their energy costs this year.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment tools he has put in place to help analyse the impact of the cost of living crisis on the ability of students to continue with university courses.

Rachael Maskell: [\[48420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to universities to help support students experiencing hardship due to trends in (a) inflation and (b) cost of living.

Catherine West: [\[48459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help support students in full-time higher education with the rising cost of living.

Andrea Jenkyns:

The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen and impacted students this year. Many higher education (HE) providers have hardship funds that students can apply to for assistance.

To support disadvantaged students and those in need of additional help, the department has confirmed in our guidance to the Office for Students (OfS) on funding for the 2022/23 financial year that universities will continue to be able to support students in hardship through their own hardship funds and the student premium, for which up to £261 million is available for the 2022/23 academic year.

We have also worked closely with the OfS to clarify that English providers can draw upon this funding now, to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

Maximum grants and loans for living costs have also been increased by 2.3% this 2022/23 academic year. Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the tax year 2022/23 has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

In addition, maximum tuition fees, and the subsidised loans available from the department to pay them remain at £9,250 for the 2022/23 academic year, in respect of standard full-time courses. The department is also freezing maximum tuition fees for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. By 2024/25, maximum fees will have been frozen for seven years. As well as reducing debt levels for students, the continued fee freeze will help to ensure that the HE system remains sustainable while also promoting greater efficiency at providers.

The Energy Price Guarantee announced on 8 September will save the average household at least £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October. This is in addition to the £400 energy bills discount for all households. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount.

As part of the package of support for rising energy bills, the government is also giving a council tax rebate payment of £150 to households that were living in a property in council tax bands A to D as their main home on 1 April 2022. This includes full-time students that do not live in student halls or in property that is not considered a House in Multiple Occupation for council tax purposes.

■ T-levels**Mr Toby Perkins:****[48308]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many learners (a) started and (b) completed T Levels in the cohort ending in August 2022.

Andrea Jenkyns:

1,241 students enrolled on the first wave of T Levels in September 2020. 1,029 students achieved a T Level result this summer and received their overall grade on 18th August.

This figure is subject to change, as a small number of students will complete their remaining industry placement hours and receive their overall grade this Autumn.

Mr Toby Perkins:[\[48309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his planned timetable is for publishing the sixth annual T Level action plan.

Andrea Jenkyns:

We expect to publish the sixth T Level Action Plan this winter.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Bats: Conservation****Tracey Crouch:**[\[45773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Nature Recovery Green Paper on the protection of (a) bats and (b) bat habitats.

Trudy Harrison:

No specific assessments of the potential impact on the Nature Recovery Green Paper on the protection of bats and their habitats have been made. The Nature Recovery Green Paper set out our proposals to create a legislative system for nature which better reflects the latest science and impending impacts of climate change, tailored to our native species such as bats.

Chilterns: Hitchin and Harpenden**Bim Afolami:**[\[45277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of including rural areas in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency in an extension of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Trudy Harrison:

The power to consider areas for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation lies with Natural England (NE), which then makes an order to be confirmed by the Secretary of State. NE announced its current designation programme in 2021, which includes considering a variation to extend the boundary of the existing Chilterns AONB.

The Area of Search which is being assessed for potential designation includes an area in the Hitchin and Harpenden Area. Some areas of Hitchin are already included in the current Chilterns AONB.

The designation process will include a detailed assessment of the natural beauty of the area proposed for designation, and the desirability of designating the area.

In its assessment of the proposed extension, Natural England will work collaboratively with local partners to ensure there are good engagement and consultation opportunities during the process including statutory bodies, stakeholder organisations, landowners, farmers and the public.

■ Desalination: Finance

Paul Maynard:

[48300]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he is taking steps to increase investment in desalination plants.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government recognises the need for new water resources infrastructure, including reservoirs and water transfers, alongside reducing leakage and conserving water to provide a secure supply of water for future generations and to protect our environment.

The National Framework for Water Resources (launched in March 2020) brings together industry, regulators and Government to transform the way we use and look after our water supplies, including the need to reduce demand, halve leakage and develop new supplies.

The water industry is now working in regional groups to deliver the action needed to meet the challenge set out in the Framework to make sure water supplies remain secure. This includes looking at how they will accommodate new buildings and investigating what new infrastructure projects are required, such as desalination.

As part of the current price review round (PR19), Ofwat has allocated a £469 million fund for water companies to expedite and progress the development of new water infrastructure. Additionally, the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) has been formed to help accelerate the development of new water infrastructure and design future regulatory frameworks to enable this development.

■ Droughts and Rain

John Spellar:

[45654]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's policy is on cloud seeding to encourage rainfall during drought conditions.

Trudy Harrison:

Cloud seeding is not appropriate for managing droughts in England due to the weather patterns we receive. This makes it difficult to predict where the resulting rain

will fall. There is a risk that the rain falls not in this country and could cause issues for neighbouring countries where rain is not needed. Cloud seeding is used in other countries around the world, but they generally have larger land masses and more stable weather patterns. There are also concerns relating to pollution that could be caused from the compounds used to create 'seed particles', depending on the nature of the particle used and the volume required to form an effective amount of rainfall.

■ Fly-tipping: Fines

Ruth Jones: [46069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people have been fined for fly-tipping in England in each of the last five years.

Trudy Harrison:

Local authorities report fly-tipping incidents and enforcement actions, including fixed penalty notices and fines, to Defra every year. We publish these figures annually at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/env24-fly-tipping-incidents-and-actions-taken-in-england>.

■ Fly-tipping: Reoffenders

Ruth Jones: [46068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the length of sentences for repeat fly-tipping offenders; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

DEFRA officials continue to discuss fly-tipping sentencing with other Government Departments including the Ministry of Justice.

While the law already allows for an unlimited fine and imprisonment for the most serious incidents, sentencing is a matter for the independent courts. When deciding what sentence to impose for unlawfully depositing waste, the courts will take into account the circumstances of the offence and any aggravating factors, such as repeat offending, in line with the Environmental Offences Definitive Guideline issued by the independent Sentencing Council for England and Wales.

In partnership with the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG), which includes local authorities and the police, we have recently produced a guide on how local authorities, and others, can present robust cases to court to support sentences that properly reflect the severity of fly tipping. This guide is available on the NFTPG [website](#).

■ Gun Sports: Lead

Alan Brown: [45396]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the joint statement by the British

Association for Shooting and Conservation and other rural organisations requesting a five year transition away from the use of lead ammunition in game shooting; what assessment he has made of the potential merits of such a transition period; and if he will make a statement.

Trudy Harrison:

We welcome the joint statement made in 2020 by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and other rural organisations requesting a transition away from lead and confirming their commitment to ensuring a sustainable, mutually beneficial relationship between shooting and conservation.

In Spring 2021, Defra asked the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA) to prepare a UK REACH restriction dossier for lead in ammunition. In producing the dossier, both organisations considered the evidence of risk posed by lead in ammunition on human health and the environment, and therefore, the case for phasing out most uses of lead in ammunition, including potential derogations for use in strictly controlled environments such as target shooting, where control measures are in place. HSE published the dossier on 6 May 2022 and a consultation is currently open until 6 November 2022.

Following this, HSE will finalise its opinion and the final decision for any restriction will be made by the Secretary of State, with the consent of Welsh and Scottish Ministers. It is expected that the full process will take approximately two years (from Spring 2021).

■ **Horticulture: Peat**

Justin Madders:

[45875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he will publish his response to his Department's consultation on Ending the retail sale of peat in horticulture in England and Wales.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government published its response to the recent consultation on 27 August 2022.

The consultation response can be found at: www.consult.defra.gov.uk/soils-and-peatlands/endingtheretailsaleofpeatinhorticulture

■ **Litter: Tobacco**

Andrew Rosindell:

[47394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the littering of cigarette butts; whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of promoting wall-mounted ashtrays in public spaces; and if his Department will hold discussions with Havering Council on potential steps to decrease littering in that area.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government wants to see the tobacco industry taking more responsibility for the litter created by its products. We are therefore working with Waste and Resources Action Programme to actively explore regulatory options for tackling littering of cigarette butts, including extended producer responsibility. We expect this work to complete in the coming months.

We have provided guidance for councils on the provision of litter bins, which includes a section on discarded cigarettes, and nearly £1m across 44 councils to help them purchase new bins. Bins for cigarette butts were eligible for funding.

■ Nature Conservation: Rural Areas**Bim Afolami:****[45280]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is planning to take to help encourage (a) tree planting, (b) re-wilding and (c) wider planting in rural communities, including in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

Trudy Harrison:

Our England Trees Action Plan (ETAP), published in May 2021, sets out the long-term, generational vision for trees and forestry to 2050. It recognises the vital contribution trees can make, including to nature recovery, Net Zero, and health and wellbeing.

ETAP details how we will treble tree planting rates in England by the end of this Parliament, contributing to 30,000 hectares of new trees per year across the UK by 2025. The Plan is supported by the £675 million Nature for Climate Fund.

This includes launching the England Woodland Creation Offer with over £15 million available in this year alone to support woodland creation from as little as 1 hectare, in blocks of 0.1 hectares. The Offer includes funding for natural colonisation, which allows trees to seed and grow naturally next to existing trees.

The Government is continuing to support the creation and enhancement of wilder landscapes as part of our broader approach to nature recovery including, where appropriate, species reintroductions. However, we recognise that as an approach, rewilding is not appropriate in all situations, and is not the only means of delivering the Government's environmental goals.

Locally we have supported a variety of tree planting and establishment projects including over £25 million for our Woodland Creation Partnerships this year, establishing three new Community Forests with over 1,000 hectares of new woodland being planted across the total 13 Community Forests since 2020, up to £4.4 million available to rural communities through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, and launched the ground-breaking Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund, which will have a total value of just under £8 million to provide financial support to local authorities to increase their capacity and specialist skills.

The Forestry Commission estimates that there were at least 400,000 newly planted trees with Government support in woodland in the 12 years 3 months from 1 April 2010 to 30 June 2022, in the Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

■ **Radio Frequency Identification: Waste**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[46171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make it his policy that reusable security tags are used rather than RFID tags; and for what reason there was a change made from reusable tags to RFID tags.

Trudy Harrison:

Our approach to using resources efficiently and reducing waste overall is set out in the Resources and Waste Strategy (2018). There is no specific policy relating to RFID tags and the decision by businesses on which tags to use would be a commercial one in which they are expected to apply the principles of the Waste Hierarchy. However, we intend to keep using our Environment Act 2021 powers to target throwaway culture and incentivise consumers and businesses to choose reusable alternatives.

■ **Recreation Spaces: Plastics**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[46193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of restricting the use of (a) astro turf and (b) other plastic-based artificial grass products.

Trudy Harrison:

The Government has not assessed the potential merits of restricting the use of astro turf or other plastic-based artificial grass products. However, we do recognise that these products, in themselves, have no value for wildlife. Their installation can have negative impacts on soil health, biodiversity and drainage for flood prevention or alleviation if installed in place of natural earth or more positive measures such as planting flowers or trees or providing natural water features.

Improving biodiversity is a key objective for the Government. We prefer to help people and companies make the right choice, rather than banning or taxing items outright. We are seeing more organisations, including the Royal Horticultural Society, helping to communicate the risks and issues surrounding the use of artificial grass in place of natural landscaping. While we have no current plans to ban the sale of artificial grass, in our recent call for evidence on commonly littered and problematic plastic items, we asked the public if there were any further plastic items we should consider for future policy action. We will review the feedback from the call for evidence and publish a response in due course.

In the 25 Year Environment Plan, we committed to introduce stronger new standards for green infrastructure and to support local authorities to assess provision. This new Green Infrastructure Framework will be launched by Natural England in December

2022. This will show what good green infrastructure looks like and help local authorities, developers and communities to improve provision in their area.

The Environment Act 2021 contains an ambitious package of reforms to restore and enhance nature and green spaces. This includes a new mandatory requirement for biodiversity net gain in the planning system, to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity. In future, developments which involve the laying of artificial grass at the expense of natural landscaping, and are above a de minimis threshold, will be required to enhance biodiversity in other ways, through the biodiversity net gain requirement. This will incentivise more nature positive development.

■ **Sewage: Pollution Control**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[47631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure that untreated sewage is not discharged into rivers, inland waterways and the sea.

Trudy Harrison:

On 26 August, the Government published a Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan. This plan outlines strict targets which will see the toughest ever crack down on sewage spills and will require water companies to deliver the largest infrastructure programme in water company history - £56 billion capital investment over 25 years. By 2035, water companies will have to improve all storm overflows discharging into or near every designated bathing water and improve 75% of overflows discharging to high priority nature sites. By 2050, this will apply to all remaining storm overflows covered by our targets, regardless of location.

The operation of storm overflows is regulated by permits issued by the Environment Agency. The new targets will be underpinned by changes to the conditions in these permits, which will greatly reduce when and how overflows can be used. We have also increased the number of storm overflows monitored across the network from 5% in 2016 to almost 90% now monitored, and we will reach 100% cover by end of next year.

Our Plan will protect biodiversity, the ecology of our rivers and seas, and the public health of our water users for generations to come. There should be no doubt about the Government's ambition and determination to tackle storm overflows and sewage discharges.

■ **Sewage: Waste Disposal**

Derek Thomas:

[45332]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent to which recent increases in the price of emptying septic tanks have been caused by reduced competition in the market for processing.

Trudy Harrison:

Defra and the Environment Agency have worked with South West Water through the Cornwall operators group to increase capacity and flexibility for the acceptance of tankered waste.

Tanker waste companies in Cornwall must use the local water company sites for legitimate discharge/disposal of tankered septic waste at least until providers can offer other legitimate routes for disposal. Water company rates are higher than previous non-compliant land spreading sites, but the prices charged should reflect the cost of legitimate disposal.

■ Water Companies: Incentives**Dr Rupa Huq:**[\[45557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing legislation to ban water company bosses from awarding themselves bonuses unless leak reduction targets are met.

Trudy Harrison:

Government and Ofwat have set an expectation that companies must be transparent about how performance related executive pay and dividends are linked to services for customers, including leakage and environmental performance.

David Black, Ofwat CEO recently reiterated that "performance related pay for CEOs should be clearly linked to their performance for customers, the environment and society. Performance related pay can't be a one-way street, if companies are not performing that should be reflected in executive pay."

Ofwat plans to report on an analysis, it is completing, of whether it feels companies have clearly made the link between performance and performance related pay.

In July, Ofwat released new figures showing that three quarters of the companies are meeting their leakage targets and some have reduced leakage by more than 10% over the past two years. Industry-wide leakage has been reduced by 11% since 2017-18, heading towards a target of a 50% reduction by 2050.

Water companies already face automatic financial penalties when leakage performance commitments are missed and Ofwat can take enforcement action if a company is also breaching its legal obligations or licence conditions.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Amazonia: Rainforests****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[47367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to respond to the August 2022 fires in the Amazon rainforest.

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[47369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the impact of the 33,116 fires in August 2022 in Brazil's Amazon rainforest on health, the environment and biodiversity.

Jesse Norman:

Deforestation is affecting livelihoods, biodiversity and carbon sequestration and has increased at a worrying rate since 2018, with a 22% increase in deforested area recorded between 2020 and 2021. Fires have contributed to this trend. At COP26 the UK committed £300 million to help protect the rainforest throughout the Amazonian biome through the International Climate Finance (ICF) Programme.

Also at COP26, the UK welcomed Brazil's commitments to eliminate illegal deforestation by 2028 and restore 18 million hectares of forest by 2030. Through ICF projects, the UK works side by side with Brazil to tackle deforestation in all nine Amazon states and carefully monitors deforestation across the Amazon region to inform our efforts.

■ **Angola: Elections**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the outcome of the 2022 Angolan general election.

Gillian Keegan:

The FCDO works to strengthen institutions and governance, promote and protect human rights, and support democracy globally. The UK has a proud record of global leadership on international development and Overseas Development Assistance is used to strengthen and support Open Societies and Human Rights in many countries including Angola.

The UK will continue to work closely with the Government of Angola to encourage modern and progressive legislation and to ensure that rights and freedoms are enjoyed by the whole of society. This includes promoting media freedom; improving access to education with the Global Partnership for Education; and raising awareness of the humanitarian conditions in Southern Angola.

■ **Arctic: International Cooperation**

John Healey:

[\[45202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has plans to appoint a UK Ambassador to the Arctic region.

Jesse Norman:

The UK takes a whole-of-government approach to the Arctic, overseen by a Minister with responsibility for the Polar Regions in FCDO. The UK attends all major Arctic meetings and conferences, either from the UK or from our embassies in the region.

■ **Barbados: Embassies****Ruth Jones:** [\[46082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British High Commission in Bridgetown in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF						
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022
46082 a)	Bridgetown	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49	40-49

■ **Chile: Referendums****Fabian Hamilton:** [\[48254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the result of the recent referendum in Chile on that country's constitution.

Jesse Norman:

Chile's national referendum on a proposed new constitution was an excellent example of a peaceful democratic exercise and the UK applauds Chile on its respect for the democratic process and its institutional systems. We are confident in the country's continuing success and stability as they continue with the renewal of their constitution.

■ **Christopher Emms****Crispin Blunt:** [\[45696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps Ministers in her Department have taken in relation to the case of Christopher Emms since his detention in Saudi Arabia on 6 February 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

Following the decision by the Saudi Prosecutor's office in August not to extradite Mr Emms, the British Embassy requested that the Saudi authorities swiftly conclude the administrative procedures required to remove the Saudi arrest warrant on Mr Emms, thereby allowing him to depart Saudi Arabia. Most recently, on 5 September, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for South and Central Asia, North Africa, UN & the Commonwealth, raised Mr Emms' case with His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Al Saud, the Saudi Ambassador to the UK.

Consular officials in Saudi Arabia and the UK continue to provide consular assistance to Mr Emms and his family. We cannot, of course, interfere in the judicial process of another country, just as we would not expect interference in our own. However, Mr Emms' safety and welfare remain of the utmost importance, and the Embassy has engaged with the Saudi government on a number of occasions since his arrest requesting that they expedite his case for welfare reasons.

■ **Cristina Fernández de Kirchner**

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[47366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the assassination attempt on Argentina's Vice President, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, on 1 September 2022.

Jesse Norman:

The UK condemns the recent assassination attempt on Vice President Kirchner and stands with the Government of Argentina in support of democracy and the rule of law, and against political violence.

The UK is keen to work with Argentina to continue to strengthen our bilateral relationship. This includes building on our recent cooperation on health, including on COVID-19 vaccines, on climate change and on human rights, notably as co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition.

■ **Democratic Republic of Congo: Armed Conflict**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[47484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to help support (a) integration between the East African Community intervention force in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and militant demobilisation efforts by the government of Democratic Republic of Congo and (b) the implementation of human rights due diligence mechanisms by the East African Community intervention force in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Gillian Keegan:

The recent increase in violence jeopardises efforts to pursue peace and prosperity and exacerbates the already severe humanitarian situation. We welcome the ongoing and regionally-led diplomatic efforts to resolve the disputes. Our approach in response to recent violence has been to call for de-escalation on all sides, encourage all parties to engage in existing political mediation processes and use our diplomatic relationships to lobby in regional capitals.

Any military deployment must be subordinate to a credible and legitimate political process. We are working through our network to urge East African states to prioritise a political solution. It is vital that any regional force prioritises the safety and security of the people of eastern DRC. We continue to lobby in regional capitals, alongside like-minded partners, to obtain more detail on the proposed force and to seek

answers to how risks will be mitigated. This includes how the force plans to minimise the proliferation of human rights violations and ensure effective coordination with the UN Peacekeeping Mission, MONUSCO and linkup with the DRC's national Demobilization, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilization (PDDRCS) programme.

■ Development Aid

Chris Law: [\[45376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether HM Treasury's suspension of non-essential aid spend until September resulted in reductions to existing FCDO-funded programmes in developing countries.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has paused payments in line with HM Treasury's suspension, but this has not reduced existing programming. We have continued to meet our contractual arrangements for activity which has taken place.

Sarah Champion: [\[45823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has established a definition of (a) essential and (b) non-essential overseas aid payments.

Vicky Ford:

Due to pressures on the ODA budget, the government is currently prioritising critical overseas aid funding, while also meeting needs of people seeking sanctuary in the UK from conflict in Ukraine and Afghanistan. We will prioritise spending that is vital to protect against immediate threat to life and wellbeing, will prevent people falling into humanitarian need, or will prevent delays to accessing healthcare, primary education, sanitation and clean water, in addition to considering the value for money of any decisions.

■ Development Aid: Health Services

Jess Phillips: [\[48375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will take steps to ensure that 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 will 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.

■ Dilia Contreras and Leiner Montero

Fabian Hamilton:

[\[47364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions she has had with her Colombian counterpart on the killing of radio journalists Dilia Contreras and Leiner Montero in that country.

Jesse Norman:

Colombia is a UK Human Rights Priority Country and UK ministers and senior officials regularly discuss security issues with the Colombian Government and in multilateral fora. Most recently, our Permanent Representative at the United Nations raised the need to ensure security for vulnerable communities affected by violence at the UN Security Council on 14 July. We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully and to take appropriate action against those responsible.

The UK has provided longstanding support through our Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) programme to support at risk-Human Rights Defenders, social leaders and victims, and help tackle the root causes of the violence. We will continue to work closely with organisations such as the Foundation for Freedom of the Press (FLIP) and UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) in support of human rights and media freedom.

■ East Africa: Humanitarian Aid

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[47490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's press release entitled UK commits millions to helping the world's most vulnerable on World Humanitarian Day, published on 19 August 2022, what her Department's timescale is for disbursing the £14 million in humanitarian funding for East Africa.

Gillian Keegan:

In Financial Year 2022/23, the UK will aim to provide £156 million to East Africa. On 19 August Minister Ford announced that £14 million of this would prioritise protection against immediate threats to life. As of 7 September, this allocation has been disbursed. With this continued financial support to the region we are assisting partners to respond to devastating drought conditions and tackle food insecurity.

■ European Convention on Human Rights

Ruth Jones:

[\[46042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment she of the potential impact of withdrawing from the ECHR on the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has a longstanding tradition of ensuring rights and liberties are protected domestically and of fulfilling our international human rights obligations. The

Government is committed to protecting the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in all its dimensions. We will continue to work alongside all partners to encourage the re-establishment of the power-sharing institutions, and on other areas of shared interest.

Ruth Jones:

[\[46043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with the Irish government on the potential impact of withdrawing from the ECHR on the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has a longstanding tradition of ensuring rights and liberties are protected domestically and of fulfilling our international human rights obligations. The Government is committed to protecting the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in all its dimensions. We will continue to work alongside all partners to encourage the re-establishment of the power-sharing institutions, and on other areas of shared interest.

■ **Finland and Sweden: NATO Enlargement**

Damien Moore:

[\[45115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to help ensure Sweden and Finland are able to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation expeditiously.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has engaged regularly with NATO Allies to advance the NATO accession process for Sweden and Finland. Once the Accession Protocols were signed, the Prime Minister expedited our ratification, recognising the importance of bringing both countries quickly into NATO. We are encouraging all Allies to also ratify swiftly. Rapid integration into NATO will make both countries safer, the Alliance stronger, and the Euro-Atlantic area more secure.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Babcock International**

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[47678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many officials from her Department have been seconded to Babcock International Group; and for what purposes.

Vicky Ford:

The Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office currently have no staff on secondment to Babcock International Group.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Buildings**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the figures supplied by her Department for the Cabinet Office's weekly publication of civil service headquarters occupancy data, what estimate of the daily

capacity of the King Charles Street office was used to calculate the percentage of employees working in that building since February 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

From February 2022 until, and including, week commencing 10 July 2022 the desk capacity used was 3,200.

With effect from week commencing 17 July 2022, the desk capacity was reassessed and a revised figure of 3,029 has been used for desk capacity.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Disclosure of Information**

Chris Bryant:

[\[48277\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 19 July 2022 to Question 34834 on Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Disclosure of Information, when she plans to respond to the Subject Access Request FCDO reference DPR 2022/08995 submitted to her on 17 March 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's Information Rights Unit continues to review and assess the large amount of information returned in our searches. We hope to be able to respond by the end of September.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a government procurement card published on 1 September 2022, for what purpose payments were made to Finishing Touches of (a) £2,360 on 15 November 2021 and (b) 1,973.30 on 22 March 2022; and where in the UK that supplier is located.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a government procurement card, published 1 September 2022, for what purpose payments were made to the official Norwich City Football Club online store of (a) £1,318 on 21 October 2021 and (b) £523.50 on 21 March 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many payments were fraudulently charged to her Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, who stayed at the hotel accommodation in Greece for which payments of £8,168.52 were made on 13 August 2021; and what the (i) name and (ii) location was of those hotels.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, whether the (a) payment of £3,513.33 to Sei Soccer.Com on 9 March 2022 was reported as a fraudulent transaction and (b) amount incorrectly paid out to that supplier was recovered.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, how many staff attended the restaurant meals held at (a) The Bar Room, New York City on 21 September 2021 and (b) Smith and Wollensky, New York City on 22 September 2021; and at what grades those staff were.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £761.80 to Ingredienta on 23 September 2021, (b) £1,385.97 to British Airways on 24 September 2021, (c) £821.23 to Abdullah Bin Taleb Co. on 17 October 2021 and (d) £1,378.06 to Food Equipment Supplying Co. on 21 October 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £1,179.74 to Ali Health Sdn Bhd on 7 November 2021, (b) Ingredienta on 23 September 2021, (c) £1,385.97 to British Airways on 24 September 2021, (d) £821.23 to Abdullah Bin Taleb Co. on 17 October 2021 and (e) £1,378.06 to Food Equipment Supplying Co. on 21 October 2021.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £4,735.70 to Luna Park Sydney on 18 January 2022, (b) £699.18 to Captain Cook Cruises on 19 January 2022, (c) £1,218.05 to Chemist Warehouse on 19 January 2022, (d) £1,783.48 to Event Hire Services on 20 January 2022 and (e) £1,351.26 to SEC IAQ Women's Ready to Wear Stores on 25 January 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, who attended the gatherings held in Indonesia on 11 November 2021 at (a) Hutan Kota by Plataran, (b) Kaum and (c) Bhumi; and what refreshments were purchased at each venue.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what was the (a) purpose of, (b) location of and (c) guest list for the event for which Milly Sabina Melanowski Catering was paid £2,606.33 on 4 April 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose were payments made in Germany of (a) £5,307.68 to Interplan Congress Management on 16 May, (b) £1,631.20 to Saturn Electronics on 18 May and (c) £576.64 to Metro Stores on 18 May.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what the nature was of the VIP services purchased at Munich Airport on 28 June 2022; and who the beneficiaries of those services were.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, how many staff attended the restaurant meal held at La Penela on 28 June 2022; and at what grades those staff were.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what goods or services were payments made of (a) £2,942.16 to The Knot 36 on 27 October 2021, (b) £24,234.12 to Rev LB International between 25 November 2021 and 17 March 2022, (c) £3,895.03 to Boss Media Ltd from 18 to 22 February 2022 and (iv) Event Prop Hire Ltd on 28 March 2022; and for what purpose those purchases were made.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what services were purchased from (a) Alberto Rubino on 26 October 2021, (b) Eimear Wilson on 25 November 2021, (c) Sharon Steel on 23 February 2022,

(d) Lara Heller on 17 March 2022, (e) Raphaele Moore on 29 March 2022 and (f) Make Up By Nani on 6 June 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made (a) of £32,443.91 to Aimie Machado between 8 September 2021 and 16 May 2022, (b) of £7,084.34 to Kate Lennard between 5 March and 6 April 2022 and (c) to Miko 1031 between 9 June 2021 and 25 July 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £7,134.01 to Albino.R.Branc between 1 June and 15 July, (b) £2,4686.60 to LizardKen on 7 June, (c) £2,960.25 to Catechumoon on 16 June, (d) £6,941.43 to Entourage on 17 June and (e) £2,973.80 to CAGuitarLes on 27 June.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments of £10,440 were made to Heathrow VIP services on 23-24 March 2022; and who the beneficiaries of those services were.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £1,008 to Everwell Chinese Medicine on 16 January 2022, (b) £925.50 to Be Mindfully on 9 February 2022, (c) £2,149.61 to Calm Over Chaos on 21 March 2022 and (d) £1,850 to Soul Sanctuary on 4 July 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what the (a) purpose of, (b) location of and (c) guest list was for the events for which Alison Price Catering was paid (i) £1,593.36 on 24 September 2021, (ii) 1,720.44 on 21 October 2021, (iii) £1,089.36 on 1 December 2021, (iv) £4,164.84 on 23 December 2021 and (v) £956.28 on 6 January 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what the (a) purpose of, (b) location of and (c) guest list was for the events for which (i) Ann Kristin Catering was paid (A) 1,347.25 on 27 September 2021

and (B) £1,154.69 on 3 December 2021, (ii) Zafferano Catering was paid (A) £4,726.84 on 6 April 2022 and (B) £2,567.64 on 14 July 2022, (iii) Seasoned Events were paid £5,401.20 between 10 and 14 June 2022 and (iv) At Home Catering Ltd were paid £4,422.24 on 26 July 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what services were payments made to A Head Space Ltd of (a) £4,036.08 on 18 May 2022 and (b) £4,798.63 on 27 June 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what items were purchased from (a) Tomodaji Leather on 8 December 2021, (b) Bolsons Ltd on 16 February 2022, (c) Fattorini Local on 2 March, 11 May and 17 May 2022, (d) Shake Swirl on 26 May, 7 June and 26 July and (e) GoFlyKite on 10 June 2022; and for what purpose those items were purchased by her Department.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what goods were purchased from (a) Ram Rugby on 13 March, (b) Tribe Active on 27 March, (c) Bulldog Gear on 28 March and (d) Fitness Superstore on 20 May; and for what purpose those goods are used by her Department.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what goods were purchased from (a) Stopham Vineyard on 16 October 2021, (b) Bluebird Vineyard Estate on 13 January 2022, (c) Chapel Down Winery on 18 January 2022 and (d) Coates and Seely on 10 February 2022; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what goods were purchased from Ridgeview Estate Winery on (a) 25 October 2021, (b) 11 May 2022, (c) 1 June 2022 and (d) 17 July 2022; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £5,619.90 to Ashridge on 17 June 2022 and (b) £6,568 to Puckrup Hall on 20 July 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what items were purchased from Barrow Hepburn and Gale on (a) 11 October 2021, (b) 26 November 2021, (c) 10 January 2022, (d) 25 January 2022, (e) 28 March 2022 and (f) 17 May 2022; and whether each of those items are still in use by her Department.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what goods were purchased from (a) Deirdre Dyson Carpets on 7 October 2021, (b) Solomiya and (c) Olivias on 7 January 2022, (d) Linwood Fabric on 10 January 2022, (e) Weaver Green on 21 January 2022, (f) Clare Gaudion Ltd on 8 February 2022, (g) Soho Home on 7 March 2022, (h) Amara Living on 8 March 2022 and (i) Marc Wood Studio on 23 March 2022; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what goods were purchased from (a) Osborne and Little on 27 January 2022, (b) West Elm on 23 March 2022 and (c) Bed Guru Ltd on 28 March 2022; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £12,559 to Heal's Ltd between 14 and 23 March 2022, (b) £2,171.3 to Simba Sleep between 18 and 21 March 2022 and (c) £9,935 to Ercol Furniture Ltd between 23 and 25 March 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £3,812.95 to The White Company from 20 October to 11 November 2021, (b) £18,218.36 to Wayfair Stores Ltd between 14 November 2021 and 25 March 2022, (c) £8,190.06 to Chelsom Ltd between 4 and 11 January 2022, (d) £9,988 to the Cotswold Company between 11 January and 1 March 2022 and (e) £ 10721.29 to Ferguson's Irish Linen between 20 January and 29 March 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [\[47463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government

procurement card, what the purpose was of the floral items purchased from (a) Mary Jane Vaughan Design on 20 December 2021 and 21 July 2022 and (b) Pulbrook & Gould on 20 December 2021 and 7 April 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what items were purchased from (a) Coptrz Ltd on 15 February 2022, (b) Earle International on 23 March 2022 and (c) UK Tactical on 6 June, 13 June and 27 July 2022; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what items were purchased from (a) Firmin and Sons on 4 October 2021 and 11 January 2022, (b) JK Clothing on 17 November 2021, (c) Joke.co.uk on 13 December 2021, (d) Trekitt.co.uk on 19 January 2022 and (e) TW Kempton on 13 March 2022; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what items were purchased from (a) Coronation Promotions on 5 May, (b) Gear4Music on 25 May, (c) Feel Unique on 7 July and (d) ID&C UK on 19 July; and for what purpose each of those purchases was made.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £2657.86 to Workwear Express between 26 November 2021 and 19 January 2022, (b) £5,356.93 to Sports Direct between 17 December 2021 and 19 January 2022 and (c) £1,124.28 to Charles Tyrwhitt between 24 and 30 March 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a government procurement card published on 1 September 2022, for what purpose payments were made to Hop Shop Ltd of (a) £4,002 on 1 April 2021, (b) £678 on 12 January 2022 and (c) £2,564 on 24 March 2022.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[47469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a government procurement card published on 1 September 2022, to which accommodation provider in

the UK was £633.85 paid for hotel accommodation on 26 July 2022; and by whom was that accommodation used.

Emily Thornberry: [47470]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what services was Camm and Hooper Ltd paid £53,445.56 on 27 June 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [47471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made to Fortnum and Mason of (a) £1,527.45 on 15 November 2022, (b) £709.75 on 10 January 2022, (c) £3,679.58 on 16 March 2022, (d) £597.45 on 23 March 2022, (e) £1,541.10 on 6 June 2022 and (f) £1,500 on 28 June 2022.

Emily Thornberry: [47472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what the purpose was of the restaurant meals held at (a) Light of India on 8 December 2021, (b) The Kennington Tandoori on 15 February 2022, (c) Mem Saab on 9 March 2022 and (d) The Cinnamon Club on 14 March 2022; and who attended each of those meals.

Emily Thornberry: [47473]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a Government procurement card, what the purpose was of the gatherings held at (a) The House of Lords on 11 January 2022, (b) The Clarence Whitehall on 18 March 2022, (c) The Corinthia Hotel on 21 March 2022, (d) Stanley's Chelsea on 28 June 2022 and (e) The Waterfront Brasserie on 26 July 2022; and who attended each of those gatherings.

Emily Thornberry: [47481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to her Department's publication of spending over £500 with a government procurement card, for what purpose payments were made of (a) £1,179.74 to Ali Health Sdn Bhd on 7 November 2021, (b) Ingredienta on 23 September 2021, (c) £1,385.97 to British Airways on 24 September 2021, (d) £821.23 to Abdullah Bin Taleb Co. on 17 October 2021 and (e) £1,378.06 to Food Equipment Supplying Co. on 21 October 2021.

Gillian Keegan:

The information requested in your 45 questions of 5 September regarding the FCDO's published Government Procurement Card expenditure
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fcdo-government-procurement-card->

spending-over-500-june-2022 is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Energy**

Ruth Jones:

[46123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much her Department spent on energy in each of the last three years.

Gillian Keegan:

Information on FCDO's UK estate energy spend is available in the Sustainability Report sections of the FCDO Annual Report and Accounts. Links to the last three years are below:

- 2021-22 energy spend can be found on page 84 of the FCDO's 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1095304/FCDO_Annual_Report_2021_2022_Accessible_290722.pdf
- 2021-21 energy spend can be found on page 60 of the FCDO's 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1019938/FCDO_annual_report_and_accounts_2020_to_2021_accessible.pdf
- 2019-20 legacy FCO energy spend can be found on page 12 of legacy FCO's 2019-20 Sustainability Report, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907876/FCO_Sustainability_Report_2020.pdf
- 2019-20 legacy DFID energy spend can be found on page 71 of legacy DFID's 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/902370/annual-accounts19-20.pdf

■ **Gabon: Commonwealth**

Ruth Jones:

[46138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she had with Commonwealth counterparts on the preparedness of Gabon to join the Commonwealth of Nations.

Vicky Ford:

Gabon was welcomed into the Commonwealth family by a consensus of all member states at the Kigali Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in June 2022. Preceding this, a detailed four step readiness assessment was undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Commonwealth Secretary General, Baroness Scotland, submitted this assessment to Commonwealth Heads of Government for consideration at the CHOGM Leaders' Retreat. Gabon's accession was confirmed by

the CHOGM Leaders Statement of 25 June. The UK welcomes Gabon's accession to the Commonwealth, demonstrating the continued relevance and vitality of this truly global association.

■ **Gabon: Education**

Ruth Jones: [\[46055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if her Department will make an assessment of the access that women and girls have to education in Gabon.

Gillian Keegan:

Gabon has adopted a series of reforms to increase gender equality, however the FCDO does not currently have plans to undertake an independent assessment of access to education for women and girls. Instead, we rely on partner organisations for their assessment and expertise. This includes the Commonwealth Secretary General who produced a report in May 2022 during Gabon's Commonwealth membership application, which included an assessment of girls' education in Gabon.

■ **Gaza: Health Services**

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[45336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of Israel's permit regime on the mental health of patients in Gaza in need of treatment that is only available elsewhere.

Dr Philippa Whitford: [\[45343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the closure of Gaza and associated movement restrictions on survival rates of patients with cancer in Gaza.

Gillian Keegan:

We have made clear our concern about the ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare, including critical health services, with the Israeli authorities, most recently on 1 June. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure this access is maintained. The wounded and critically ill in Gaza should be able to access the urgent medical care they need.

■ **Gulf Strategy Fund**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[47627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will publish (a) a breakdown of spending by country from the Gulf Strategy Fund and (b) details of what that funding was spent on.

Gillian Keegan:

The FCDO's International Programme (IP), and within it the Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF), is a vital tool in promoting positive change and reforms across the world, including in the Gulf. Our programmes help our partners to continue their human rights reform, address key climate change and green growth opportunities and challenges, tackle illicit finance, improve marine conservation, promote economic diversification, promote diversity and inclusion including on LGBTQ+ rights, and develop their institutions.

All cooperation through the International Programme, including the GSFs, is subject to rigorous risk assessments to ensure all work meets our human rights obligations and our values. The Government does not shy away from raising legitimate human rights concerns, and encourage other states to respect international law.

We now publish an annual summary of the GSF's work on gov.uk. We will not publish further information where doing so presents risks to our staff, programme suppliers and beneficiaries, or which may impact our relationships with our international partners, and therefore our ability to influence their reform efforts.

We will provide updates on an annual basis.

■ Hong Kong: Foreign Nationals**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[48396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 June 2022 to Question 18940 on Hong Kong: Foreign Nationals, what the statutory regulations are which require employers to carry out Certificates of No Criminal Convictions checks in specified roles in the health and education sectors.

Vicky Ford:

The statutory regulations that require employers to carry out Certificates of No Criminal Convictions for Hong Kong British Nationals Overseas (BNOs) in the Health sector can be found under the NHS Employers criminal records check standards and in the Education sector under 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance. Both are available online. Further comment on the specifics of these regulations should be directed to the respective departments of Health and Education.

■ Horn of Africa: Food Supply**Sarah Champion:**[\[47549\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government is taking to help (a) bring greater global attention to the hunger crisis in Somalia and the Horn of Africa and (b) leverage funding for a frontline response in those countries.

Gillian Keegan:

In Financial Year 2022/23, the UK will be providing approximately £156 million to East Africa. To avert loss of life in Somalia and elsewhere in the region, the

international community must prioritise a collective response to the worsening crisis. Recently the UK played a critical role in convening the UN Horn of Africa Drought Roundtable, which took place in Geneva. This included working with states in the region and the UN to ensure appropriate participation. It helped to bring much needed focus on the drought and it mobilised roughly USD \$400 million in new funding.

The UK is using our political and diplomatic influence to bring other stakeholders to the table. Minister Ford, my predecessor as Minister for Africa, recently wrote to David Malpass, the World Bank's President, and to Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to highlight the gravity of needs across the region and to request that the World Bank and UN step up their engagement on these issues. Both have since announced further action in the region, with the World Bank publicising \$5.1 billion in new funding and projects, while OCHA has confirmed a scale up of efforts in both Somalia and Ethiopia.

■ **Ian Khama**

Ruth Jones: [\[46040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department will take steps to help support the former President of Botswana, Ian Khama.

Gillian Keegan:

Former President Khama has not sought the assistance of the UK Government.

■ **Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[45453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of the size of the UK's Diplomatic Staff in the context of its capability of fulfilling the requirements of the Integrated Review.

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[45727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the size of the UK's Diplomatic Staff in the context of increasing global multipolarity.

Gillian Keegan:

The FCDO oversees one of the world's largest diplomatic networks, with 282 Posts covering 180 Countries and Territories. In the last decade, the UK's diplomatic network has expanded by over 10%, with over 16,000 staff around the world and in the UK. The FCDO is ensuring that we have the right people and skills to deliver the Integrated Review: though diplomatic, economic, development & security partnerships; prioritising Euro-Atlantic security and the Indo-Pacific Tilt; and recognising the need for a more agile workforce, prepared for future crises and able to deliver UK interests in a more contested and fragmented geopolitical context.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[47389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to Page 83 of the Integrated Review, whether her Department has a planned timetable for its greater integration with the National Crime Agency.

Gillian Keegan:

The Integrated Review does not refer to a structural integration process of the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office and National Crime Agency (NCA) but rather linking of the response at all levels, including internationally. FCDO already works closely with the NCA both in the UK and abroad to engage international partners and tackle Serious Organised Crime threats impacting upon the UK and our interests, and regularly review our collaboration.

■ International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Wera Hobhouse:

[\[44977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement agreed at the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief entitled Statement on freedom of religion or belief and gender equality, published on 7 July 2022, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the removal of references to (a) sexual and reproductive health and rights and (b) bodily autonomy.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is committed to defending and promoting universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and will continue working with other countries to protect and further gender equality in international agreements.

In our capacity as Chair of the event, we amended the statement we made at the Freedom of Religion or Belief Conference to make the final statement more inclusive of all perspectives and views to allow for a constructive exchange of views on all issues. The UK continues to fund, support and lead on initiatives related to promoting gender equality including SRHR, Women, Peace and Security and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[47505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the statement agreed at the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief entitled Statement on freedom of religion or belief and gender equality, published on 7 July 2022, for what reason 'sexual and reproductive health and rights' and 'bodily autonomy' were removed from the statement, and if she will reinstate the original wording.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is committed to defending and promoting universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and will continue working with other countries to protect gender equality in international agreements.

In our capacity as Chair of the event, we amended the statement we made at the Freedom of Religion or Belief Conference to make the final statement more inclusive of all perspectives and views to allow for a constructive exchange of views on all issues. The UK continues to fund support and lead on issues of gender including on SRHR, through initiatives related to Women, Peace and Security and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

■ Iran: Conferences

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[45782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what security assessment the UK Embassy in Albania made of the Free Iran Summit on 23 and 24 July in Durres.

Leo Docherty:

On 22 July, we amended FCDO Travel Advice for Albania to include a factual reference to US advice to US citizens, to avoid the Free Iran Summit. The organisers of the Free Iran Summit subsequently cancelled the event, citing security concerns. We do not routinely comment on security assessments. The UK continues to work closely with the Government of Albania and international partners to promote security and stability across the Western Balkans and protect UK interests.

■ Iran: Females

Ruth Jones:

[\[46112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made a recent assessment of the number of women and girls able to access publicly funded sport in Iran.

Gillian Keegan:

Iran is one of the FCDO's Human Rights Priority Countries. In the FCDO's Annual Human Rights and Democracy Report, we continue to highlight the issues women and girls face in Iran and other Human Rights Priority Countries.

The UK Government does not hold information on how many women and girls are able to access publicly funded sports, but continues to track the situation of women and girls closely. We raise our concerns with the Iranian government at all appropriate opportunities, and continue to work alongside international partners to press Iran to improve its record.

■ Iran: Nuclear Power

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[45784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking with international partners to reverse Iran's nuclear escalation.

Gillian Keegan:

Iran has been in non-compliance with its nuclear commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) since 2019 and its nuclear programme has never been more advanced than it is today. Iran's escalation of its nuclear activities is threatening international peace and security and undermining the global non-proliferation system.

There has been a viable deal on the table since March to return Iran to compliance with its commitments, and return the US to the deal. The deal would reverse Iran's nuclear escalation, return Iran's nuclear programme to strict JCPOA limits and restore extensive monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency. If Iran fails to conclude the deal, its nuclear escalation will cause the collapse of the JCPOA. In this scenario we would carefully consider all options in partnership with our allies.

■ Israeli Settlements**Daisy Cooper:**[\[46156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has made representations to the Israeli government on its E1 settlement plan.

Daisy Cooper:[\[46157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Israeli government's E1 settlement plan on the human rights of Palestinian residents in that area.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK welcomes the decision to postpone the discussion to advance the E1 settlement plan. We will monitor developments closely. The UK continues to urge the Government of Israel to permanently end its settlement expansion and settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and advancement of the E1 settlement plan. The former Minister Milling, raised our concerns with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll on 22 June. The UK continues to raise our opposition to settlement advancements at the UN Security Council.

■ Israeli Settlements: Construction**Fleur Anderson:**[\[45604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the construction of the E1 Israeli settlement.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK welcomes the decision to postpone the discussion to advance the E1 settlement plan. We will monitor developments closely. The UK continues to urge the Government of Israel to permanently end its settlement expansion and settlement activity in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and advancement of the E1 settlement plan. The former Minister for the Middle East raised our concerns with

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll on 22 June. The UK continues to raise our opposition to settlement advancements at the UN Security Council.

■ Japan: Embassies

Ruth Jones: [\[46078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Tokyo in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF						
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022
46078 a)	Tokyo	70-79	80-89	70-79	80-89	80-89	80-89	80-89

■ Kenya: Embassies

Ruth Jones: [\[46076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Nairobi in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF						
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022
46076 a)	Nairobi	200-219	240-259	220-239	260-279	260-279	260-279	260-279

■ Lebanon: Economic Situation

Bambos Charalambous: [\[45562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment the Government has made of the economic situation in Lebanon.

Gillian Keegan:

Lebanon is experiencing a severe economic crisis. The Lebanese government must deliver economic reforms as the only way to rebuild the confidence of the international community and set the country on a more sustainable path to long-term economic stability. The economic crisis has been exacerbated by COVID-19, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the aftermath of the Beirut port explosion of August 2020.

This crisis has had a severe impact, in particular on healthcare provision and poverty rates in the country, for both Lebanese citizens and the vulnerable refugee populations. The UK and members of the UN-led International Support Group for Lebanon are clear that Lebanon's leaders need to implement credible economic reforms as the only sustainable way to address this crisis and alleviate the suffering of the Lebanese people.

■ Lebanon: Hezbollah**Andrew Percy:**[\[44974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has had recent discussions with her Lebanese counterpart on the launching of drones by Hezbollah towards Israel's Karish gas facility.

Gillian Keegan:

Our commitment to Israel's security is unwavering. Lebanon and Israel are important regional partners for the UK and we collaborate closely on issues of defence and security. This includes regular discussions at the highest levels on the destabilising threat posed by Hizballah activity across the region. We condemn Hizballah's activity which directly threatens regional stability and endangers civilians in Lebanon and Israel.

FCDO Minister of State, Lord [Tariq] Ahmad of Wimbledon most recently discussed regional security with Lebanese Foreign Minister Bou Habib on 6 July. The Former Foreign Secretary also raised this issue during a call with Israeli Foreign Minister Lapid on 22 June.

■ Lesotho: Contraceptives**Ruth Jones:**[\[46031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to support women's access to contraceptive services in Lesotho.

Ruth Jones:[\[46032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to support women's access to contraceptive services in Malawi.

Ruth Jones:

[\[46033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to support women’s access to contraceptive services in Botswana, and if she has discussed this with her counterparts in that country.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK is proud to defend and promote universal and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The UK has supported 9.5 million women and girls to use modern methods of contraception since 2018 through the Women’s Integrated Sexual Health (WISH) programme (2017-2024), which now works in 17 sub Saharan African countries.

While the UK does not currently provide bilateral support to women’s access to contraceptive services in Lesotho or Botswana, the FCDO invests in a broad range of global SRHR programmes, including access to voluntary family planning, through the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Reproductive Health Supplies programme.

■ Middle East: Foreign Relations

Daisy Cooper:

[\[46158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of not having a specific ministerial role for the Middle East on the UK’s influence in that region.

Gillian Keegan:

Ministerial appointments are a decision for the Prime Minister. The Middle East ministerial post remains within the FCDO.

■ Namibia: Embassies

Ruth Jones:

[\[46084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British High Commission in Windhoek in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF					
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021
46084 a)	Windhoek	10-19	20-29	10-19	10-19	20-29	20-29

■ Pakistan: Floods

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[45700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support her Department is providing to Pakistan to assist that country in tackling floods.

Leo Docherty:

The UK stands shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan, as it faces the consequences of the recent devastating flooding. The UK was one of the first countries to announce funding (£1.5 million) to respond to the humanitarian need. We have now increased this to £16.5 million to support flood relief efforts. The UK contribution now also amounts to over 10% of the joint UN and Government of Pakistan emergency appeal (\$160 million).

■ Private Military and Security Companies

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[48281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on (a) recent statements made by the Russian Embassy relating to Azov militants and capital punishment and (b) the legal status of mercenaries under International Public Law.

Leo Docherty:

There are regular discussions with Cabinet and ministerial colleagues on the situation in Ukraine. The exploitation of prisoners of war for political purposes is a clear breach of International Humanitarian Law. We will ensure those responsible are held to account and will continue to consider options in concert with our allies. The Government of Ukraine is clear that those serving in the Azov Battalion are legitimate members of the Ukraine Armed Forces. On this basis, HMG's position is that they should be treated as Prisoners of War, and in this context, the FS has not had discussions with Cabinet about the legal status of mercenaries under International Public Law. This is another example of Russia not complying with International Humanitarian Law and instead exploiting individuals for political purposes.

■ Republic of Ireland: Embassies

Ruth Jones:

[\[46075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Dublin in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF

Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022
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NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF

46075 a) Dublin	20-29	30-39	20-29	30-39	40-49	30-39	30-39
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■ **Russia: Arctic****Ruth Jones:**[\[46114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) implications for her policies and (b) potential impact on peace and security in Northern Europe of Russian military activity in the Arctic region.

Leo Docherty:

The Ministry Of Defence's Defence High North strategy, published earlier this year, assessed that Russia is increasingly militarising its Arctic territory, establishing a new Northern Joint Strategic Command, reopening Cold War-era bases above the Arctic Circle, and investing in further Arctic-capable equipment. Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic has reached Cold War levels. We will continue to work with our Allies and partners to monitor the implications of Russia's military activity in the Arctic and High North, and to preserve the security and stability of the wider region.

■ **Russia: Unmanned Air Vehicles****Drew Hendry:**[\[45904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the sanctions regime to include people facilitating the (a) purchase and (b) transfer of civilian drones that could be used by Russian service personnel during the war in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK, along with its allies, have introduced severe sanctions against Russia's defence industry. This includes prohibitions on the export, supply and delivery, and making available of restricted goods, including unmanned aircraft, to Russia. Sanctions against Kronshtadt, the main producer of Kronshtadt Orion drones and other unmanned aerial vehicles widely used during Russia's invasion of Ukraine, will make it harder to replace these drones. We will continue this pressure against Putin and his regime, until Ukraine prevails or Putin's ends his war of choice. It is not appropriate to speculate on specific future designations. To do this could reduce the impact of the designations.

■ **Sanctions: Russia****Drew Hendry:**[\[45140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether officials in his Department have had discussions with their counterparts in third party countries that (a) have not sanctioned Russia over its war in Ukraine and (b) import

UK produced goods on ensuring that UK manufactured products within the sanctions regime are not transferred or sold onto Russia.

Leo Docherty:

In close coordination with our allies, we continue to engage extensively with countries across the world to urge them to support our effort to deprive Putin's war machine of the goods and services it needs to continue its illegal invasion. This includes countries which do not impose autonomous sanctions. In addition to banning the direct export of hundreds of goods to Russia, we have also prohibited UK persons from directly or indirectly supplying these goods from a third country to Russia.

■ **Schengen Agreement**

Stephen Hammond:

[\[47494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Article six of the Schengen Borders Code applies to UK citizens travelling to the EU.

Leo Docherty:

Article 6 of the EU's Schengen Borders Code applies to UK nationals when travelling to Schengen Area Member States. UK nationals legally resident in a Member State are exempt from these checks when travelling to their country of residence.

Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania are in the EU but they are not part of the Schengen Area. UK nationals travelling to these countries can expect similar checks as set out in Article 6 of the Schengen Borders Code. We advise UK nationals to check the FCDO's travel advice pages on GOV.UK for the latest information on travel to Europe.

■ **Somalia: Terrorism**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[45783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the terrorist attack in Mogadishu on 19 August 2022.

Leo Docherty:

Tackling Al Shabaab is one of the UK's top international counter-terrorism priorities, as we seek to keep the UK and its interests at home and overseas safe from the threat of terrorism. We condemn the ongoing violence perpetrated by Al Shabaab and partner with the Kenyan and Somali Governments, as well as the wider international community, to counter the threat posed by the group.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[45785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will make an estimate of the number of UK nationals who were directly affected by the terrorist attack in Mogadishu on 19 August 2022.

Leo Docherty:

The FCDO has supported one man who was injured in the attack and have offered our support to the family of another man who was killed.

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[45786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the organisation responsible for the planning and execution of the attack in Mogadishu on 19 August 2022.

Leo Docherty:

It is our assessment that the referenced attack in Mogadishu on 19 August 2022 was conducted by Al Shabaab.

■ Somaliland: Development Aid**Alexander Stafford:**[\[48516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which Government agencies and bodies (a) were operating in and (b) worked with Somaliland as of 6 September 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK effort in Somaliland is led by the FCDO. Although there is no formal trade office in Hargeisa, officers from the Department for International Trade based in Nairobi also cover Somaliland.

For a decade the UK has been the only Western bilateral donor with a permanent diplomatic presence in Hargeisa. UK cooperation with Somaliland covers a broad range of areas, including supporting its development and security, enhancing stability and promoting economic, human and social development through a network of cross-Government resources. British International Investment (BII), the development finance institution of the UK Government, plays an important role in our work in Somaliland. Through BII, the UK has made a significant investment in the development of Berbera Port. This is part of an initial £232 million investment into three ports in Africa. Separately, the FCDO has invested £25 million of official development assistance in the Berbera Corridor, which will drive economic growth and present significant opportunities for UK businesses.

Alexander Stafford:[\[48519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing UK aid to Somaliland.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK is already a leading partner of Somaliland, supporting its development and security, enhancing stability and promoting economic, human and social development. For a decade the UK has been the only Western bilateral donor with a permanent diplomatic presence in Hargeisa. The FCDO has invested £25 million of Official Development Assistance in the Berbera Corridor, which will drive economic

growth in Somaliland and the region, and present significant opportunities for UK businesses.

The UK is also committed to supporting the ongoing humanitarian response in Somalia, including Somaliland. This financial year the UK intends to provide £156 million across East Africa to support communities affected by drought, conflict and flooding. This is in addition to the £46 million of humanitarian support that the UK contributed to Somalia, including Somaliland last financial year. Our aid is helping millions of people to access food, water and healthcare.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[48520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she is taking steps to increase UK health cooperation with Somaliland to the benefit of the people of Somaliland.

Gillian Keegan:

As one of the largest donors to the health sector in Somalia, including Somaliland, the UK is a leading partner, promoting and supporting human and social development. The UK provided £41.8 million of support to the now completed Somali Health and Nutrition programme in Somaliland, focusing on the provision of lifesaving services to the most vulnerable populations, including women and girls.

In addition, through £14 million of yearly support through UNICEF, the UK is funding the Better Lives for Somali Women and Children programme which will begin next year in Somalia, including Somaliland. This new programme will provide life-saving support to reduce the high rates of preventable deaths, combat cross-border threats of infectious diseases, and create lasting health benefits for some of the world's most vulnerable women and children.

■ Somaliland: Economic Growth

Ruth Jones:

[\[46021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken through (a) international diplomacy, (b) Official Development Assistance, or (c) other means, to facilitate economic growth in Somaliland.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK is a leading partner of Somaliland, supporting its development, security, enhancing stability and promoting economic, human and social development. For a decade the UK has been the only Western bilateral donor with a permanent diplomatic presence in Hargeisa. The UK provides economic support to Somaliland through the £25 million Horn of Africa programme and our £35 million contribution to the Somaliland Development Fund. In addition, through British International Investment, the UK has made a significant investment in the development of Berbera Port. This is part of an initial £232 million investment into three ports in Africa. Separately, the FCDO has invested £25 million of official development assistance in the Berbera Corridor, which will drive economic growth and present significant opportunities for UK businesses.

■ Somaliland: Foreign Relations

Alexander Stafford: [\[48512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department has taken to strengthen relations with Somaliland.

Alexander Stafford: [\[48517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to support good governance in Somaliland.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK is a leading partner of Somaliland, supporting its development, security, enhancing stability and promoting economic, human and social development. For a decade the UK has been the only Western bilateral donor with a permanent diplomatic presence in Hargeisa. A prominent area of UK support has been our assistance to the Somaliland National Elections Commission, where we provided £1.97 million to upgrade voter registration systems and support election observation. This increased the participation of women and minority ethnic groups.

Alexander Stafford: [\[48513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has taken diplomatic steps to help ensure Somaliland is represented in international multilateral organisations and agreements.

Gillian Keegan:

The international community as a whole, including the UK, does not recognise Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence. Somaliland cannot, therefore, be represented in international multilateral organisations as an independent state would be.

However, the UK remains a leading partner of Somaliland, supporting its development, security, enhancing stability and promoting economic, human and social development. For a decade the UK has been the only Western bilateral donor with a permanent diplomatic presence in Hargeisa.

Alexander Stafford: [\[48514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has taken diplomatic steps to help encourage Commonwealth engagement with Somaliland.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK, consistent with the entire international community, does not recognise Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence. It is for Somaliland and Somalia to come to an agreement about their future relationship. In this context it would not be appropriate for the UK to encourage Commonwealth engagement with Somaliland.

Any new arrangements would need to be recognised by the African Union and neighbours in the region. The African Union is the pre-eminent regional body mandated to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its

Member States, of which Somalia is one. The UK encourages dialogue between Mogadishu and Hargeisa on this issue.

■ **Somaliland: Peace Negotiations**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[48518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will take steps to support the people of Somaliland in exercising their right to self-determination.

Gillian Keegan:

The UK, consistent with the entire international community, does not recognise Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence. It is for Somaliland and Somalia to come to an agreement about their future relationship.

Any new arrangements would need to be recognised by the African Union and neighbours in the region. The African Union is the pre-eminent regional body mandated to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its Member States, of which Somalia is one. The UK encourages dialogue between Mogadishu and Hargeisa on this issue.

■ **South Sudan: Politics and Government**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken through (a) international diplomacy, (b) Official Development Assistance, or (c) other means, to support democracy in South Sudan.

Gillian Keegan:

A peace agreement that is implemented in full is in the best interests of the people of South Sudan, the region and international community. The UK has regularly raised our concerns at the lack of progress, including at the UN Security Council in June; and during visits by senior FCDO officials to Juba. In August, we also issued a statement with our Troika partners and the EU, calling for the swift implementation of the peace agreement. On 1 September we abstained on a vote to endorse the South Sudanese Government's most recent proposal to extend the peace process by a further two years. Alongside the vote we released a Troika and EU statement setting out concerns at the lack of progress since 2015 and pressed the Government of South Sudan to demonstrate sustained political will and genuine progress.

The UK Government remains a leading donor in South Sudan, working with the UN and partners on the response to the humanitarian crisis, and funding crucial health and education services. We supported the mandate renewal of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and provide funding via the UN peacekeeping budget. The UK-funded Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund works to address the root causes of subnational conflict and strengthen community resilience to violence in two South Sudanese states. The UK also contributes funds towards the Better Aid in Conflict programme, and funds three positions in the South Sudanese peace process

monitoring mechanisms. We continue to work closely with regional and international partners and international institutions to put pressure on the Government of South Sudan to implement the peace agreement and move towards free and fair elections, and address the security situation and humanitarian crisis.

■ Southern Africa: Females

Ruth Jones:

[46113]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken through (a) bilateral discussions and (b) aid programmes to improve access to mobile technology for woman and girls in the Southern African Development Community region.

Gillian Keegan:

The FCDO supports inclusive, responsible and sustainable digital transformation in developing and emerging partner countries, and is providing assistance across a wide range of programmes. The UK Digital Access Programme (DAP) operates in five countries, including South Africa. The Programme promotes digital inclusion policies and regulations and supports scalable models for affordable last-mile connectivity, digital skills and locally-relevant digital content and services for underserved groups - with a strong emphasis on closing the digital gender gap. About one million women and girls in the Southern and Eastern African region have directly benefited from the Digital Access Programme through inclusive connectivity and digital skills projects in FY2021/22.

Through the Connected Women Commitment initiative (<https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/connected-women/the-commitment/>) we have supported the Mobile Gender Gap (<https://www.gsma.com/r/gender-gap/>) report by GSMA, a global organisation working with mobile providers to improve access to mobile technology. We are also working with Vodacom Tanzania and Ecocash Zimbabwe to increase the number of women in their mobile money customer base. Working alongside GSMA, the FCDO has made investments in two start-up companies in Zambia (WidEnergy) and Zimbabwe (Zonful) that work to improve telecoms access for women.

In addition, the UK Government has signed a Declaration of Intent with the Government of South Africa (Department of Communications and Digital Technologies) to agree on cooperation with regard to inclusive digital access policies and projects.

■ Southern Africa: LGBT+ People

Ruth Jones:

[46115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps she has taken to support LGBTQ+ rights in southern Africa.

Vicky Ford:

The UK is committed to championing LGBT+ rights internationally and supporting those who defend them. Ministers and our overseas missions work closely with partners across Southern Africa to advance LGBT+ equality, and promote the implementation of new laws and policies that better protect LGBT+ people from violence and discrimination.

Since 2018, the UK has committed over £13.5 million in programmes to support the promotion and protection of LGBT+ people's rights around the world. On 24 June, the former Prime Minister announced a further £2.7 million of UK funding to support LGBT+ grassroots human rights defenders, including those fighting for equality in Southern Africa.

■ **Spain: Embassies****Ruth Jones:**[\[46077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Madrid in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF					
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021
46077 a)	Madrid	70-79	70-79	80-89	100-119	100-119	120-139

■ **Tigray: Armed Conflict****Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[47483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the impact on a) food security, b) access to healthcare and c) other humanitarian impacts of the resumption of violence between the TPLF and the government of Ethiopia since 24 August 2022.

Gillian Keegan:

The conflict in Ethiopia has contributed to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, leaving 13 million people in Tigray, Amhara and Afar requiring humanitarian assistance. The breakdown of the truce between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian Government, and the renewed involvement of Eritrea, is catastrophic for the people of Ethiopia and makes the work of humanitarian agencies much more difficult. Humanitarian access to Tigray is now extremely limited. This is having a devastating impact on food security, access to healthcare and other humanitarian needs.

The UK urges all parties to the conflict to guarantee unfettered humanitarian access by immediately ceasing hostilities and allowing aid in. The UK calls on the Ethiopian Government to urgently restore services to Tigray and the TPLF to return the fuel that it seized so that it can be used for aid distribution and critical services.

■ **Tobias White-Sansom**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[47330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions (a) she and (b) her Department has had with their Spanish counterparts regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of Tobias Evald White-Sansom in Mallorca on 31 July 2022.

Leo Docherty:

FCDO Officials in Spain have met with representatives from the Guardia Civil to inform them of our interest in the case. They are also in touch with the lawyer of Mr White-Sansom's family and the relevant Spanish authorities and will continue to liaise with them. An investigation by the Spanish authorities is currently underway. The FCDO will continue to offer support to Mr White-Sansom's family at this difficult time.

■ **Togo: Education**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if her Department will make an assessment of the access that women and girls have to education in Togo.

Gillian Keegan:

Girls in Togo have lower enrolment rates than boys and are more likely to drop out of schooling. The Togolese Government's education strategy up to 2025 is focused on achieving universal primary education, extending coverage in rural and poor communities, reducing illiteracy, and developing quality secondary, technical, vocational, and higher education courses.

The UK Government was pleased to welcome the President of Togo, Faure Gnassingbé, to the UK in 2021 for the Global Education Summit, which raised \$4 billion to support the education of vulnerable children worldwide. An upcoming education conference in December, being organised by UK education stakeholders in Lomé, will bring together key education players from the UK and across West Africa to discuss ways of ensuring that education systems meet the future needs of the 21st Century.

■ **Turkey: Embassies**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British Embassy in Ankara in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF					
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021
46079 a)	Ankara	100-119	100-119	100-119	100-119	100-119	90-99

Turkey: Foreign Relations**Andrew Percy:**[\[44973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's regional strategy of President Erdogan's meeting with President Raisi and President Putin on 19 July 2022.

Leo Docherty:

The meeting of 19 July 2022 took place within the framework of the 'Astana' format, which Turkey, Russia and Iran have used since 2017 to discuss Syria and which the UK does not recognise this as the legitimate forum to discuss Syria's political future. Turkey is a NATO ally and an important partner for the UK in addressing the security and humanitarian challenges in the region, including northern Syria, where we urge all parties to maintain ceasefires and protect civilians. Ultimately, the only way to end the terrible suffering of the Syrian people, inflicted by the Syrian regime and its allies, including Russia and Iran, is through the UN-facilitated political process in Geneva.

Uganda: Embassies**Ruth Jones:**[\[46080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many (a) permanent and (b) temporary staff worked at the British High Commission in Kampala in each year since 2016.

Gillian Keegan:

		NUMBER OF PERMANENT STAFF					
Question Ref	Location	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021
46080 a)	Kampala	70-79	90-99	80-89	90-99	90-99	90-99

■ Uganda: LGBT+ People**Ms Lyn Brown:**[\[47491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions her Department has had with the authorities in Uganda on protecting LGBTQ people from inhuman or degrading treatment in that country.

Gillian Keegan:

We make regular representations to the Government of Uganda on LGBT+ issues through our High Commission in Kampala. We also work on these issues in Uganda through international organisations, including the UN, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Commonwealth, to address discriminatory laws and end discrimination against LGBT+ people. Our approach to protecting LGBT+ rights in Uganda is shaped through our regular consultation with civil society organisations and is cognisant of the risk of negative repercussions of discriminatory practises for the LGBT+ community in Uganda.

■ Ukraine: Military Aid**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[47384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many units of (a) body armour, (b) night vision goggles, (c) ballistic helmets and (d) other non-lethal aid the UK has sent to Ukraine as of 5 September 2022; and whether the Government plans to continue to send (a) aid of that nature and (b) other humanitarian support to Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has sent over 200,000 pieces of non-lethal aid to Ukraine, including helmets, body armour, range finders and medical equipment. In providing lethal and non-lethal aid to Ukraine, we have liaised closely with the Ukrainian Armed Forces to determine and meet their needs. We have also enabled the delivery of systems and capabilities from other donor nations. In the coming weeks, we will send thousands more pieces of vital equipment. We have also committed £220 million of humanitarian funding to those affected by Russia's invasion. Our priority is to support the most vulnerable people - including women, children, the elderly and disabled. Our pledge includes over £140 million to UN and Red Cross Agencies and £25 million in matched funding to the Disasters Emergency Committee Appeal.

■ UN Convention on the Law of the Sea**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[47725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Vicky Ford:

It is a priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office with the UK Government to implement, uphold and strengthen the United Nations Convention on

the Law of The Sea (UNCLOS). UNCLOS provides a framework for developing more detailed treaties and instruments that tackle areas of interest to the UK such as the Protocol against smuggling migrants, fisheries instruments, instruments concerning pollution and conservation.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are championing the development of a new Implementing Agreement on marine biodiversity of the High Seas negotiations on which were recently suspended in New York but are expected to resume early in 2023. The UK continues to work through the International Maritime Organisation, Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and other bodies to develop regulations, guidance and best practices that support safety, security and conservation of the ocean. We are also deploying our military assets to uphold freedoms where they are challenged, and delivering capacity building to countries to support effective and sustainable management of their marine zones.

■ **Zimbabwe: Commonwealth**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans her Department has to support Zimbabwe's application to join the Commonwealth.

Gillian Keegan:

The decision on whether Zimbabwe re-joins the Commonwealth is for all Commonwealth members. The UK will support re-admission if Zimbabwe meets the admission requirements and complies with the values and principles set out in the Commonwealth Charter.

■ **Zimbabwe: Education**

Ruth Jones:

[\[46023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent (a) discussions she has had with her Zimbabwean counterpart on taking steps to, (b) Official Development Assistance funding her Department has made available and (c) other steps her Department has taken to help improve access to education for women and girls in Zimbabwe.

Gillian Keegan:

Minister Ford discussed girls' education with the Zimbabwean Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu on 23 May 2022. They discussed the UK's bilateral support and progress in implementing the Government of Zimbabwe's commitments to the Kenyatta Declaration, including allocating 20 percent of the budget to education and allowing girls to return to school after pregnancy.

The UK is the largest bilateral donor to the education sector in Zimbabwe, investing £241 million since 2012. Despite significant challenges in the sector, this has supported 190,000 girls and boys in Zimbabwe to get a decent education.

The UK support is channelled through three programmes. The Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for Children Programme (TEACH) (£39.8 million from 2019-

2025) supports school improvement grants, teacher development and girls' education. The Zimbabwe Girls Secondary Education Programme (£39.6 million from 2012-2023) has supported over 57,000 marginalised girls to attend and complete their secondary education and provided over 5,100 bicycles so girls can travel safely to and from school. The UK's Girls Education Challenge fund (£44 million from 2017-2023) has piloted catch-up materials to support the lost learning time caused by COVID-19. The UK is also a major funder of the Global Partnership for Education, which has provided \$75.7 million to Zimbabwe since 2013.

■ Zimbabwe: South Africa

Ruth Jones:

[46058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) health and wellbeing and (b) financial situation of the Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa.

Gillian Keegan:

There are an estimated 300,000 Zimbabweans in South Africa on Zimbabwe Exemption Permits (ZEPs) and we note that the South African Government has extended these permits until June 2023. We are also aware that there are estimated 2-5 million Zimbabweans living undocumented in South Africa. We do not collect data on their health, wellbeing or financial situation. Minister Ford, my predecessor as Minister for Africa, discussed a broad range of issues, including Zimbabwe, during her recent visit to South Africa.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Analgesics

Ms Marie Rimmer:

[47575]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing fetal pain relief during abortion procedures, in a similar way to that provided to fetuses in utero during open fetal surgery for spina bifida repair.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Department does not set clinical practice. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has considered the issue of fetal pain and awareness in its guidelines on 'The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion' and 'Fetal Awareness: Review of Research and Recommendations for Practice', which are available at the following links:

https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/abortion-guideline_web_1.pdf

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/rcogfetalawarenesswpr0610.pdf>

The Royal College has established a review group to consider the latest evidence on fetal pain and fetal awareness. It is expected to report on its findings by the end of 2022.

■ **Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust: Air Pollution**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what data his Department holds on the level of air pollution outside NHS facilities in the Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The information requested is not held centrally. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs publishes measured and modelled data for outdoor air quality. Local authorities also provide monitoring data online and in Annual Status Reports.

■ **Cancer: Children**

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[45391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding is available for children's cancer in the current financial year; and how much funding has been available for children's cancer in each of the last five financial years.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally. National Health Service commissioners receive allocations for a range of services and specific funding for children's cancer services is not recorded separately.

■ **Cannabis: Medical Treatments**

Martyn Day:

[\[45233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an impact assessment of the regulations prohibiting regulated manufacture of medical cannabis and CBD products on patient safety.

Martyn Day:

[\[45491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will take steps to reform regulations relating to the production of cannabis-based medicinal products to support UK patients and businesses.

Will Quince:

The manufacture of cannabis-based medicines is allowed under the appropriate Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and Home Office licences. Cannabis-based medicines must comply with all applicable requirements and high standards of manufacture that apply to all other medicines to ensure patient safety.

In 2018, the Government amended the law to allow specialist doctors to prescribe unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use, where clinically appropriate, with an accompanying impact assessment published by the Home Office. The

Government must consider advice from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) before making any further amendments to the law in this area. At the request of the Home Office, the ACMD have recently reviewed this legislation and concluded that no amendments are currently required.

Cannabidiol (CBD) in its pure form is not a controlled drug. However, many consumer CBD products also contain varying amounts of controlled cannabinoids due to difficulties in isolating pure CBD. The Home Office has sought the ACMD's advice on a legal framework exempting CBD products with a defined trace percentage of controlled cannabinoids from control under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The ACMD responded on December 17 2021 and the Government is currently considering this advice.

■ Care Workers: Allowances

Navendu Mishra:

[\[47691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will offer support to local authorities to help social care providers to increase the mileage allowance paid to care workers.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to manage local care markets. The vast majority of care workers are employed by private sector providers which set their terms and conditions, including remuneration for travel costs, independently of Government. Local authorities work with care providers to determine fee rates, which should take account of employment costs, based on local market conditions.

We are committing £1.36 billion to the Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund. The Fund will support local authorities to prepare markets for reform and move towards paying providers a fair cost of care. The Government continues to work with local government and care providers to understand the impact from challenges such as energy price rises and inflationary pressures.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[48511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to encourage more women to attend cervical screening appointments; and what recent steps his Department has taken to make cervical screening more accessible.

Will Quince:

The national 'Help us help you' Cervical Screening Saves Lives campaign ran in February and March 2022 to urge individuals not to ignore a cervical screening invitation and to contact their general practitioner (GP) where an invitation has been missed. In some Primary Care Networks, appointments can be made in any primary

care setting in addition to the patient's GP practice for evenings and weekends and via integrated sexual health clinics.

To support improved uptake, the effectiveness of human papillomavirus self-sampling is being evaluated. This initiative could address some barriers which prevent people from attending for screening, such as physical disability or trauma.

■ **Children's Play: Staff**

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[45207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the current provision of play specialists is (a) across the NHS and (b) specifically for children with cancer.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally. However, NHS England has established a taskforce with stakeholders, including the Starlight Foundation, National Association for Hospital Play Specialists. This group aims to develop guidance on play services for National Health Service providers and recognised practice standards. It will also explore options for the regulation of health play specialists.

■ **Contraceptives: Pharmacy**

Feryal Clark:

[\[46200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to expand the NHS Community Pharmacy Contraception Management Service Pilot; and when that pilot will be (a) evaluated and (b) progressed to Tier 2.

Will Quince:

The Pharmacy Integration Fund Tier 1 pilot is currently active, testing the on-going management, review and supply of oral contraception from community pharmacy for people on a regime initiated in general practice or sexual health clinics. The interim evaluation in early 2022 will be used to inform the development of any future community pharmacy service which manages oral contraception. This would be subject to negotiations with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, as would the commencement of a Tier 2 pilot and deployment of the service.

■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[45553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing a fourth dose of a Covid-19 vaccine to all people over the age of 12.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Government continues to be guided by the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on COVID-19 vaccinations. On 15 July 2022, the Government accepted the advice of the JCVI to offer an autumn COVID-19 booster dose to those at higher risk from severe COVID-19 in winter 2022/23.

Therefore, the autumn COVID-19 booster dose will be offered to residents and staff in care homes for older adults; all adults aged 50 years old and over; those aged five to 49 years old in a clinical risk group or who are household contacts of someone with immunosuppression; frontline health and social care workers; and carers aged 16 years old and over.

■ Dental Services: Fees and Charges

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[45639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to exempt those people who were prescribed tetracycline from future dental costs.

Will Quince:

There are no current plans to do so. However, we continue to provide financial support through a range of exemptions to dental patient charges. Free National Health Service dental care is available for those aged under 18 years old or under 19 years old and in full-time education; those who are pregnant or have had a baby in the previous 12 months; patients being treated in an NHS hospital and where the treatment is carried out by the hospital dentist; and those receiving low-income benefits or are under 20 years old and a dependant of someone receiving low-income benefits. Support is also available through the NHS Low Income Scheme for those patients who are not eligible for exemption or full remission.

■ Endometriosis: Health Services

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to establish care pathways for endometriosis outside the pelvic area, including thoracic endometriosis.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

NHS England is reviewing the service specification for severe endometriosis, including care pathways for thoracic endometriosis and expects to report on the outcome in 2023. This will ensure that specialist endometriosis services have access to the most recent evidence and advice and improve standards of care for women with severe endometriosis.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guideline on endometriosis was published in 2017. In December 2021, NICE amended the section on referral for women with suspected or confirmed endometriosis to highlight that women with endometriosis outside the pelvic cavity should be referred to a specialist endometriosis centre. NICE is undertaking a further review of its guideline and will consider any further updates.

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[45471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the evidence provided to the Women's Health Strategy for England on endometriosis diagnosis and treatment, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of a change in the

service specification for severe endometriosis on diagnosis rates and access to treatment for that condition.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

NHS England is reviewing the service specification for severe endometriosis and its impact will be considered through the overall service specification review methodology. The working group will report on this review in 2023.

Service specifications define the standards of care expected from organisations commissioned by NHS England to provide specialist care. This update will ensure that specialist endometriosis services have access to current evidence and advice and improve standards of care.

■ **Endometriosis: Mental Health Services**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make mental health support available for women with endometriosis.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

Access to mental health services is based on clinical need. We are investing at least an additional £2.3 billion a year in mental health services by 2023/24 to allow an additional two million people to receive mental health support.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guideline on endometriosis was published in 2017. Section 1.2 of the guideline includes information and support on mental health. NICE recognises that endometriosis can have a significant physical, sexual, psychological and social impact and those with endometriosis may have complex needs and require long-term support. The guideline recommends assessment of individual circumstances, symptoms, priorities, desire for fertility, aspects of daily living, work and study, cultural background and physical, psychosexual and emotional needs.

■ **Endometriosis: Pain**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) improve access to pain management for people with endometriosis and (b) ensure endometriosis is recognised by NICE as a chronic pain condition.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Women's Health Strategy for England, published in July 2022, highlighted menstrual health and gynaecological conditions, including endometriosis, as a priority area and states the ambition to improve the experience of care for women and girls with severe endometriosis.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guideline on endometriosis make recommendations on pharmacological pain management, including analgesics, neuromodulators and neuropathic pain treatments and

hormonal treatments. The NICE guideline 'Endometriosis: diagnosis and management' is available at the following link: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng73>

NHS England is reviewing the service specification for severe endometriosis and a working group will report the outcome in 2023. This will ensure that specialist endometriosis services have access to the recent evidence and advice and improve standards of care for women with severe endometriosis.

■ **Epidermolysis Bullosa: Health Services and Research**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[45330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support patients of Epidermolysis Bullosa on the NHS in England; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing funding into research on that condition.

Will Quince:

NHS England commissions a national epidermolysis bullosa (EB) service to provide diagnosis and assessment of infants, children, adolescents and adults with suspected or known EB, with treatment and long-term support. NHS England is aware that a number of innovative treatments for EB are either in trials or being considered by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). If any of these treatments are given a positive recommendation by NICE, NHS England will ensure that service provision is in place to deliver these treatments.

The Department funds research through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR). While the usual practice of the NIHR is not to ring-fence funds for expenditure on particular topics, the NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of health or care research, including therapies for rare conditions such as EB. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality. In the past 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.

■ **Evusheld**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[47379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects NICE's review of Evusheld to be concluded.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: On 10 August 2022, the Department referred tixagevimab and cilgavimab (Evusheld) to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to evaluate its clinical and cost effectiveness for preventing COVID-19. Between 29 July and 12 August, NICE consulted with stakeholders on the suggested remit, draft scope and list of consultees and commentators.

NICE has commenced this evaluation and currently expects to publish draft guidance in April 2023, with final guidance to follow in May 2023. In discussion with AstraZeneca, NICE is expediting the appraisal process by bringing forward the deadline for the manufacturer's evidence submission.

■ Food: Labelling

Jacob Young:

[\[45536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of calorie labelling requirements on restaurant menus on people with eating disorders.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Department continues to evaluate the impact of the out-of-home calorie labelling Regulations, including on people living with eating disorders and will publish a post-implementation review within five years of implementation. This will consider the implementation and effectiveness of the policy and will use various methods such as structured observations, intercept surveys, national survey analysis and qualitative interviews. The Department is commissioning additional research to ensure that the impact of the Regulations on people with lived experience of eating disorders is considered.

■ General Practitioners: Hitchin and Harpenden

Bim Afolami:

[\[45993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for a GP appointment in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency in the latest period for which data is available; and what steps his Department is taking to help reduce these waiting times.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally. However, we are investing least £1.5 billion to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 by increasing and diversifying the workforce to improve access to general practice appointments and reduce waiting times.

Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) has made tailored support visits to local practices to identify solutions to specific challenges and devise action plans where improvement is needed. More than 70 practices in Hertfordshire and West Essex have been approved for additional funds to upgrade telephone lines to a 'cloud-based' system, which has the capability to offer call backs, queue management and to increase the number of lines available if needed. These new systems also enable call volumes and waiting times to be monitored to allow practices to adjust the number of staff taking calls according to the demand.

Bim Afolami:[\[45994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to help support GPs to offer face-to-face appointments in Hitchin and Harpenden constituency.

Will Quince:

In July 2022, 66.4% of general practice appointments were conducted face-to-face in the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System area, compared to 54.7% in 2021. Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) has confirmed that all practices in this area have been providing appointments face-to-face, by phone and video, as clinically necessary. The ICB provide a flexible 'pool' of locums to relieve some of the immediate pressure on individual general practitioners (GPs) who may be covering for temporary or long-term absence in their practices.

The Government made £520 million available during the pandemic to increase general practice capacity, including for providing face-to-face appointments. NHS England's guidance states that GP practices must provide face-to-face appointments, alongside remote consultations. Patients' input into consultation type should be sought and practices should respect preferences for face-to-face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary.

■ General Practitioners: Standards

Sam Tarry:[\[45053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what short and long term steps the Government is taking to increase the availability of GP appointments.

Will Quince:

Excluding COVID-19 vaccinations, there were an average of 1.24 million appointments per working day in July 2022, compared to 1.17 million in July 2019. We have also made £520 million available to improve access and expand general practice capacity during the pandemic. To reduce unnecessary bureaucracy for general practitioners (GPs) and increase capacity for appointments, we have expanded the range of healthcare professionals who can sign fit notes and published seven principles to reduce unnecessary burdens on GPs.

We are investing at least £1.5 billion to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 through increasing and diversifying the workforce. General practice teams include a range of other health professionals in addition to GPs, to respond to the needs of patients and we are on schedule to recruit an additional 26,000 primary care staff.

■ Health Centres: Essex

Mr Mark Francois:[\[48261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to expand patient capacity at Riverside Medical Centre at Hullbridge, Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

There are no current plans to do so. Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board is responsible for planning and commissioning local healthcare services, including primary medical care.

■ **Health Professions: Radiology****Wes Streeting:****[42123]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent radiologists were employed by the NHS in (a) 2022, (b) 2021 and (c) 2020.

Robert Jenrick:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England. These include staff working in National Health Service hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but excludes staff working in primary care, general practitioner surgeries, local authorities and other providers.

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent doctors working in the specialty of clinical radiology in NHS trusts and CCGs in England in March 2020, 2021 and 2022.

MARCH 2020	4,615
March 2021	4,817
March 2022	5,081

Wes Streeting:**[42124]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent radiographers were employed by the NHS in (a) 2022, (b) 2021 and (c) 2020.

Robert Jenrick:

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services workforce statistics for England. These include staff working in National Health Service hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but excludes staff working in primary care, general practitioner surgeries, local authorities and other providers.

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) digital and therapeutic radiographers working in NHS trusts and CCGs in England in March 2020, 2021 and 2022.

FTE DIAGNOSTIC RADIOGRAPHERS	FTE THERAPEUTIC RADIOGRAPHERS	
March 2020	15,057	2,952
March 2021	15,668	3,017
March 2022	16,123	2,957

■ Health Services and Social Services: Databases

Margaret Greenwood: [\[45333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the staffing hours required by health and social care providers to submit data to his Department under new requirements arising from the Health and Care Act 2022.

Neil O'Brien:

It is estimated that the staffing hours required would be less than one hour per month per provider.

■ Health Services: Females

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[45472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Results of the Women's Health, let's talk about its survey and the Women's Health Strategy for England, published on 20 July 2022, what steps he plans to take as part of that strategy to ensure that women feel they are listened to by their doctors.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Women's Health Strategy for England set out the ambition for women feel better listened to by healthcare professionals and ensure that concerns are taken seriously.

Through the National Institute for Health and Care Research, we have commissioned primary research into healthcare professionals' perspectives of listening to women in primary care, with a focus on menstrual and gynaecological symptoms. This follows an initial evidence review which identified very few studies relevant to this topic.

The Women's Health Strategy also states that we will work with the newly appointed Women's Health Ambassador and other organisations to consider actions to improve women and girls' experiences of services. In addition, the Ambassador will engage with healthcare professionals to understand their perspectives.

■ Health: Females

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[45290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to data produced by the ONS, Socioeconomic inequalities in avoidable mortality in England: 2019, released on 11 March 2021, what steps the Government is taking to tackle regional disparities in women's health outcomes in the context of women in the most deprived areas being 3.5 times more likely to die from an avoidable cause than those in the least deprived areas in England in 2019.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The white paper, 'Levelling Up the United Kingdom', committed to improve healthy life expectancy by five years by 2035 and to reduce the gap between the locations where healthy life expectancy is highest and lowest by 2030.

Each integrated care partnership (ICP) is required to develop an integrated care strategy by December 2022 which states how the assessed local needs can be met through the integrated care board, partner local authorities or NHS England. This must include plans to reduce disparities in health access, experience and outcomes. Departmental regional teams are working with ICPs to ensure that these plans are comprehensive, ambitious and determined by the evidence on local need.

Work to improve health and wellbeing and how the health and care system engages with women and girls is underway, to ensure equitable access to and experience of services and that disparities in outcomes are reduced.

■ **Healthy Start Scheme and School Milk**

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[45083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to offer plant-based milk alternatives (a) in the Nursery Milk Scheme and (b) through Healthy Start Vouchers.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

At present the legislation governing the Healthy Start scheme and the Nursery Milk Scheme allows for the purchase or reimbursement of the cost of cow's milk and infant formula based on cow's milk. The Department is currently considering this position.

Beneficiaries can use Healthy Start to purchase extra fruit and vegetables if they are unable to drink cow's milk or infant formula based on cow's milk. Infant formulas can be prescribed by general practitioners for a range of clinical indications.

■ **Healthy Start Scheme: North East**

Catherine McKinnell:

[45820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 23 May 2022 to Question 1509, and the Answer of 14 July 2022 to Question 18900, on Healthy Start Scheme: North East, what proportion of eligible claimants claimed Healthy Start vouchers in (a) the North East and (b) each local authority area in the North East in April 2022 and each subsequent month for which data is available.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Department of Health and Social Care is continuing to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to obtain the relevant data as soon as possible.

■ **Heart Diseases: Diagnosis**

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[48381]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what services breathlessness clinics will provide to support the early detection of heart valve disease; and whether those clinics will refer patients for auscultation using a stethoscope in primary care or community diagnostic centres.

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[48382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to support increases in auscultation using a stethoscope in primary and community care settings to detect heart murmurs characteristic of heart valve disease.

Will Quince:

NHS England has assessed that the use of clinical auscultation using a stethoscope is not a sensitive way of identifying the presence and clinical significance of heart valve disease or the detection of heart murmurs.

To support the early detection and diagnosis of heart valve disease NHS England has committed to launch at least 100 community diagnostic centres (CDCs) by 2024/25. These CDCs will provide services to detect heart murmurs, which are characteristic of heart valve and cardiovascular disease, through physiological measurement tests such as echocardiography and electrocardiograms, pathology tests, computerised tomography and magnetic resonance imaging scans.

In addition, the National Health Service is investing in cardiac networks to support whole pathway improvements. These networks have been developed to take an evidenced based, clinically led, whole pathway approach to improvement from prevention, diagnosis, treatment and end-of-life care.

■ **Hormone Replacement Therapy: Fees and Charges**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[45671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the cost of hormone replacement therapy.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

We have committed to reducing the cost of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) prescriptions through a bespoke pre-payment certificate. This will be introduced by April 2023 and will enable women to access as many National Health Service prescriptions for HRT medicines licensed for treatment of the menopause as required for an annual cost of two single item prescription charges, which is currently £18.70.

Justin Madders:

[\[45871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timescale is for introducing a single annual prepayment certificate of £18.70 for HRT prescriptions.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

We have committed to reducing the cost of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) prescriptions through a bespoke pre-payment certificate. This will be introduced by April 2023 and will enable women to access as many National Health Service prescriptions for HRT medicines licensed for treatment of the menopause as required for an annual cost of two single item prescription charges, which is currently £18.70.

■ Hospitals: Air Pollution

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how frequently air pollution levels are measured outside hospitals.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The information requested is not collected centrally. However, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs publishes measured and modelled data for outdoor air quality. Local authorities also publish monitoring data online and in Annual Status Reports.

■ Incontinence

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[47638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the provision of free incontinence products across Integrated Care Boards; and what assessment he has made of the impact of the availability of those products on disabled people's mobility and quality of life.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: No specific assessment has been made. However, general practitioners and incontinence clinics are expected to offer free incontinence products to all eligible patients following an assessment and diagnosis of incontinence issues. While there is no statutory requirement for the provision of pads for incontinence, all clinicians and integrated care boards are expected to follow the best practice in provision of incontinence products.

■ Infant Foods: Soya Beans

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing access to soy-based milk formulae.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[45420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to make provision through the Healthy Start Scheme for children who cannot drink cows' milk .

Dr Caroline Johnson:

At present the legislation governing the Healthy Start Scheme allows for the purchase of cow's milk and infant formula based on cow's milk. The Department is currently considering this position. Beneficiaries in receipt of Healthy Start can purchase extra fruit and vegetables if they are unable to drink cow's milk or infant formula based on cow's milk. Infant formulas can be prescribed by general practitioners for a range of clinical indications.

■ Mental Health Services: Tamworth**Christopher Pincher:** [\[45792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that people in Tamworth constituency have access to local and adequate mental health inpatient care.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

NHS England has advised that Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board, which provides inpatient care for the Tamworth constituency, is developing a long-term solution for inpatient mental health services. This is based on an enhanced community mental health model, in line with the ambitions in the NHS Long Term Plan.

This includes providing enhanced crisis support, more personalised care to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and discharge pathways which assist people to stay in the community and prevent readmission and maintain bed capacity for patients who require admission.

■ Monkeypox: Vaccination**Wes Streeting:** [\[45437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many doses of monkeypox vaccine have been delivered to NHS patients (a) in the last 12 months and (b) since May 2022.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: As of 30 August 2022, a total of 38,079 administered doses of vaccine have been recorded in England, of which 33,918 doses have been administered as pre-exposure vaccination, primarily to gay and bisexual people and other men who have sex with men. A further 1,992 doses have been provided to healthcare workers managing monkeypox cases and 2,169 doses have been given to close contacts of cases.

No smallpox vaccines were issued for the purposes of monkeypox response between September 2021 and May 2022.

■ Neurology: Children**Tom Randall:** [\[46201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase provision of paediatric neurology treatment in Nottinghamshire.

Will Quince:

The majority of paediatric neurology services are recognised as specialised or 'tertiary level'. Paediatric neurology services in Nottinghamshire are provided by Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, with clinics delivered across several sites. To assist with increased activity and meet the requirement of its service specification for tertiary centres, NHS England has awarded additional funding to the

Nottingham paediatric neurology service to recruit a full complement of multi-disciplinary staff. This funding will support increased activity and reduce waiting times for new and follow-up appointments.

■ **NHS: Temporary Employment**

Feryal Clark:

[\[47698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the total cost to NHS hospitals was of using (a) agency and (b) bank staff in each region in England in the 2021-22 financial year.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: The information requested is not yet held in the format requested as the accounts for 2021/22 are currently being audited.

■ **Nurses: Recruitment**

Karl Turner:

[\[47512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he expects eligible post-graduate nurses to receive the £10,000 golden hello payment announced in May 2018.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: In May 2018, we announced the intention to pay a 'golden hello' to nurses who started a postgraduate course in learning disability nursing, mental health nursing or district nursing in the 2018/19 academic year who subsequently qualified and were employed in these roles in the health and care sector.

The Government is considering the most effective way to administer and introduce any scheme to ensure it delivers on the original intent.

■ **Out of Area Treatment: Travel**

Christopher Pincher:

[\[45794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to reimburse friends and family members who travel long distances to visit NHS patients whose care has been moved to a new location.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government has no plans to do so.

■ **Radiotherapy: Finance**

Wes Streeting:

[\[45962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the overall budget for cancers services delivered by the NHS in England that is spent on radiotherapy services compared with the proportion spent on those services in comparable OECD countries.

Will Quince:

No estimate has been made.

■ Respiratory Syncytial Virus: Vaccination

Daisy Cooper:

[\[47662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on what date he expects NHS England's Palivizumab Expert Group to respond to the request from the JCVI to consider the eligibility of children with spinal muscular atrophy to receive the Palivizumab vaccination against respiratory syncytial virus.

Daisy Cooper:

[\[47663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to recommendations in the consensus statement of the 2017 International Conference on the Standards of Care on the use of Palivizumab for some categories of children with spinal muscular atrophy to protect from respiratory syncytial virus, if he will take steps to urgently review the eligibility criteria for the Palivizumab vaccine.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infection poses a serious risk for children with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) with weakened respiratory muscles due to their condition. Following a letter from clinicians, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has requested that NHS England's Palivizumab National Expert Group consider the eligibility of a sub-group of children with SMA to receive palivizumab vaccination this winter. This Group is preparing a briefing and on completion, it will meet and report the outcome of its discussion and recommendations to the JCVI. A specific date has yet to be confirmed.

■ Sickle Cell Diseases

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[47331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to (a) increase awareness of Sickle Cell disease and (b) improve the training for dealing with that disease among (i) nurses and doctors in training and (ii) practising NHS nurses and doctors.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[47332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the level of awareness among NHS ambulance and A and E staff of the need for urgency in dealing with a Sickle Cell crisis.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[47333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the extent of compliance in the NHS with NICE guidance that Sickle Cell patients should receive pain relief within 30 minutes of admittance to Accident and Emergency care; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: As part of this years' World Sickle Cell Day, NHS England launched a new sickle cell disease awareness campaign on the signs and symptoms of sickle cell disease, aimed at urgent and emergency care staff and those living with the condition and their carers.

There have been recent improvements to the haematology medical curriculum, with understanding sickle cell disease and thalassemia now described in the curriculum as core competencies. Health Education England (HEE) provides e-learning which includes content on sickle cell disease. HEE has held discussions with the Royal Colleges of Pathology and Physicians to ensure this curriculum is deliverable to all four nations, in line with General Medical Council's (GMC) standards. The Haemoglobinopathy Coordinating Centres also provide network development, leadership, learning and education.

The Sickle Cell Society and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia report 'No One's Listening' highlighted the lack of awareness of sickle cell disease among healthcare professionals. Officials are considering the report's recommendations. NHS England estimates that awareness amongst accident and emergency medical and nursing staff, specifically of conditions such as sickle cell disease, is high across England and in areas where there is a higher prevalence of the condition. However, NHS England and other bodies continue with further awareness raising.

No specific assessment has been made regarding the extent of compliance to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guidance on pain relief for sickle cell patients. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) considers evidence of how registered persons have met fundamental standards through its regulatory approach. The CQC will consider the processes providers have to ensure that best practice is implemented for quality standards, including NICE's guidelines.

■ Silicosis**Jim Shannon:****[47530]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to include silicosis as a notifiable disease under the Health Protection Regulations 2010.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

The Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 provide public health protection in England and place a statutory duty to notify the appropriate authority of certain infectious diseases and causative agents, such as COVID-19. This enables prompt investigation, risk assessment and response by specified bodies to cases of infectious disease or contamination that pose a significant risk to human health. Silicosis is not an infectious disease or causative agent which presents or could present significant harm to human health. Therefore, it cannot be included under Schedule 1 or 2 of the regulations, as the powers are limited in accordance with the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984. Instead, it is associated with

occupational exposure to respirable crystalline silica. The Health and Safety Executive recommend health surveillance should be considered for workers involved in high-risk occupations, such as construction and foundry work.

■ Strokes: Southport

Damien Moore: [\[45095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment his Department has made of Southport's stroke services to others in its region; and what steps his Department is taking to help improve stroke services in Southport.

Will Quince:

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board has assessed stroke services in the North Mersey area, including Southport. It has assessed that stroke services within the region do not currently meet best practice guidelines for providing the highest quality care or maximise the effectiveness of the specialist stroke workforce.

On 4 August 2022, a proposal for a comprehensive stroke centre on the Aintree Hospital site was approved, to be located with specialist services provided by the Walton Centre and post 72 hours care provided at either Aintree, Broadgreen or Southport. This clinically-led service has been developed over the last five years and is based on national evidence for improved outcomes for patients when hyper acute stroke services are centralised.

Additional investment is also planned for Southport and Ormskirk hospital to care for stroke patients who do not need to travel to Aintree Hospital or who return to their local hospital after receiving hyper-acute stroke treatment at Aintree.

■ Weather: Working Conditions

Sam Tarry: [\[45067\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues regarding the health impacts on workers of working in extreme weather.

Dr Caroline Johnson:

Ministers have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues relating to health and social care, such as extreme weather.

■ World Health Organization

Mr David Jones: [\[45556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will be represented at the World Health Organisation Regional Committee Meeting for Europe between 12-14 September 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: The United Kingdom's delegation will be led by the Department of Health and Social Care, with officials from the Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Office, the UK Health Security Agency, NHS England and the Welsh Government.

■ **Yoga: Social Prescribing**

Daisy Cooper:

[45499]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to promote the social prescribing of yoga to help patients with high blood pressure, heart disease, aches and pains, depression and stress.

Will Quince:

The United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers have issued guidelines on the recommended levels of physical activity for good health and wellbeing. This can deliver wider social benefits for individuals and communities as well as savings for the health and care system.

As of March 2022, there were over 2,500 social prescribing link workers in the National Health Service in England and over 900,000 referrals have been made. Social prescribing is a universal offer and a component of personalised care. Link workers connect people to agencies for practical, emotional and social support and to community groups and activities, which can include yoga. Services are commissioned locally so this offer may vary.

HOME OFFICE

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Sales**

Rachael Maskell:

[47580]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to ensure age checks are being conducted on the sale of alcohol by (a) alcohol home delivery services and (b) other online retailers.

Jeremy Quin:

The Licensing Act (2003) regulates the sale of alcohol. It sets out a number of licensing objectives, one of which is the protection of children from harm. This objective informs all licensing authorities' decisions and all licensed premises should promote it. It is illegal to sell age-restricted products to underage consumers whether that is in person or the sales are online, including home delivery. We expect all retailers to have suitable policies in place to ensure this is the case.

Enforcement of the Licensing Act is locally led. The Act provides Local Authorities with a range of powers to monitor and enforce adherence to all licensing objectives, including instances where underage sales may be occurring. The Government is considering what further steps could be taken to tackle underage sales.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[47583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to help ensure age checks are being conducted on the sale of alcohol by (a) alcohol home delivery services and (b) other online retailers.

Jeremy Quin:

The Licensing Act (2003) regulates the sale of alcohol. It sets out a number of licensing objectives, one of which is the protection of children from harm. This objective informs all licensing authorities' decisions and all licensed premises should promote it. It is illegal to sell age-restricted products to underage consumers whether that is in person or the sales are online, including home delivery. We expect all retailers to have suitable policies in place to ensure this is the case.

Enforcement of the Licensing Act is locally led. The Act provides Local Authorities with a range of powers to monitor and enforce adherence to all licensing objectives, including instances where underage sales may be occurring. The Government is considering what further steps could be taken to tackle underage sales.

■ Anti-social Behaviour

Peter Gibson:

[\[44964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that anti-social behaviour is recorded consistently across the country.

Peter Gibson:

[\[45157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of creating a national database to record acts of anti-social behaviour.

Peter Gibson:

[\[45158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of having a national standard for the reporting of anti-social behaviour.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). We know the serious impact that persistent anti-social behaviour can have on both individuals and communities.

We monitor the national statistics on ASB through police recorded crime incident data and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, which presents people's perceptions of levels of ASB. Given the localised nature of ASB, we do not currently plan to introduce a national standard for the reporting of ASB or create a national database.

We do, however, keep ASB under review through the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board which brings together a range of partners from key agencies and other Government departments to discuss ASB issues and share best practice. We have recently published multi-agency principles, endorsed by the Board, which seek to

describe a consistent approach to addressing ASB in local communities and to ensure a strong and effective partnership response to anti-social behaviour, including local reporting and referral pathways.

Recommendations from Part Two of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Review were published on Monday 7 March 2022. The overall package strengthens and expands the role of PCCs. We want to ensure that PCCs have sufficient tools and levers to more effectively scrutinise and challenge partnership activity on ASB. To do this, PCCs should be able to bring partners together on ASB, direct local ASB strategy and request local data on ASB.

Sarah Jones: [\[45303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) relevant stakeholders on the potential merits of introducing standardised national measuring of levels of anti-social behaviour.

Sarah Jones: [\[45394\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a list of attendees at Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board meetings held since its establishment.

Sarah Jones: [\[45397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) civil, (b) statutory and (c) criminal powers are available to relevant agencies to support the delivery of the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board principles, published on 20 July 2022.

Sarah Jones: [\[45401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with relevant stakeholders in the (a) public and (b) private sectors on encouraging the use of the community trigger in relation to anti-social behaviour in local authorities.

Sarah Jones: [\[45405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a list of meetings held by the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board since its establishment.

Sarah Jones: [\[45410\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish (a) working, (b) background, (c) justification and (d) other documents produced by her Department as part of the development of the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board's principles.

Sarah Jones: [\[45412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there will be sanctions against (a) Police forces, (b) local authorities, (c) relevant agencies and (d) individuals that do not follow the Anti-social Behaviour principles, published on 20 July 2022.

Sarah Jones: [\[45415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the minutes of the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board's meetings held since its establishment.

Sarah Jones: [\[45418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether additional resources have been provided to support the delivery of the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board's principles, published on 20 July 2022.

Sarah Jones: [\[45421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which (a) public bodies, (b) private bodies and (c) individuals were consulted on the development of the Anti-social behaviour principles.

Sarah Jones: [\[45429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to encourage the use of the community trigger in relation to anti-social behaviour.

Sarah Jones: [\[45432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to introduce standardised national measuring of levels of anti-social behaviour.

Sarah Jones: [\[45436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason her Department does not measure levels of anti-social behaviour in a standardised national format.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB). As set out in the Beating Crime Plan, we are working with local areas to ensure the powers under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, including the Community Trigger, are being implemented effectively and have recently updated Home Office statutory guidance, which supports local areas to make effective use of the powers.

The Home Office chairs the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Board which brings together key partners from relevant bodies across policing, local government and NGOs, and other Government departments, to discuss any arising ASB issues and share best practice. We do not routinely publish the dates of meetings, minutes nor names of those who attend this board.

We have recently published multi-agency principles which seek to describe a consistent approach to addressing ASB in local communities. The principles are intended to act as a guide in seeking to deliver the best possible outcomes for victims of ASB and we encourage local assessment on how processes and practices compare to the standard outlined in the principles. The principles were drafted and endorsed by the ASB Strategic Board who also wrote out to relevant organisations including police forces, local authorities and housing associations for feedback on the draft principles. We have provided partners with a Q&A document to support implementation of the ASB Principles. In line with usual practice, we do not propose to publish drafts of documents or other material prepared as part of the development of the Principles.

No additional funding will be available for implementing the principles however, the Safer Streets Fund aims to support local areas in preventing and tackling neighbourhood crime, ASB and violence against women and girls. Bidding for the fourth round has now closed but we look forward to seeing how relevant successful projects incorporate the principles into their activity.

We monitor the national statistics on ASB through the police recorded crime incident data and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), which presents people's perception of the levels of ASB. Given the localised nature of ASB, we do not currently plan to introduce standardised national measuring of levels of ASB, however the multi-agency principles included local reporting and referral pathways. Recommendations from Part Two of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review were published on Monday 7 March 2022. The overall package strengthens and expands the role of PCCs. We want to ensure that PCCs have sufficient tools and levers to more effectively scrutinise and challenge partnership activity on ASB. To do this, PCCs should be able to bring partners together on ASB, direct local ASB strategy and request local data on ASB.

Jacob Young:

[\[45357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether territorial forces are able to apply for additional funding to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: Safer Streets Round 4 was launched on 18 March and was open to Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities, British Transport Police and eligible civil society organisations across England and Wales to submit bids. This latest round combined and expanded on Rounds One, Two and Three of the Safer Streets Fund, and the Safety of Women at Night Fund, and targets neighbourhood crime, violence against women and girls, and anti-social behaviour as a primary focus for the first time.

The bidding for round 4 has now closed and on 25 July the Government announced £50 million funding for 111 projects. This includes 83 projects which will deliver a wide range of interventions to tackle ASB, including: outreach and diversionary activities; educational programmes; professional development courses; 'street scene' enhancements; behavioural change campaigns; additional CCTV cameras; and multi-agency training.

Police forces have also received funding to recruit additional officers. We have given forces the biggest funding increase in a decade and they are recruiting 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, which provides extra resource to protect the public and keep us safe.

■ Anti-social Behaviour and Crime: Rural Areas

Bim Afolami:

[\[45255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect rural communities from (a) crime and (b) anti-social behaviour.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: This Government is committed to driving down crime everywhere, including in rural communities. The Beating Crime plan sets out how we will deliver this including the largest increase in officer numbers in decades; 20,000 by March 2023. It also sets out how we will protect local communities through targeted interventions including our flagship Safer Streets Fund. Round Four of this fund has allocated £50 million to crime prevention projects across England and Wales, including in rural areas. Many of these projects aim to tackle anti-social behaviour as a primary focus .

■ Anti-social Behaviour: Newport West**Ruth Jones:**[\[46129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on tackling antisocial behaviour in Newport West constituency.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB).

There have been no recent discussions between Ministers and the Welsh Government on ASB in Newport West. We provided the police, local authorities, and other local agencies in England and Wales with a range of tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to ASB through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

It is for local areas to decide how best to deploy these powers depending on the specific circumstances. They are best placed to understand what is driving the behaviour in question, the impact that it is having, and to determine the most appropriate response.

It is for Chief Constables and PCCs, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to local crime priorities and to help ensure that the police have the resources they need, we have given them the biggest funding increase in a decade and are recruiting 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, which provides extra resource to protect the public and keep us safe.

Home Office statutory guidance was updated in June 2022. It supports local areas to make effective use of the anti-social behaviour powers. The Home Office chairs the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategic Board which brings together key partners from agencies, other Government departments and the Welsh Government, to discuss any arising ASB issues and share best practice.

■ Asylum

Emma Hardy:

[\[47637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are there currently in the UK who would previously have been returned to the first country they arrived in under the Dublin Agreement.

Tom Pursglove:

Until 31 December 2020, the UK was bound by, and participated in, the EU's Dublin arrangements for assigning EU Member State responsibility for considering asylum claims. These arrangements included use of the Eurodac fingerprint database, which assisted identifying an individual's earlier presence in another Member State. Responsibility for claims was determined according to a referral mechanism between Member States and the application of a hierarchical criteria to the particular facts of each case.

Since the UK no longer participates in the Dublin arrangements, these specific considerations and referral mechanisms no longer operate as they did. There are therefore no statistics available to show how many people who have claimed asylum in the UK would, or could, have been identified and considered for action within Dublin were it to have continued, or how many of those we would have removed.

■ Asylum: Applications

Caroline Lucas:

[\[45768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to set a target time for processing outstanding claims for asylum made before the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 came into force on 28 June 2022; how many such claims are pending; what the earliest submission date is for those pending claims; if she will make it her policy to expedite older claims by date of submission; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office does not currently have a target time for processing applications for asylum, but are committed to ensuring that asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay.

Asylum Operations are working to reintroduce a service standard for the processing of asylum applications. It is our intention to reintroduce a service standard aligning with the recommendation from the recent Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's (ICIBI) published report - An inspection of asylum casework (November 2021).

We have already made progress in prioritising claims with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. Additionally, we are prioritising older claims and those where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

Information regarding how many initial asylum claims are pending and the earliest submission date is published as part of the Government's transparency agenda, the latest release of which can be found at table Asy_04 of the Asylum Migration Data June 2022: [List of tables - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-migration-data-june-2022).

Justin Madders: [45869]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many additional members of staff have been recruited to tackle asylum application delays.

Justin Madders: [45870]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many interviews have been omitted from the asylum application process since June 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office is unable to state how many asylum interviews have been omitted from the asylum process since June 2022 as this information is not held in a reportable format and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The Home Office currently employs c.895 asylum decision-makers. There are recruitment strategies in place, with the aim of increasing staffing and reducing the number of cases awaiting a decision and increasing outputs.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Dr Rupa Huq: [48444]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the appropriateness of the use of hotel accommodation for asylum seeking families that include children with severe mental health issues or autism; and if she will review the use of hotel accommodation in such circumstances.

Tom Pursglove:

Hotels are an appropriate means of providing adequate accommodation in order to meet our legal obligations to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Our published asylum support healthcare needs and pregnancy dispersal policy sets out that if an applicant's healthcare need requires the urgent provision of dispersal accommodation, the application for support should be prioritised wherever possible. This guidance also provides guidelines on dispersal for those with mental health issues.

The guidance can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496911/new_Healthcare_Needs_and_Pregnancy_Dispersal_Policy_EXTERNAL_v3_0.pdf.

■ Asylum: Housing

Catherine West:

[48461]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help transition asylum seekers from hotel accommodation into permanent accommodation.

Tom Pursglove:

Accommodation provided to asylum seekers is temporary whilst their claim for asylum is considered. When moving from initial and contingency accommodation into dispersed accommodation, service users are afforded with an induction to both their property and the local area.

On 13 April we moved to full dispersal with every local authority in England, Scotland and Wales participating in asylum dispersal. Since April, accommodation providers have expanded procurement of beds in new areas. This move is hoped to end the use of contingency accommodation.

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Naz Shah:

[45127]

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 criteria will be used to assess the mental and psychological health of persons seeking asylum when determining their eligibility for relocation to Rwanda.

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.

Stephen Kinnock:

[45539]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what budget was made available for advertising relating to the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership in the 2022-23 financial year; how much and what proportion of this budget has been spent as on 2 September 2022; and if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of this spending.

Tom Pursglove:

Communications support the Department's work to implement the Nationality and Borders Act, deter the exploitation of people by organised criminal gangs, and explain key policies and provide up-to-date information.

When the Migration and Economic Development Partnership was launched in April 2022, social media posts containing information on the policy were amplified on the Home Office's social media channels, using a budget of approximately £50,000.

The Home Office also is running a communications campaign outside the UK, which launched in June 2022 (although activity has been temporarily paused as a mark of respect following the passing of Her Majesty The Queen). This campaign provides factual information about the risks of illegal migration, including details on the dangers of illegal travel to the UK by boat, explains what happens if people arrive in the UK from a safe country, including the potential for relocation to Rwanda or another safe third country, and sets out the safe and legal options for coming to the UK.

Currently the Home Office plans to spend up to approximately £100,000 on the migrant communications campaign, and to date approximately £87,159.06 has been spent. However, this campaign is not solely used to publicise the Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership, as its key messages cover the campaign's objective to inform potential migrants about all the risks of illegal migration, to discourage them from making dangerous Channel crossings.

■ Biometric Residence Permits**Catherine West:**[\[48452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of delays in (a) processing and (b) delivering biometric residence permit cards.

Tom Pursglove:

The waiting times for biometric residence permits (BRP) are dictated by the BRP production and delivery processes.

We aim to deliver a BRP within 7 -10 working days of the immigration decision. BRPs are produced at the secure delivery facility (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)) within 48 hours of the decision being made and are collected by our secure delivery partner the same day. Our secure delivery partner (FedEx) aims to attempt to deliver the BRPs within 48 hours of receipt of the BRPs. This equates to a minimum of 5 working days from date of decision to delivery of the BRP. We have added an additional 2 -5 working days to the timeline advised to applicants to allow us to resolve any production issues.

For the period April – August 2022, FedEx was 99.74% and the DVLA is 100% within 48 hours, of which 97.4% were within 24 hours.

■ Body Searches: Children

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[45325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children under the age of 16 have been strip searched by the Metropolitan Police in each of the last three years.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[45326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children under the age of 16 have had their genitalia uncovered as part of a strip search by the Metropolitan Police in each of the last three years.

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[45327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children under the age of 16 have been strip searched by the Metropolitan Police in each of the last three years, by racial categories.

Jeremy Quin:

For the first time, information on strip searches that have taken place whilst a person is detained in police custody is being collected by the Home Office. These data will be published as part of the Police Powers and Procedures statistical publication on 17 November 2022: [Police powers and procedures: Other PACE powers, England and Wales, year ending 31 March 2022 - National statistics announcement - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Strip search is one of the most intrusive powers available to the police. There will be times when its use is necessary, to prevent or detect crime or protect the individual or officers. However, it must be used in accordance with the law and with full regard for the welfare and dignity of the individual being searched, particularly if that individual is a child.

■ British Nationality: Assessments

Stephen Kinnock: [\[45833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2022 to Question HL1710 on British Nationality: Assessments, how many and what proportion of Life in the UK test centres undertook checks that individuals waited at least seven days since their last test in the latest period for which data is available; and what steps her Department is taking to monitor this.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[45834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2022 to Question HL1710 on British Nationality: Assessments, how many and what proportion of individuals who sat the Life in the UK test did so without waiting at least seven days since their previous test in the latest period for which data is available; and what steps her Department is taking to monitor this.

Tom Pursglove:

Life in the UK testing is provided and hosted by PSI Services (UK) Limited who operate a self-booking process. Candidates are able to book tests in multiple slots; they are not limited by the system as to how frequently a test can be taken and there is no requirement for customers to wait seven days before taking a test again.

Therefore, no checks are conducted by test centres, or the online booking system, on the length of time a candidate has waited for their test. Guidance on gov.uk is being updated to reflect that there is no requirement to wait seven days.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[45835\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2022 to Question HL1710 on British Nationality: Assessments, if her Department will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the guidance that requires that a Life in the UK test be sat no more than once every seven days; and when this requirement was introduced.

Stephen Kinnock:[\[45836\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2022 to Question HL1710 on British Nationality: Assessments, if her Department will make an assessment of the effectiveness of (a) the guidance entitled Guide AN: Naturalisation Booklet: The Requirements and The Process, published on 28 June 2022 and (b) her Department's website on achieving compliance with the requirement for individuals to wait seven days after failing a citizenship test before taking a new test.

Tom Pursglove:

There has never been a formal requirement for customers to wait seven days before taking a test again, so no assessment will be made. The seven day wait before re-taking a test is a suggestion in order to aid candidates' personal preparation.

Guidance on gov.uk is being updated to reflect that there is no requirement to wait seven days.

■ Burglary**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[45657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help increase the number of charges for burglary.

Jeremy Quin:

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

We are also taking a range of measures to tackle reoffending, including the tagging scheme for neighbourhood crime offenders released on licence, and work led by the

Residential Burglary Taskforce, driving forward the sharing of best practice about effective police investigations.

■ **Clothing: Manufacturing Industries**

Stephen Kinnock: [\[45830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of businesses investigated as part of Operation Tacit were visited by inspectors in (a) 2021 and (b) 2022; and how many and what proportion of these visits led to the imposition of (i) fines and (ii) other penalties for non compliance.

Stephen Kinnock: [\[48364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many businesses investigated as part of Operation Tacit were visited by inspectors during (a) 2021 and (b) 2022; and how many and what proportion of such visits led to the imposition of (i) fines and (ii) other penalties for non-compliance.

Amanda Solloway:

Exploiting vulnerable workers for commercial gain is despicable and this Government will not stand for it. Operation TACIT was set-up to investigate allegations of widespread exploitation and modern slavery in Leicester, and to take appropriate action where non-compliance was found.

To date (7th September 2022), a total of 484 visits have been undertaken at commercial premises, as part of Operation TACIT; 219 of these visits took place in 2021 and 76 in 2022, the remainder were done in 2020. All investigations which suggest non-compliance by a given business have been followed up with visits from relevant enforcement bodies.

Some issues were uncovered such as health and safety breaches, illegal working and risk of underpayment of national minimum wage. The Government does not tolerate labour market non-compliance: taskforce partners have taken appropriate action to deal with any exploitation, non-compliance and breaches of the law where found. Of those premises visited, enforcement action of some kind was taken against 117 (roughly 24% of all visits) and the Government will continue to take appropriate action against unscrupulous employers and individuals who exploit workers

■ **Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis: Resignations**

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[45016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the report by Sir Thomas Winsor entitled Special commission on the resignation of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, published on 2 September 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

Sir Tom presented his report to the Home Office on 24 August 2022 and, given the public interest in the matter, the Home Secretary decided to publish the report in full on gov.uk on 2 September.

In the report, Sir Tom states that he believes due process was not followed by the Mayor of London and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in the actions they took which led, on 10 February 2022, to Dame Cressida Dick stepping aside as Commissioner.

A number of recommendations for how accountability arrangements in London can be improved were also given. The Government is already taking steps to strengthen the accountability and transparency of police governance through the delivery of recommendations from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Review. We will continue to deliver recommendations from the PCC Review, including legislating where necessary and when parliamentary time allows.

The Home Office will consider all of the findings Sir Tom has laid out and will bring forward any further changes once the findings and recommendations have been fully considered.

Counter-terrorism**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[47388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish a timetable for the revision of her Department's Prevent scheme in the context of recent academic discussions relating to mixed ideology.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Independent Review of Prevent, led by William Shawcross, will ensure we continue to improve our response and better protect people from being drawn into poisonous and dangerous ideologies. The Review will consider a wide range of evidence, including from academia, practitioners, and from the public call for evidence.

The report is currently being finalised and once formally received and after full consideration, the report and the Government's response to it will be published.

Crime**Gerald Jones:**[\[45322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of the Safer Streets Fund on reported crime.

Gerald Jones:[\[45339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the impact of the Safer Streets Fund on reported crime in Wales.

Tom Pursglove:

All rounds of the Safer Streets Fund are subject to independent evaluation, which is vital in ensuring we learn lessons about what works in preventing crime to inform future government policy and funding.

The evaluation of Round One of the Fund, which has now completed, has been finalised and we intend to publish in due course.

Interim lessons learnt, including from Rounds Two and Three where evaluation is ongoing, have been shared with those eligible to bid for funding and those subsequently awarded funding to help inform their approach.

■ Donald Trump**Holly Lynch:**[\[45909\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government has taken steps to establish if material taken from Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago home by the FBI relates to the national security of the UK.

Tom Tugendhat:

In line with the long standing policy of successive Governments we do not comment on national security matters.

■ Economic Crime**Jonathan Reynolds:**[\[47519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals on economic crime.

Tom Tugendhat:

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Government is committed to bringing forward further legislation on economic crime. Building on the recently enacted Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act, the upcoming Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill will bear down further on kleptocrats, criminals and terrorists who abuse our financial system, strengthening the UK's economic security and reputation as a place where legitimate business can thrive while driving dirty money out of the UK.

This will be a joint Bill between Home Office and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Bill will include reform of Companies House, reforms to prevent abuse of limited partnerships, additional powers to seize cryptoassets more quickly and easily, reforms to support more effective and targeted information sharing to tackle money laundering and economic crime, new intelligence gathering powers for law enforcement and removing regulatory burdens on businesses.

We are preparing the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill at pace and expect it to be introduced soon.

■ Emergency Services Network: Orkney

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[48256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of when the Change Request to the Emergency Services Network necessary to activate 4G masts in Rackwick and Stronsay in Orkney as part of the Scottish 4G Infill Programme will be completed.

Jeremy Quin:

The sites referred to on Orkney are EAS0171 Rackwick and EAS0543 Stronsay, they are planned to be activated by March 2023. Both sites are passive build complete with mains power delivered, awaiting transmission and active equipment installation.

They are part of the wider 17 Scottish Futures Trust sites (S4Gi Project sites) that the HO have prioritised with EE, our Transmission (TX) delivery partner. EE are actively working on confirming the TX solutions to the 17 S4Gi sites. The TX contract was awarded to EE in August 22 and have started their prework on providing a full activation plan to the Home Office.

■ Fire and Rescue Services

Sam Tarry:

[\[45039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to future proof fire brigades in tackling wildfire and other fire incidents as a result of extreme weather events.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government intends to research the issue further, looking at the impacts of portable and disposable barbecues on the environment. This research will also include the impact of sky lanterns which may be a factor in causing wildfires.

Should the evidence indicate that these items represent a risk, we will of course examine the most appropriate options available to protect our precious natural environment for ours and future generations.

At a local level, each Fire and Rescue Authority is required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area (including wildfires) through their Integrated Risk Management Plan. This will include plans to prevent and respond to incidents and Fire and Rescue Services will have regard to other key local responders including landowners and other emergency services in their planning.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Finance

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

[\[45612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will take steps to increase funding for the fire service in (a) Bournemouth East constituency and (b) England.

Jeremy Quin:

Fire and rescue services have the resources they need to do their important work. Overall, fire and rescue authorities in England will receive around £2.5 billion in 2022/23. Dorset & Wilshire Fire and Rescue Authority has a core spending power of £60.5m, an increase of £2.6m (4.5%) compared to 2021/22.

Over the past 10 years (year ending December 2011– year ending December 2021) the total number of all incidents in England attended by fire and rescue services has fallen by 8% and the total number of fire incidents in England has fallen by 34%.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Pensions**Dame Nia Griffith:**[\[48295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Public Service Pensions: Firefighters' Pensions (Amendment) Regulations 2022, when she plans to publish further guidance on ensuring that fire fighters are paid their full pension entitlement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is taking steps to remove discrimination on the grounds of age, associated with the transitional protection arrangements linked to the 2015 pension reforms, which was subsequently identified by the courts.

The Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act (PSPJOA) which received Royal Assent on 10 March, established the legal framework to provide this remedy. The Police and Firefighters' Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2022 ('the Regulations') provided the first, prospective, element of the remedy for firefighters' pensions.

The second, retrospective, part of the remedy is more complex and will require further detailed changes to scheme regulations using the powers in the PSPJOA. These changes will be in force by 1 October 2023, in line with the Government's commitments under that Act.

The Home Office and the Local Government Association are developing supporting material that will allow scheme members to make an informed choice about their pension options at the point they retire.

■ Fire Extinguishers**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[45591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department holds information on the number of serious fires in buildings that may have been prevented by the installation of sprinklers over the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Home Office collects data on incidents attended by Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs). This data is published in a variety of publications, available here: Fire statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Data is collected on FRS incidents attended through the Incident Recording System (IRS). However, this database does not hold information on incidents prevented. Records are not held as to how many serious fires were prevented due to the presence of a sprinkler system.

The IRS holds data on fire incidents in buildings, including whether a safety system, such as sprinklers, were installed. This is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1096397/other-building-fires-dataset-110822.ods

■ Firearms: Licensing

Sarah Olney:

[45975]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans he has to change the law on gun control in the UK, following the recent fatal shooting in Liverpool.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The tragic death of nine year old Olivia Pratt-Korbel on 22 August was truly shocking.

We have some of the toughest firearms controls in the world which we keep under constant review to safeguard against abuse by criminals and to preserve public safety. In recent years we have tightened controls on antique firearms, consulted on further changes to support firearms safety, and introduced Statutory Guidance on firearms licensing to Chief Officers of Police to improve the consistency and quality of decision-making. The recent shootings in Liverpool are the subject of ongoing investigations but we will not hesitate to strengthen the controls further if necessary.

The Home Secretary visited Merseyside on 26 August and announced a £150,000 package to support the communities of Liverpool and Knowsley, which will provide specialist trauma informed support in nearby schools, as well as mental health provisions for those closely affected.

The Home Secretary also announced £350,000 to expand the 'Clear, Hold, Build' pilot to other areas in Merseyside affected by Serious and Organised Crime.

■ Fires

Selaine Saxby:

[45516]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the role of (a) disposable barbecues and (b) other factors in causing wildfires; and what recent steps her Department has taken to help prevent wildfires.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government intends to research the issue further, looking at the impact of disposable barbecues, as part of a research project led by Defra. This research will also include the impact of sky lanterns which may be a factor in causing wildfires.

Should the evidence indicate that these items represent a risk, we will of course examine the most appropriate options.

At a local level, each Fire and Rescue Authority is required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area (including wildfires) through their Integrated Risk Management Plan. This will include plans to prevent and respond to incidents and Fire and Rescue Services will have regard to other key local responders including landowners and other emergency services in their planning.

■ **Fraud: Solihull**

Julian Knight:

[44933]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent the risk of fraud to residents of Solihull constituency.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government takes the issue of fraud very seriously and is dedicated to protecting the public from this devastating crime. Tackling fraud requires a unified and co-ordinated response from government, law enforcement and the private sector to better protect the public and businesses from fraud, reduce the impact of fraud on victims, and increase the disruption and prosecution of fraudsters. This is why, later this year, we will publish a new strategy to address the threat of fraud.

Over the next three years the Spending Review has allocated £400 million to tackle economic crime, including fraud. This is in addition to the £63 million allocated last year.

We are also working to improve the victim support system to ensure everyone receives the support they need to prevent further victimisation. The National Economic Crime Victim Care Unit (NECVCU) provides an additional level of support for people who report a fraud to Action Fraud. West Midlands Police are accessing the level 2 service, meaning constituents in Solihull have access to an enhanced service.

■ **Fuels: Theft**

Jim Shannon:

[47532]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has she made of trends in the level of fuel theft since March 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government is working closely with police and industry partners to do everything we can collectively to drive down acquisitive crime, including theft of fuel. There are no official figures on the theft of fuel since March 2022..

The Home Office funded the set-up of the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership (NICRP), which ensures national co-ordination of policing and law enforcement partners to tackle crime affecting infrastructure companies including rail

networks, utility, agricultural and construction companies. Fuel theft is a concern and reports are being mapped and monitored through this Partnership to provide insights on the scale of these thefts and potential preventative measures.

Fuel users storing fuel in tanks or in vehicles and machinery on their site(s) should continue to take steps to ensure this is stored securely. Practical crime prevention advice is published on the Secured by Design website, developed by the Police Crime Prevention Initiatives: <https://www.securedbydesign.com/guidance/crime-prevention-advice/fuel-theft>.

■ HM Passport Office: Compensation

Chi Onwurah: [48335]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much compensation has Her Majesty's Passport Office paid out due delays in producing passports between 1 May 2022 and 1 September 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The standard passport service does not have a guaranteed service time. Compensation would not usually be paid by virtue of an application taking longer to process than the published processing time, and customers are advised not to book without a passport that meets their travel needs.

For customers of the urgent Fast Track and Digital Premium services, £18,290.32 was paid in compensation where applications have fallen outside of their published service timeframe between 1 May 2022 and 1 September 2022. For the Fast-Track and Premium applications, this equates to 469 refunds processed.

■ HM Passport Office: ICT

Ian Byrne: [40998]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people are engaged in working on the development programme of Digital Application Processing at HM Passport Office as of 20 July 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The maximum number of people engaged in the development programme is constrained by the number of independent spaces within the technical architecture where change can be made in parallel. Industry leading development practices have been employed to maximise the efficiency and pace of change while minimising the risk to passport processing.

Ian Byrne: [40999]

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 January 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The maximum number of people engaged in the development programme is constrained by the number of independent spaces within the technical architecture where change can be made in parallel. Industry leading development practices have been employed to maximise the efficiency and pace of change while minimising the risk to passport processing.

Ian Byrne:[\[41001\]](#)

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 March 2022.

Ian Byrne:[\[41002\]](#)

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 May 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The number of people engaged in developing the Digital Application Service as of 1 March 2022 was 68.

■ **HM Passport Office: Lost Property****Chi Onwurah:**[\[48334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of documents lost by the Passport Office in the last 6 months.

Tom Pursglove:

The number of documents lost during the processing of passport applications in the last six months is 68.

■ **HM Passport Office: Staff****Ian Byrne:**[\[42294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) permanent, (b) fixed-term, (c) agency and (d) other staff were working in HM Passport Office on 1 April 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: The table below shows the breakdown of workers at HM Passport Office on 30 March 2022.

	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS APRIL 2022
Civil servants (Permanent)	3205.99

	FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS APRIL 2022
Civil servants (Fixed-term Appointment)	25.54
Agency Workers	1141.52
Civil Servants Unpaid (Fixed-term Appointment, Loan & Permanent)	51.72

Staffing numbers at Her Majesty's Passport Office has increased by over 1200 since April 2021. Its recruitment will continue to cover any attrition, to ensure the passport service remains fully resourced.

We are committed to ensuring public services are run as efficiently and effectively as possible. Given elevated demand will not continue indefinitely, it is appropriate to have flexible resources available. Therefore, while there has been some recruitment of civil servants, the use of agency workers is appropriate in this context.

■ HM Passport Office: Telephone Services

Nick Gibb: [\[45416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has taken steps to shorten the waiting times for people who call the passport advice line.

Tom Pursglove:

His Majesty's Passport Office has worked closely with Teleperformance to improve waiting times for callers to the Passport Adviceline. In August, the average wait time for a caller was 6 seconds.

Nick Gibb: [\[45445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the passport advice line.

Tom Pursglove:

The Passport Adviceline continues to be an integral part of the wider passport service, helping to ensure that customer queries are resolved as quickly as possible. Between January and August this year, approximately 3 million calls were answered by the Passport Adviceline.

■ Home Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry: [\[47413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her Department's publication of data for spending over £500 on a procurement card, when she plans to publish the figures for spending in the month of January 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The publication of data for spending over £500 on a procurement card for the month of January 2022 is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-procurement-card-spend-over-500-2022>.

Emily Thornberry:**[47421]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many payments were fraudulently charged to her Department's budget using electronic purchasing cards in the financial years (a) 2019-20, (b) 2020-21, and (c) 2021-22; and what was the total value of fraudulent payments (i) made and (ii) recovered in each of those years.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: There is no record of any payment fraudulently charged to the Home Office budget in 2019-20.

There were four instances of payments fraudulently charged to the Home Office budget in 2020-21. The total value was £1903.82 and the total recovery in this year was £1903.82.

There were two instances of payments fraudulently charged to the Home Office budget in 2021-22. The total value was £542.90 and the total recovery in this year was £542.90.

■ Home Office: Termination of Employment**Ruth Jones:****[46104]**

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

Amanda Solloway:

The number of leavers of the Home Office is published annually as part of the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey (ACSES).

[Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/civil-service-statistics) – Tables 42 and 43

■ Homicide: Young People**Dr Matthew Offord:****[45781]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the implications for her policies on the number of teenage homicides in the Metropolitan Police Service area.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: We are providing the police and law enforcement agencies assets they need to bring murderers to justice – through record investment in policing, recruitment of 20,000 police officers, backing officers to use stop and search powers, and introducing legislation to tackle serious violence and keep serious offenders in prison for longer.

Every knife taken off our streets is a potential life saved, and since December 2019, 72,000 knives and offensive weapons have been removed from our streets through stop and search, surrender initiatives and other targeted police action.

■ Immigration Controls

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[45080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the policy paper, New plan for immigration: legal migration and border control strategy, published by her Department on 20 July 2022, what estimate she has made of the potential costs to her Department of introducing the technologies proposed in the strategy; and what provisions have been made within her Department's current funding plans to meet those costs.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office has secured funding up until 2024/25 to deliver on Government priorities via the departmental Spending Review.

The commitments in the New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Control Strategy will be funded through the Future Border and Immigration System (FBIS) programme budget, which is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

This funding continues to support work to deliver transformational change for all those who use the immigration system and cross the border.

■ Immigration Controls: Republic of Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[45626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to paragraph 56 of her New Plan for Immigration: legal migration and border control strategy, whether requirements for British and Irish citizens to provide a passport on arrival in the UK apply to those citizens entering the UK via the Northern Ireland land border.

Tom Pursglove:

As part of the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangements, the UK does not operate routine immigration controls on journeys within the CTA, with no immigration controls on the Ireland-Northern Ireland land border. However, individuals arriving in the UK must continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework.

Where required, most people who are not British or Irish citizens will need to show a valid passport on arrival if required by a Border Force Officer. The document must be valid for the whole time individuals are in the UK.

Stephen Farry:

[\[45627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference her New Plan for Immigration: legal migration and border control strategy, what progress she has made on the proposed exemption to Electronic Travel Authorisation for residents of the Republic of Ireland; and if she will make a statement.

Stephen Farry:

[\[45628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her New Plan for Immigration: legal migration and border control strategy, published in July 2022, if she will publish further information on the application of the proposed policies on the land border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Tom Pursglove:

As is currently the case, individuals arriving in the UK, including those crossing the land border into Northern Ireland, will need to continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework, including the requirement to obtain an ETA when it is introduced. Visa nationals will continue to require a visa for the UK when travelling via Ireland, in order to lawfully enter the UK. Our position is similar to the requirement set by the Irish Government for visa nationals who wish to travel to Ireland from the UK, who must seek a visa to enter Ireland before doing so.

However, as now, the UK will not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from within the Common Travel Area, with no immigration controls whatsoever on the Ireland-Northern Ireland land border.

The UK remains committed to working with Ireland to consider whether a satisfactory data sharing agreement can be reached in order to exempt third country nationals who are resident in Ireland from the ETA requirement. If an agreement cannot be reached, the requirement will apply to all those travelling to the UK from Ireland.

■ Immigration: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[\[45640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 16 June 2022 to Question 13846 on Immigration: Northern Ireland, whether Ukrainian nationals who arrived in Ireland and subsequently enter the UK for six-months Leave Outside the Immigration Rules are (a) eligible to apply to the Ukraine Extension Scheme and (b) will not be deemed in breach of immigration controls in the future.

Tom Pursglove:

Those who want to come to the UK should not travel before they have made an application to one of the two Ukraine visa schemes which can be applied for from abroad, and received confirmation that their application has been granted.

However, we recognise that some individuals will have already travelled to the UK via Ireland realising this in the turmoil of the war unfolding in Ukraine without making a prior application or receiving confirmation. Recognising this, they will be able to apply for six-months' leave outside of the Immigration Rules, with no restrictions on their access to work, benefits and services. Those who arrived this way between 1 January 2022 and 18 March 2022 are able to apply for the Ukraine Extension Scheme, which provides a 36 month visa with all rights and benefits associated with the other two Ukraine schemes.

■ Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner

Stephen Kinnock: [48370]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent progress she has made towards the appointment of a new Anti-Slavery Commissioner following the interviews of candidates for the role which took place in April 2022; and what her planned timetable is for making a final decision on a new appointee for that role.

Stephen Kinnock: [48371]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications of the length of time taken to appoint a new Anti-Slavery Commissioner on the effectiveness of efforts to tackle modern slavery in the UK.

Stephen Kinnock: [48372]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the Government's policy is on making revisions to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 before or after the appointment of a new Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

Amanda Solloway:

The role of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) as set out in the 2015 Modern Slavery Act is to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of slavery and human trafficking offences and the identification of victims.

The process to recruit a new IASC follows the principles set out within the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578498/governance_code_on_public_appointments_16_12_2016.pdf

A decision on the appointment is under consideration and an announcement will follow in due course.

My Rt Hon friend the Home Secretary will set out the Government's plans for modern slavery legislation in due course. We will engage with the new IASC on the legislation following their appointment.

The Government continues to work with a range of partners to shape its response to modern slavery and will look forward to working with the new IASC when appointed.

■ Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Sarah Olney: [45293]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will proscribe Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organisation.

Tom Tugendhat:

Whilst the Government keeps the list of proscribed organisations under review, we do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not being considered for proscription.

■ Knives: Crime

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[48468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to tackle knife crime in (a) Slough constituency and (b) the South East.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[48470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has plans to increase policing resources in Slough constituency in the context of recent incidents of knife crime in that area.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[48471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions has she had with local police force leaders in (a) Slough and (b) the South East on tackling knife crime.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[48472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what funding has been made available for early intervention and prevention programmes to support young people at high risk of involvement in serious violence in (a) Slough and (b) the Thames Valley region in each of the past five years.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[48473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley on tackling knife crime.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is determined to tackle serious violence, including knife crime, and has made £130m available this financial year (22/23) to do so. 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 (previously Surge).

An independent evaluation of these programmes compared numbers of police-recorded violent offences taking place in the areas where these programmes operate with matched (control) areas. This found that in their first two years of operation, the programmes had together prevented an estimated 49,000 offences.

Over 10 years, we are also investing £200m in the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), which funds interventions to divert children and young people away from exploitation and serious violence.

The previous Home Secretary visited Thames Valley Police and the VRU on 11 and 31 August. She met the Police and Crime Commissioner and other force leaders from the Southeast of England to discuss the positive work they are doing to reduce serious violence in their areas.

The Home Office has provided funding to 7 police forces and VRUs across the Southeast to combat serious violence, including knife crime. The areas that receive

VRU funding are London, Thames Valley, Essex, Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, and Bedfordshire.

The Thames Valley VRU has received c £5.5m since 2019. This includes £1.16m in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, and a further £2m in 2022/23. The VRU also received additional investment of £787,000 in 2021/22 to deliver two programmes that capitalise on key moments where learning is expected to be best heard in a young person's life, such as on admission to A&E or in police custody.

The Metropolitan Police and the London VRU have received a combined c.£91.1m since 2019, including c.£20.7m for this financial year. The remaining six areas have received a combined c.£54.8m since 2019, including c.£13.9m for this financial year.

VRUs are also delivering youth interventions with their funding. Thames Valley's VRU-funded 'Hospital Navigators' programme is delivered in 5 major A&Es across the area, including Slough, and provides immediate support to young people attending A&E because of a violent incident. This supported more than 470 vulnerable young people last year and has received additional funding from the YEF to evaluate its impact.

The South-eastern areas that receive VRU funding also receive funding for the Grip programme. Thames Valley Police have been allocated c.£4.8m over the last three years, including c.£798k for this financial year (2022/23). The Metropolitan Police have been allocated approximately £50.9m over the last three years, including £7.9m for this financial year (2022/23). The remaining six areas have received a combined c.£19.6m since 2019, including c.£3.6m in the current financial year of 2022/23.

The Government also encourages funding to be used on national weeks of action through Operation Sceptre. The latest phase of this operation took place between 16 and 22 May 2022. In the Thames Valley Police area, 13 knives were seized during enforcement action, with a further 97 being surrendered or seized during operational weapon sweeps.

In 2022/23, Thames Valley Police will receive up to £511.9m from Government Grants and precept. This is an increase of up to £28.6m compared to 2021/22. Through the Government's Police Uplift Programme, Thames Valley Police has been allocated 609 additional officers. As of 30 June 2022, the force has recruited 442 of these.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[48469]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to tackle knife crime in (a) Slough constituency and (b) the South East.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is determined to tackle serious violence, including knife crime, and has made £130m available this financial year (22/23) to do so. 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 (previously Surge).

An independent evaluation of these programmes compared numbers of police-recorded violent offences taking place in the areas where these programmes operate with matched (control) areas. This found that in their first two years of operation, the programmes had together prevented an estimated 49,000 offences.

Over 10 years, we are also investing £200m in the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), which funds interventions to divert children and young people away from exploitation and serious violence.

The previous Home Secretary visited Thames Valley Police and the VRU on 11 and 31 August. She met the Police and Crime Commissioner and other force leaders from the Southeast of England to discuss the positive work they are doing to reduce serious violence in their areas.

The Home Office has provided funding to 7 police forces and VRUs across the Southeast to combat serious violence, including knife crime. The areas that receive VRU funding are London, Thames Valley, Essex, Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, and Bedfordshire.

The Thames Valley VRU has received c £5.5m since 2019. This includes £1.16m in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, and a further £2m in 2022/23. The VRU also received additional investment of £787,000 in 2021/22 to deliver two programmes that capitalise on key moments where learning is expected to be best heard in a young person's life, such as on admission to A&E or in police custody.

The Metropolitan Police and the London VRU have received a combined c.£91.1m since 2019, including c.£20.7m for this financial year. The remaining six areas have received a combined c.£54.8m since 2019, including c.£13.9m for this financial year.

VRUs are also delivering youth interventions with their funding. Thames Valley's VRU-funded 'Hospital Navigators' programme is delivered in 5 major A&Es across the area, including Slough, and provides immediate support to young people attending A&E because of a violent incident. This supported more than 470 vulnerable young people last year and has received additional funding from the YEF to evaluate its impact.

The South-eastern areas that receive VRU funding also receive funding for the Grip programme. Thames Valley Police have been allocated c.£4.8m over the last three years, including c.£798k for this financial year (2022/23). The Metropolitan Police have been allocated approximately £50.9m over the last three years, including £7.9m for this financial year (2022/23). The remaining six areas have received a combined c.£19.6m since 2019, including c.£3.6m in the current financial year of 2022/23.

The Government also encourages funding to be used on national weeks of action through Operation Sceptre. The latest phase of this operation took place between 16 and 22 May 2022. In the Thames Valley Police area, 13 knives were seized during enforcement action, with a further 97 being surrendered or seized during operational weapon sweeps.

In 2022/23, Thames Valley Police will receive up to £511.9m from Government Grants and precept. This is an increase of up to £28.6m compared to 2021/22. Through the Government's Police Uplift Programme, Thames Valley Police has been allocated 609 additional officers. As of 30 June 2022, the force has recruited 442 of these.

■ London Fire Brigade

Sam Tarry:

[45041]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is offering additional support to the London Fire Brigade in light of the recent wildfires.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government intends to research the issue further, looking at the impacts of portable and disposable barbecues on the environment. This research will also include the impact of sky lanterns which may be a factor in causing wildfires.

Should the evidence indicate that these items represent a risk, we will of course examine the most appropriate options available to protect our precious natural environment for ours and future generations.

At a local level, each Fire and Rescue Authority is required to plan for the foreseeable risks in their area (including wildfires) through their Integrated Risk Management Plan. This will include plans to prevent and respond to incidents and Fire and Rescue Services will have regard to other key local responders including landowners and other emergency services in their planning.

■ London Policing College: China

Sir Iain Duncan Smith:

[45630]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the London Policing College's partnerships in China were subject to (a) authorisation by her Department, (b) an international police assistance brief approval process and (c) the consideration of overseas security and justice assistance assessments.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The London Policing College (LPC) is an independent organisation with no formal relationship to the Home Office. The Home Office has no commercial relationship with the LPC.

As the LPC is an independent organisation, their work with China was not in scope for authorisation from the Home Office. Authorisation is only provided to serving officers and police staff who provide non-operational policing assistance and support to international partners in line with the OSJA assessment process.

■ Members: Correspondence

Dan Carden:

[\[33899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 9 June 2022 sent to the urgent queries inbox from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton regarding Momina Rameez.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 12 July 2022.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[45592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the later dated 25 May 2022 from the hon. Member for Glasgow Central regarding a constituent, reference 28507935.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office responded to the correspondence on 5 September 2022.

■ Migrants: English Language

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[48196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date her Department adopted the policy that nobody should be refused leave to remain in the UK solely on the grounds of having been accused by ETS of cheating in its TOEIC English language test.

Tom Pursglove:

The former Home Secretary, The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, announced in a Written Ministerial Statement on 23 July 2019:

"I have therefore asked officials to review our guidance to ensure that we are taking the right decisions on these cases to ensure we are properly balancing a belief that deception was committed some years ago against other factors that would normally lead to leave being granted, especially where children are involved."

The ETS casework guidance first issued on 09 March 2020 (latest update was 18 November 2020) which made clear that using deception in an English language test is not a mandatory ground to refuse an application, but must be balanced against all relevant aspects of the application, including any human rights claim.

■ Motor Vehicles: Crime

Julian Knight:

[\[45174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the analysis of Home Office data showing that West Midlands Police solved 0.9% of thefts from cars reported to it in 2021, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the performance of West Midlands Police in relation to reported vehicle theft offences.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is aware of the growing trend in vehicle-related thefts and we are determined to drive down vehicle crime in all parts of the country.

We are working closely with the National Vehicle Crime Working Group, chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Jenny Simms, the NPCC lead for Vehicle Crime, to reduce theft of and from vehicles across all forces in England and Wales. As part of ongoing work, a network of vehicle crime leads has been established, covering all forces, to ensure effective sharing of information about emerging trends in vehicle crime, best practice and expertise to better tackle regional issues.

■ National Crime Agency: Finance

Drew Hendry:

[44959]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional funding to the National Crime Agency to enforce sanctions in relation to the war in Ukraine.

Jeremy Quin:

The Home Office welcomes the announcement on the Combatting Kleptocracy Cell in the National Crime Agency which will focus on corrupt elites laundering their assets within the UK, including through supporting work on criminal sanctions enforcement. The NCA has already surged additional officers to support existing efforts and the Home Office will support the unit to drive forwards what are inevitably complex and lengthy operations.

The Spending Review 2021 settlement and the Economic Crime Levy represent an overall package of circa £400 million to tackle economic crime over the next three years, including support for the NCA's National Economic Crime Centre (NECC) and law enforcement.

■ Naturalisation: Applications

Dan Carden:

[46007]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, (a) what the average processing time is for a naturalisation decision from her Department and (b) how this compares to each year since 2016.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Department publishes data on naturalisation applications made and completed every quarter on the Gov.uk website.

The most recent data set was published on 25 August 2022 and links to older migration transparency data and it can be found through the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data>

■ Nitrous Oxide: Misuse

Selaine Saxby:

[45414]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) restricting or (b) banning the recreational use or sale of nitrous oxide.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government takes the supply of substances for their psychoactive effect seriously. There are legitimate uses for nitrous oxide, such as in medicine, dentistry and as a propellant for whipped cream canisters, but those who supply nitrous oxide who know, or who are reckless as to whether, it will be used for its psychoactive effect may be subject to a maximum sentence of seven years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

The Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced powers, such as Public Space Protection Orders, which the police and local councils can use to prevent people from taking intoxicating substances, including psychoactive substances such as nitrous oxide, in specified areas.

On 3 September 2021, the Government asked the independent statutory advisory body, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, to provide an updated assessment of the harms of nitrous oxide, including whether it should be controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The ACMD is independent of Government and provides a broad range of recommendations, including advice on legislative changes. The Government will consider the ACMD's advice carefully before deciding how to proceed.

■ Passports and Visas: Applications**Nick Gibb:**[\[45259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of delays in processing British passport applications on the processing times for other types of visa applications.

Tom Pursglove:

The response to the unprecedented demand for passports in 2022 has had no impact upon the processing times for UK visas.

■ Passports: Applications**Bim Afolami:**[\[45262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to clear (a) backlogs and (b) delays at the Passport Office.

Tom Pursglove:

Between January and July 2022, His Majesty's Passport Office processed 96.4% of standard UK applications within the published processing time of ten weeks.

Elevated passport demand is expected to continue into 2023, and HM Passport Office is working to help ensure that people continue to receive their passport in good time.

Nick Gibb:[\[45446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the (a) number and (b) proportion of applications for British passports that have taken longer than 10 weeks to be processed in 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

Between January and July 2022, 96.4% of the 5.3 million standard UK applications processed were completed within the published processing time of ten weeks.

Chi Onwurah:[\[48333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an estimate of the number of people unable to travel abroad in summer 2022 due to passport application delays.

Tom Pursglove:

Since April 2021, people applying from the UK have been advised to allow up to ten weeks when applying for their British passport under the standard service. Between January and July 2022, 96.4% of applications were processed within 10 weeks.

For the small percentage of customers who have not received their passport within 10 weeks, where they have evidenced that they require a passport within the next fortnight, His Majesty's Passport Office has prioritised their application at no additional cost to help ensure that a passport is issued in time for travel.

■ Passports: Surrogacy

John McNally:[\[45514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to expedite British surrogacy babies' passports who are born overseas in the context of enabling them to be vaccinated and cared for by their family in a timely way.

Tom Pursglove:

His Majesty's Passport Office provides significant support to the commissioning parents of surrogate babies. In all applications, especially where there are safety concerns, HM Passport Office works in conjunction with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to prioritise the processing of applications, and to issue Emergency Travel Documents for travel to a safe location once checks have been satisfactorily completed.

■ Police

Rosie Cooper:[\[45423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many warranted police officers are occupying police staff roles (a) within Lancashire Police and (b) nationwide as of 2 September 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

Information on the number of police officers occupying police staff roles is not held centrally by the Home Office.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size and composition of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-statistical-bulletin)

The data tables accompanying the latest release (as at 31 March 2022) are available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1093761/police-workforce-mar22-tables.ods.

Tables F1 to F8 contain information on the number of police officers, police staff and Police Community Support Officers categorised by their policing function. These functions are categorised into frontline roles, frontline support roles and business support roles as described in Table F4. Table F5 shows, by Police Force Area, the number and proportion of officers carrying out frontline policing roles.

The deployment of officers is an operational decision for Chief Constables.

■ Police: Complaints

Beth Winter: [\[45572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there are processes to (a) periodically review and (b) ensure uniformity of procedure for dealing with complaints across professional standards departments of police forces.

Beth Winter: [\[45641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) establishing a single independent body with oversight of the police disciplinary system and (b) other reforms to police disciplinary processes.

Beth Winter: [\[46187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming police complaints processes to ensure that complaints against a police officer are handled by a police professional standards department outside of their force.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government implemented a major overhaul of police complaints and discipline in February 2020. These reforms included ensuring that those making a formal complaint against the police have a right to an independent review either by their local Police and Crime Commissioner or by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) depending on the circumstances of the complaint. Forces have the option of involving another force's Professional Standards Department if appropriate. The IOPC oversees the complaints system, producing statutory guidance and publishing statistics on force performance on handling complaints to ensure

consistency. The most serious misconduct allegations must be referred immediately by forces to the IOPC for consideration and investigation at the IOPC's discretion. The Government has undertaken to review the effectiveness of the IOPC later this year. The Home Affairs Committee published its own assessment of police conduct and complaints in March 2022. The Government has said in response that it will review the impact of its 2020 reforms in line with post legislative scrutiny guidance.

Beth Winter:

[48510]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether complainants automatically have a right to review decisions made by the police internal legal teams on police conduct complaints that have not been referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: Since the Government's reforms to police complaints and discipline on 1 February 2020, complainants have a right to an independent review of the way their complaint was handed by the force, providing they were directly affected by the matter complained about and it was dealt with as a formal complaint.

Such reviews, which must be requested within 28 days, and are carried out by either the local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) or the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) depending on the circumstances. Further information about these processes are available on the IOPC's website.

■ Police: Finance

Andrew Rosindell:

[48290]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 26 May 2022 to Question 3503, on Police: Havering, whether she has had discussions with chief constables, police and crime commissioners and mayors on ensuring that locally-funded police officers are not asked to perform activities in other boroughs; and whether guidelines are in place for chief constables about the allocation of resources.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: It is for Chief Constables and directly elected local policing bodies (including Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), Mayors exercising PCC functions and the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) to make operational decisions including how to allocate resources based on their local knowledge and experience, as well as any relevant Section 92 grant related conditions placed on Section 92 grants.

The Policing Protocol sets out to all local policing bodies, Chief Constables and Police and Crime Panels (including the London Assembly Police and Crime Panel) how their functions will be exercised in relation to each other. It sets out the high-level financial responsibilities of the local policing body and the Chief Constable, making clear that the former is ultimately accountable to the public for the management of the

Police Fund while the latter has day to day responsibility for managing their allocated budgets after these have been approved by the local policing body.

The department also publishes a Financial Management Code of Practice which provides clarity around the financial governance arrangements within the police in England and Wales. The Code builds on the Policing Protocol and sets out the working financial relationship between the local policing bodies and the Chief Constable and their respective Chief Finance Officers, having regard also to the role performed by the local policing body's Chief Executive.

■ **Police: Hertfordshire**

Bim Afolami:

[45253]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to increase the number of police officers in Hertfordshire.

Jeremy Quin:

We are recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by March 2023, the biggest recruitment drive in decades.

As at 30 June 2022, Hertfordshire police has recruited 190 additional uplift officers against a total three-year allocation of 304 officers.

As a result of their hard work and commitment police forces in England and Wales have recruited 13,790 additional officers, as at 30 June 2022, 69% of the 20,000 officer target.

■ **Police: Lancashire**

Cat Smith:

[45316]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police staff have been made redundant in Lancashire in the last year for which data is available.

Jeremy Quin:

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police staff leavers in England and Wales in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-statistics)

Data on the number of police staff who left during the financial year, on both a full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount basis, since 2007 can be found in the 'Leavers Open Data Table' available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1093591/open-data-table-police-workforce-leavers-270722.ods

This data includes the leaver type 'Dismissal/Contract termination'. This category includes individuals who have been made compulsorily redundant. It also includes those who were required to resign such as dismissals for misconduct or have had their contract terminated.

■ Police: Newport West**Ruth Jones:** [\[46130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on making an estimate of the number of (a) serving and (b) former police officers in Newport West constituency who are in fuel poverty as on 2 September 2022.

Ruth Jones: [\[46133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on making an estimate of the number of (a) serving and (b) former police officers in Newport West constituency who are at risk of homelessness as on 2 September 2022.

Ruth Jones: [\[46134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on making an estimate of the number of (a) serving and (b) former police officers in Newport West constituency who are in food poverty as on 2 September 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government understands that people across the UK are worried about the rising cost of living and are seeing their disposable incomes decrease as they spend more on essentials. Building on previously announced packages of support, in May we announced a significant additional cost of living support package targeted at those with the greatest need.

The Government has recently outlined a further substantial package of support. This support includes helping all domestic electricity customers in Great Britain cope with the impact of higher energy bills, with £400 off their bills from October through the expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Furthermore we accepted in full the Police Remuneration Review Body's recommendation to award a consolidated increase of £1,900 to all police officer ranks and pay points it will provide an uplift of up to 8.8%.

The Government has also introduced a Police Covenant, which recognises the service and sacrifice of current and former members of the police workforce. As part of this, we are focusing on health and wellbeing, physical protection and support for families.

■ Police: Recruitment**Rosie Cooper:** [\[45581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police staff roles have been disestablished since the advent of the Police Uplift Programme (a) within Lancashire Police and (b) nationwide.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: Information on the number of disestablished staff roles since the advent of the Police Uplift Programme is not held centrally by the Home Office.

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size and composition of the police workforce in England and Wales on a biannual basis in the 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, available here: [Police workforce England and Wales statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-statistics)

Information on the number of police staff (including designated officers) in post since 31 March 2007 to 31 March 2022, by Police Force Area, is published in the 'Police Workforce Open Data Table' available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1093587/open-data-table-police-workforce-270722.ods

Rosie Cooper:**[45589]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the probability that the Government will recruit a net increase of 20,000 police officers by the end of March 2023, as set out in her Department's Police Uplift Programme.

Jeremy Quin:

We are recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by March 2023, the biggest recruitment drive in decades.

As part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme, the Home Office publishes a quarterly update on the number of officers in England and Wales, available here: [Police Officer uplift statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-officer-uplift-statistics). The latest release, published on 27 July 2022 for data up to June 2022, showed that we remain on track to deliver 20,000 additional officers. As at 30 June 2022, 13,790 additional officers have been recruited from funding for the Police Uplift Programme representing 69% of the target.

■ Police: Stun Guns**Julian Knight:****[45220]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what allocation has been awarded to the West Midlands for the purposes of equipping police officers with tasers.

Jeremy Quin:

The government is committed to giving police the tools and equipment they need to keep themselves and the public safe from harm. That is why in 2020 the Home Secretary provided £6.7 million to equip up to 8,000 more officers with Taser. West Midlands requested and received £206,250.

Decisions around the purchase and supply of Taser is an operational issue and one that is made by Chief Officers in line with forces' strategic threat and risk assessments.

■ Protest

Christopher Pincher: [47517]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has considered further steps to effectively remove activists who have set up permanent protest camps in areas (a) where they are trespassing and (b) in Historic Environment Character Zones.

Jeremy Quin:

There is a range of civil and criminal remedies available to remove trespassers from land. Where a criminal offence is committed, the police have the powers they need to respond.

Under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the government broadened the range of circumstances in which the police can use their powers to direct trespassers to leave. The broader powers capture all forms of damage, disruption and distress. This will improve the police's abilities to respond to certain protest camps. Additionally, the Public Order Bill will criminalise tactics such as tunnelling, on both public and private land, which cause serious disruption as well as substantial damage to land.

■ Refugees

Stephen Farry: [45173]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many community sponsorship applications have been (a) submitted and (b) approved in the last 12 months; and how many applications were pending as 1 September 2022.

Stephen Farry: [45178]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to promote Community Sponsorship programmes to support refugee resettlement.

Tom Pursglove:

Community Sponsorship enables local volunteer groups including charities and faith groups, to directly welcome and support refugees, helping with accommodation and integration support.

Between the 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022, 67 applications were submitted by groups wishing to sponsor refugees, and 62 applications have been approved during that period of time. To note, those approved may not necessarily be the same as those submitted during the year reported.

More than 790 refugees have been resettled through Community Sponsorship since the scheme began in 2016. Details of the number of refugees resettled through community sponsorship each quarter are published in the quarterly immigration statistics. The latest release is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>.

Through the New Plan for Immigration, the Government has committed to increase the number of resettled refugees supported through Community Sponsorship, encouraging stronger partnerships between local government and community groups.

The Government funds Reset, a capacity building organisation to increase the number and diversity of Community Sponsorship groups and catalyse the growth of the scheme. This includes campaign work targeting the recruitment of new sponsor groups, and a toolkit which supports others to help raise awareness of Community Sponsorship.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Alison McGovern:

[\[45411\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 18 July 2022 to Question 38652 on Refugees: Afghanistan, what steps the Government is taking to work with local authorities across the UK to identify more opportunities for people being housed in bridging hotels to move into permanent accommodation.

Tom Pursglove:

We continue to work at pace with over 350 local authority partners to meet the demand for housing and have moved – or are in the process of moving - around 7,400 people into homes since June 2021.

Both the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Home Office have teams which engage with local authorities and Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) to encourage local authorities to pledge support.

We are providing funding to local authorities who support people through the Afghan Citizen's Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme to the value of £20,520 per person, over 3 years, for resettlement and integration costs. There is also an additional housing costs fund available over three years to provide a top-up to help councils meet the costs of renting properties of three bedrooms or more in recognition of the need to find larger homes for families for those evacuated from Afghanistan.

Local authorities and health partners who resettle families will also receive up to £4,500 per child for education, £850 for English language provision for adults requiring this support and £2,600 for healthcare.

We are also reaching out to landlords, developers, and the wider private rented sector to encourage further offers of properties, either directly to local authorities or through our housing portal.

Anne McLaughlin:

[\[45695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan child refugees have arrived in the UK since 15 August 2021.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 7 September 2022]: Afghans resettling in the UK under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the 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 August 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.

Neil Coyle:

[45841]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what criteria are used to assess whether accommodation is appropriate for offer as accommodation to Afghan refugees; and for how long her Department will continue to offer hotel accommodation to Afghan refugees should offers of permanent accommodation not be taken up.

Tom Pursglove:

We have been working hard to support Afghan families into homes of their own, so that they can settle into their local communities, feel safe and independent and rebuild their lives in the UK.

We have made improvements to the accommodation matching process, which took effect from 9 May. Before we match individuals and families to accommodation, we will talk to them to make sure we have all the necessary information about their circumstances to enable us to make an appropriate offer of accommodation, taking in to account education, health and faith needs, as well as employment, family links and caring responsibilities. We will ensure also that the accommodation offered will meet all relevant health and safety requirements, be in a good state of repair and will be furnished. Where necessary, adaptations to the property will be made before the

household move in to ensure that it is accessible for any residents with a known disability. The accommodation will be available for a minimum of 12 months. It will be affordable for the household, considering the financial resource available to them, including any Government support for which they are eligible. Accommodation will be of suitable size to accommodate all household members.

The length of time that a family will remain in bridging hotels is dependent on several factors including the availability of appropriate housing. We encourage families to accept appropriate properties as quickly as possible and urge local authorities to continue to do all they can to help house people.

Stephen Farry:

[46211]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many desk officers were working on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme in her Department as of 1 September 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

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

■ Refugees: Ukraine

Bim Afolami:

[45634]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that Ukrainian refugees have access to public transport in rural Hertfordshire.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: Ukrainian nationals coming to the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme, or extending their stay in the UK using the Ukraine Extension Scheme, are given access to work, benefits and public services as laid down in Appendix Ukraine to the Immigration Rules, details of which can be found at:

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

They can access Universal Credit and job support immediately.

Ukrainians here under our schemes will also be eligible for Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Child Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance, and Attendance Allowance. Contributions-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) are also available for those Ukrainians who meet the criteria.

We recognise the importance of having reliable public transport for all members of the community. That is why the former Transport Secretary announced on 3rd September that the Government will provide up to £60 million from January to March

next year (2023), to help bus operators in England to cap single adult fares at £2 per journey. Buses across England will also benefit from up to £130 million of Government support from October 2022 to March 2023, ensuring services keep running and millions of passengers can continue using affordable transport.

■ **Roads: Safety**

Sam Tarry:

[45043]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of allocating additional funding to local authorities to improve street safety, such as additional funding for the maintenance of street lighting.

Jeremy Quin:

The Government is providing local authorities with additional funding to improve street safety through the Safer Streets Fund.

Over the first four rounds of the Safer Streets Fund, £120 million has been awarded to local projects to prevent crime through measures such as improved street lighting.

Local authorities have been eligible to bid for funding since Round Two of the Fund. All rounds of funding are subject to independent evaluation, which is vital to understand what is effective at improving street safety and how future Government investment should be targeted.

■ **Safer Streets Fund: Havering**

Andrew Rosindell:

[48287]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much has been allocated to local organisations in Havering from the Safer Streets Fund.

Jeremy Quin:

While no Safer Streets Funding has been allocated to Havering specifically, in total, since the inception of the Safer Streets Fund in 2020, £3,298,201 has been awarded to 12 projects within the Mayors Office for Police and Crime area across four rounds of the Fund. This includes projects in Barnet, Haringey and Hackney, which have been targeted at preventing and reducing neighbourhood crime, violence against women and girls and anti-social behaviour.

PCCs are responsible for prioritising bids for their areas, and as MOPAC has experience of developing successful bids the Home Office would recommend engaging with them at the earliest opportunity. All bids submitted to the Fund are assessed in a fair and transparent manner against the published criteria and in line with commercial requirements, and the Home Office will ensure any further funding is advertised widely to those eligible to bid.

■ Safer Streets Fund: West Midlands

Julian Knight:

[\[44990\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what financial allocation has been awarded to West Midlands Police through the Safe Streets Fund.

Jeremy Quin:

In total, since the inception of the Safer Streets Fund in 2020, £2,907,062 has been awarded to eight projects within the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's area across four rounds of the Fund. This includes projects in Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton, which have been targeted at preventing and reducing neighbourhood crime, violence against women and girls and anti-social behaviour.

This funding has been used on a variety of interventions including fixed and deployable CCTV, street lighting, implementing a safe place scheme and an education and communication campaign aimed at helping to tackle violence against women and girls.

■ Seasonal Workers: Scotland

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[45452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential implications of the expansion of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme for Labour Market Enforcement's resourcing and work plans.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[45847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of seasonal workers working in Scotland by labour provider as of 1 August 2022.

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[45848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of farms in Scotland with workers employed on the seasonal workers visa scheme; and the number of farms in Scotland with each labour provider.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government currently has no plans to further expand the Seasonal Worker immigration route.

The Government has made no estimate of the number of seasonal workers working in Scotland by labour provider as of 1 August 2022, nor do we plan to make an estimate of the number of farms in Scotland with workers employed on the seasonal worker visa scheme; and the number of farms in Scotland with each labour provider. The UK operates a national immigration system and does not gather such information by devolved region.

■ Seasonal Workers: Ukraine

Paul Blomfield:

[\[45787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 25 July 2022 to Question 35931 on Seasonal Workers: Ukraine, how many and what proportion of the 2,914 seasonal workers have been issued with (a) biometric residence permits and (b) other proof that their leave has been extended under the (i) Seasonal Worker Ukrainian Extension Scheme and (ii) Ukrainian Extensions Scheme as on 2 September 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office does not routinely publish data on these matters and a manual trawl would be required to determine these figures which would not be cost effective.

■ Sexual Harassment

Catherine West:

[\[48457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how reported incidents of catcalling, including on the street, are logged by the police.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government takes all forms of sexual harassment extremely seriously. While there is not a specific 'catcalling' offence, depending on the circumstance of the case, this behaviour may be captured by other offences including harassment and public order offences. The most recent data show that in the year to March 2022, the police recorded 263,919 harassment offences. This is a 20% increase on the year to March 2021, likely driven by an increase in victims reporting to the police and improvements in recording practices. In addition, in the year to March 2022 the police recorded 472,067 offences of public fear, alarm or distress, an increase of 27% on the year to March 2021. Public fear, alarm or distress can be used by police to capture behaviours that do not meet the criteria required to formally be recognised as a harassment offence, for example when the behaviour happens once and not repeated. It is not possible from the data available to determine the type of harassment experienced, nor which offences were sexual in nature. The Home Office Counting Rules provide a national standard for the recording and counting of 'notifiable' offences recorded by police forces in England and Wales (known as 'recorded crime').

We have taken a number of actions to tackle street sexual harassment. In September 2021 we launched the pilot StreetSafe tool enabling the public to report anonymously areas where they feel unsafe, so that local authorities and the police can take practical steps in response. Since October 2021, we have announced awards of £23.5 million to PCCs and local authorities under Round 3 of the Safer Streets Fund, followed by £50m to 100 projects in Round 4 of the Fund to make public spaces safer for everyone with many projects aiming to help women and girls feel safer on the streets. Furthermore, in December 2021 the College of Policing published a new guidance product for police officers, advising them how to respond to reports of public

sexual harassment, and in August the CPS published updates to its legal guidance on public order offences to make clear to prosecutors how public order offences can be used to tackle public sexual harassment.

In addition, in March 2022 we launched the 'Enough' communications campaign, which seeks to change public attitudes and tolerance towards crimes such as public sexual harassment.

In July we launched a targeted consultation on whether there should be a specific criminal offence of public sexual harassment. The consultation closed on 1 September and the Home Office is now in the process of analysing the responses.

Catherine West:

[48458]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many incidents of catcalling have been reported to the police in the UK since January 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The Government takes all forms of sexual harassment extremely seriously. While there is not a specific 'catcalling' offence, depending on the circumstance of the case, this behaviour may be captured by other offences including harassment and public order offences. The most recent data show that in the year to March 2022, the police recorded 263,919 harassment offences. This is a 20% increase on the year to March 2021, likely driven by an increase in victims reporting to the police and improvements in recording practices. In addition, in the year to March 2022 the police recorded 472,067 offences of public fear, alarm or distress, an increase of 27% on the year to March 2021. Public fear, alarm or distress can be used by police to capture behaviours that do not meet the criteria required to formally be recognised as a harassment offence, for example when the behaviour happens once and not repeated. It is not possible from the data available to determine the type of harassment experienced, nor which offences were sexual in nature. The Home Office Counting Rules provide a national standard for the recording and counting of 'notifiable' offences recorded by police forces in England and Wales (known as 'recorded crime').

We have taken a number of actions to tackle street sexual harassment. In September 2021 we launched the pilot StreetSafe tool enabling the public to report anonymously areas where they feel unsafe, so that local authorities and the police can take practical steps in response. Since October 2021, we have announced awards of £23.5 million to PCCs and local authorities under Round 3 of the Safer Streets Fund, followed by £50m to 100 projects in Round 4 of the Fund to make public spaces safer for everyone with many projects aiming to help women and girls feel safer on the streets. Furthermore, in December 2021 the College of Policing published a new guidance product for police officers, advising them how to respond to reports of public sexual harassment, and in August the CPS published updates to its legal guidance on public order offences to make clear to prosecutors how public order offences can be used to tackle public sexual harassment.

In addition, in March 2022 we launched the 'Enough' communications campaign, which seeks to change public attitudes and tolerance towards crimes such as public sexual harassment.

In July we launched a targeted consultation on whether there should be a specific criminal offence of public sexual harassment. The consultation closed on 1 September and the Home Office is now in the process of analysing the responses.

■ **Shamima Begum**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date the UK intelligence services were made aware of the involvement of Canadian Security Intelligence Services in facilitating Shamima Begum's entry to Syria in 2015.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what information her Department holds on the date the Metropolitan Police Service were made aware of the involvement of Canadian Security Intelligence Services in facilitating Shamima Begum's entry to Syria in 2015.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government was made aware of the involvement of Canadian Security Intelligence Services in facilitating Shamima Begum's entry to Syria in 2015, prior to taking the decision to revoke her British citizenship in 2019.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating Shamima Begum's British Citizenship in the context of recent reports of the involvement of Canadian Security Intelligence Services in facilitating her entry to Syria in 2015.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has been aware of any other cases other than Shamima Begum whereby British children trying to join IS had their entry into Syria facilitated by foreign intelligence services.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department holds information on Five Eyes nations having been involved in facilitating British children's entry into Syria for the purpose of joining IS.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[47658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with her Canadian counterpart on reports of the involvement of Canadian Security Intelligence Services in facilitating Shamima Begum's entry to Syria in 2015.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:[\[47659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to launch an independent inquiry into the potential involvement of foreign intelligence services in facilitating British children's entry into Syria for the purpose of joining IS.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: We do not comment on individual cases, operational intelligence or security matters.

There are currently no plans to launch an independent inquiry in response to media speculation.

It would be inappropriate to comment on the specifics of Ms Begum's case whilst legal proceedings are ongoing.

The Government's top priority remains maintaining our national security and keeping the public safe.

■ **Slavery****Alex Norris:**[\[47635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to allow pre-legislative scrutiny of the forthcoming Modern Slavery Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2022.

Amanda Solloway:

There are no current plans to publish in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny the Modern Slavery Bill announced in the Queen's Speech in May.

■ **Small Businesses: Fraud****Julian Sturdy:**[\[45801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on taking steps to help protect small businesses from fraud through identity theft.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The detail of discussions with Cabinet peers are held in confidence. I would, however, like to reassure you that we understand the harms caused by identity theft and that tackling fraud is a priority for Government.

■ **Small Businesses: Recruitment****Alexander Stafford:**[\[45058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that SMEs can recruit skilled workers internationally in the event that they are unable to do so within Britain.

Tom Pursglove:

We have expanded the range of jobs eligible under the Skilled Worker visa route – the main volume work route into the UK - to include all jobs skilled to RQF level 3 (equivalent to A-levels, but not requiring academic qualifications).

Over 45,000 UK employers are currently licensed to sponsor Skilled Worker visas with the vast majority of all licences held by SMEs. Sponsoring visas is straightforward and online, and we are looking to streamline and simplify the sponsorship system further; following recent reforms most applications for a sponsor licence are decided in under 8 weeks and the application itself takes as little as 20 minutes to complete. We have abolished the resident labour market test and suspended the cap on numbers, speeding up the process of recruiting skilled workers by up to 8 weeks. We are delivering a comprehensive programme of communication and engagement to ensure employers understand how the new system operates, including the process for registering as a sponsor.

Our Points Based System also includes a number of other immigration routes, including Global Business Mobility, temporary work, Scale-up, High Potential Individuals and Innovator routes.

■ Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin**Sarah Champion:**[\[45585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Ashara London 1444H sermons given by Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin in Northolt were accredited by the Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: The UK Government does not play a role in accrediting sermons. In relation to visas granted to faith leaders, the Home Office does not routinely comment on individual cases.

■ Travellers: Caravan Sites**Christopher Pincher:**[\[45072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help tackle anti-social behaviour arising from traveller sites; and what powers her Department have given to the police to help tackle illegal encampments.

Christopher Pincher:[\[45793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to help tackle unauthorised encampments established by travellers.

Christopher Pincher:[\[45796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour arising from traveller sites; and what powers local police forces hold to help tackle illegal encampments.

Jeremy Quin:

This Government recognises the misery that unauthorised encampments can cause and that is why we have delivered on our manifesto commitment to give police the powers they need to tackle those people on unauthorised encampments who cause harm.

Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, which received Royal Assent in April, we strengthened the police's powers to arrest and seize the vehicles and other property of those who set up unauthorised encampments and cause damage, disruption or distress.

The measures also extend the powers of the police to direct trespassers to leave land.

■ Undocumented Migrants: English Channel**John Healey:**[\[48223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who have crossed the English Channel in small boats have absconded once they landed on British shores since the start of 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office is unable to provide the information that you have requested because the data is not available in a reportable format.

■ Undocumented Migrants: Personal Property**Owen Thompson:**[\[45941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what systems are in place to keep track of the location of undocumented people who arrive in the UK by small boats' personal items that are taken into the custody of Home Office agents upon arrival.

Owen Thompson:[\[45942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish data on the (a) number and (b) proportion of undocumented people's personal items, who arrive in the UK by small boats, that are taken into the custody of Home Office agents upon arrival that are (i) successfully returned to their owners and (ii) not returned to their owners.

Tom Pursglove:

Dry clothing is provided after arrival at Dover, with the consequence that people are parted from their wet clothing and possessions. These are bagged and logged, and go with the person during their journey through the reception process.

During the reception phase, people are searched for anything which might injure themselves or others, as well as for documentation related to their journey to the UK. These items are retained during the reception process but, if not contraband, are returned to the individual upon release into accommodation and our aim is to reunite people with their possessions as quickly as possible. Identity documentation is retained until such time as an individual is either granted leave to enter, or is removed

from the UK. It should be noted no cash belonging to people arriving by small boat is retained by either HO staff or contractors, but is instead returned immediately unless the sum is of such a magnitude that an investigation into potential proceeds of crime is warranted.

Inevitably, with such large volumes of persons being processed and the challenging conditions in which journeys are made, items can be mislaid. Every effort is made to reduce the risk of this happening, and there is a lost property process to enable people to raise any concerns about missing possessions. The lost property cases which do occur represent a small percentage of overall arrival numbers, but there are no plans to publish this data at present.

■ Violence Reduction Unit

Sam Tarry: [\[45049\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support the Violence Reduction Unit to help support community initiatives aimed at preventing violence crime.

Sam Tarry: [\[45094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle violent crime in Ilford.

Sam Tarry: [\[45097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is providing the Metropolitan Police with extra resources to target violent offenders and remove knives and dangerous weapons from circulation.

Jeremy Quin:

This Government is committed to tackling violent crime and making our streets safer, which is why we are giving the police and their partners the resources they need to do so.

To support the prevention of violence in London, we have allocated the London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) c.£33.7m since 2019, including a c.£12.6m allocation for this financial year (2022/23). The VRU also received an additional investment of £5.5m in 2021/22 to deliver specific, highly targeted interventions to vulnerable young people.

The London VRU delivers multiple initiatives that are projected to support over 5,300 young people in the capital next year. This includes locally delivered activity in all 32 boroughs, including Ilford's borough of Redbridge, where the London VRU have used Home Office funding to make a £145,000 investment into the "Redbridge Inclusion and Alternative Activities Hub", which targets support, mentoring, and diversion to those young people identified as being at risk of involvement in violent crime.

We are also providing additional funding to enable the Metropolitan Police to increase enforcement activity where most violence occurs, through our Grip programme (previously known as Surge). The Metropolitan Police have been allocated

approximately £50.9m over the last three years, including £7.9m for this financial year (2022/23) for Grip. Through this programme, the Metropolitan Police are delivering data-driven, targeted visible patrols to suppress violence where it is most concentrated.

Grip and VRU funding are provided in addition to the commitment to increase the number of police officers in England and Wales by 20,000 by March 2023. As of 30 June 2022, the MPS has recruited an additional 2,952 uplift officers against a total three-year allocation of 4,557 officers.

■ Visas: Applications

Caroline Lucas:

[\[45506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many family reunion applications waiting to be processed as of 2 September 2022 have exceeded the 60-day service standard for a decision; what the average processing time for those applications was in the latest period for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Pursglove:

We are currently working outside the 60 day service standard for refugee family reunion applications and processing times are approximately double the expected service standard timeframe.

We are working hard to recover our decision-making timescales and are looking to streamline our processes and secure additional resource to support this work.

We will prioritise applications where there is a particularly urgent or compelling reason to do so.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[48336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of delays in processing visa applications on (a) people and (b) employers renewing Tier 2 visas.

Tom Pursglove:

The Home Office had been prioritising Ukraine visa schemes applications in response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Staff from other Government departments, including DWP and HMRC, have been surged into the department to help with Ukraine work and enable normal visa routes to return to normal service levels in due course.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[48337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department provides for people who may lose their (a) jobs and (b) housing due to delays exceeding six months for the renewal of Leave to Remain visas.

Tom Pursglove:

Under section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971, a person whose application for further leave is outstanding when their existing leave expires will have that leave extended

until the application is either decided or withdrawn. Any conditions attached to the original leave will continue. No one should lose their job or their housing simply because of a delay in renewing their visa.

■ Visas: English Language

Drew Hendry:

[\[47576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending the length of time an English language test pass is valid for a visa application, in the context of passport application delays.

Tom Pursglove:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: We do not have any current plans to extend the length of time for which a Secure English Language Test (SELT) result is valid for the purpose of a visa application. It is important that people show they have the level of English required to work, study and integrate in the UK. An accurate and reliable SELT process ensures that people coming to work and study have the skills they need to complete the activity they are coming to the UK to undertake. Applicants can rely on the test result for 2 years from the date of the test, and can choose when they take the test before making their visa application.

As part of our work to simplify the immigration rules, we have extended the ways an applicant can prove their English language ability other than providing a valid SELT certificate. They can now meet the language requirement by:

- Having a GCSE, A Level, Scottish National Qualification level 4 or 5, Scottish Higher or Advanced Higher in English, gained through study at a UK school that they began when they were under 18;
- Having a degree taught or researched in English;
- Their education provider self-assessing their English ability if they are applying for a student visa.

Applicants also now only have to prove their language ability once, and can rely on having met the requirement in a previous visa application for future applications.

■ Visas: Skilled Workers

Daisy Cooper:

[\[46155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to amend the Skilled Worker Visa to enable visa holders to have a second job outside of their permitted occupation.

Tom Pursglove:

The Government has no plans to change the supplementary employment rules. The rules were put in place to protect migrant workers from exploitation. In their main employment, migrant workers must be sponsored by a registered sponsor.

A migrant may undertake supplementary employment of up to 20 hours per week in a job which is in the same occupation code and at the same level as their main job, or in a shortage occupation.

If they wish to work more hours, or in a different qualifying role, they can apply to vary their permission to stay so that both jobs are with Home Office approved sponsors.

■ Visas: Ukraine

Stuart C McDonald:

[45449]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 June 2022 to Question 9025 on Visas: Ukraine, for what reason her Department is not publishing data on the number of applications which have been made under the Ukrainian Extension Scheme; and what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of that scheme.

Tom Pursglove:

The latest figures on the number of applications processed under the Ukraine Schemes, including the Ukraine Extension Scheme, can be found here: [Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

■ West Midlands Police: Standards

Julian Knight:

[45062]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the analysis of Home Office data released in July 2022 showing that West Midlands Police have closed 46% of investigations without identifying a suspect, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the performance of West Midlands Police.

Jeremy Quin:

[Holding answer 20 September 2022]: As the independent Inspectorate, HMICFRS has a statutory responsibility to inspect the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces in England and Wales. Its reports provide transparency on the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in England and Wales to Ministers, the public, forces and to Police and Crime Commissioners.

HMICFRS published its finding from its most recent PEEL inspection of West Midlands Police in November 2021. West Midlands Police received a 'Requires Improvement' grade for investigating crime (albeit with three areas of innovative practice identified) and for protecting vulnerable people. The findings in respect of the victim services' assessment highlighted the following area for improvement: "The force needs to improve how it investigates reported crimes and must make sure that its investigations are proportionate, thorough and prompt".

The Government is delivering on the people's priorities by recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers. As at 30 June 2022, West Midlands Police has recruited 899 additional uplift officers against a total three year allocation of 1,218 officers, including 488 uplift officers in the final year of the Police Uplift Programme. West Midlands

police's funding will be up to £695.6m in 2022/23, an increase of up to £40.1m when compared to 2021/22.

The whole Criminal Justice System (CJS) must work effectively for victims, defendants, and communities. This includes ensuring that robust and effective investigations are carried out and timely decisions are made. The CJS Delivery Data Dashboards, launched in December 2021, are a vital step in improving transparency, and increasing understanding of the CJS, allowing PCCs, other local leaders and members of the public to see how their local area is performing.

■ Windrush Compensation Scheme

Kate Osamor: [48445]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times did the Home Office not accept and implement the recommendation of the independent person following a Tier 2 review decision of a Windrush Compensation Claim, in each month from April 2019 to September 2022.

Kate Osamor: [48446]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many times did the Home Office not accept and implement the recommendation of a Senior Reviewer following a Tier 1 review decision of a Windrush Compensation Claim, in each month from April 2019 to September 2022.

Kate Osamor: [48447]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush Compensation Scheme claimants rejected the outcome of a Tier 1 review decision in each month from April 2019 to September 2022.

Kate Osamor: [48448]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Windrush Compensation Scheme claimants rejected the outcome of a Tier 2 review decision in each month from April 2019 to September 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

From April 2019 to date, the Windrush Compensation Scheme has accepted and implemented all recommendations made by the Independent Adjudicator, following Tier 2 review decisions.

From April 2019 to date, the Windrush Compensation Scheme has accepted and implemented all recommendations made by an internal independent person who had not previously been involved in the claim, following a Tier 1 review.

Windrush Compensation Scheme published data shows that between April 2019 and July 2022, 188 individuals submitted a Tier 2 review request following a Tier 1 review decision.

A full breakdown including dates can be found at tab WCS_09: [Transparency Data](#).

The Adjudicator's Office is a separate organisation, independent of the Home Office. More information about how the Adjudicator's Office administers an independent Tier 2 review of Windrush Compensation Scheme decisions is available [here](#).

If an individual remains dissatisfied with the service or decision of the Adjudicator's Office, even where they choose to accept that Tier 2 decision, they can ask their MP to send their review request or complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

When the Ombudsman receives a complaint, they will initially conduct a primary investigation and where further information is required, the Ombudsman may launch a full investigation.

Up to the end of August 2022, the Ombudsman had investigated 14 cases relating to Tier 2 reviews. All investigations up to December 2021 have been closed. 7 claims received from January 2022 onwards remain open. No complaints relating to Tier 2 review outcomes have progressed to a full investigation.

■ Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

Sarah Olney:

[\[45600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government has taken steps to enter into a youth mobility agreement with (a) the EU, (b) France, (c) Spain, (d) Italy and (e) Germany.

Tom Pursglove:

We remain open to negotiating Youth Mobility Scheme (YMS) arrangements with other countries and territories including EU Member States. However, as each YMS is subject to a bilateral, reciprocal agreement which also provides benefit to UK nationals with the detail negotiated and agreed between the relevant parties, we are unable to disclose the status of negotiations as they occur. Further details of additional YMS agreements will be announced once they are concluded.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review

Julian Knight:

[\[45498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will publish a timeline for the implementation of the recommendations made in the Independent Review of Criminal Legal Aid.

Rachel Maclean:

On 15 March, the Department published our interim response to Sir Christopher Bellamy's report together with a consultation on related policy proposals. Our full response will be published in due course.

■ Parole: Trade Unions

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[48449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the paper entitled Root and Branch Review of the Parole System: The Future of the Parole System in England and Wales, CP654, published on 30 March 2022, whether he has had recent discussions with trade unions representing probation staff on the rights of those staff to make recommendations to the Parole Board.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[48450\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the paper entitled Root and Branch Review of the Parole System: The Future of the Parole System in England and Wales, CP654, published on 30 March 2022, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of prohibiting probation staff from making recommendations to the Parole Board on public safety; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

Officials continue to have discussions with trade unions representing probation staff about the changes made to the Parole Board Rules with effect from 21 July, and in particular the one which prohibits report writers from making a recommendation as to whether the statutory release test is met in the case of the prisoner whose detention is being reviewed by the Parole Board.

Probation officers continue to have a vital role in informing the decision which falls in law exclusively to the Parole Board, by providing comprehensive and fully reasoned assessments of the prisoner's risk.

Our priority continues to be the protection of the public; the reforms to the parole system help us to do that.

■ Powers of Attorney: Applications

Alex Sobel: [\[48488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he will take to tackle delays to the processing of documents for Lasting Power of Attorney applications.

Rachel Maclean:

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) is working to reduce the length of time that customers are currently waiting for their Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs) to be registered. In order to tackle the backlog of applications that arose during the pandemic and meet the increased demand for services, OPG have hired extra staff and teams are working overtime and across multiple shift patterns to ensure customers receive their LPAs as quickly as possible. OPG have also introduced process efficiencies and continue to make sure they are doing all they can to improve the application journey for customers. The number of LPAs being registered each month is now back to pre-pandemic levels.

■ Prison Officers: Pay

Steve Reed:

[\[48356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average pay was for band (a) three, (b) four and (c) five prison officers in the latest period for which data is available.

Rachel Maclean:

The table below quantifies average pay as at 30 June 2022. This does not therefore include the impact of the 2022 pay award which will not be paid until the end of September. HMPPS employs Prison Officers on two sets of terms and conditions (legacy terms that applied prior to April 2012 and modernised 'Fair and Sustainable' terms). The average figures combine staff covered by each set of terms and conditions.

GRADE / BAND	AVERAGE PAY (30/06/2022)
Band 3 Prison Officer	£28,699
Band 4 Prison Officer	£33,502
Band 5 Custodial Manager	£37,980

Steve Reed:

[\[48357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the total increase in pay to prison staff was in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

HMPPS employs Prison Officers on two sets of terms and conditions. Pay for Prison Officers employed under either set of terms and conditions is determined through the independent Prison Service Pay Review Body (PSPRB) process.

The tables below show the rates of pay and annual increases that applied for the core Prison Officer roles, for each set of terms and conditions, for each of the last five years:

1) Legacy Grades (those employed prior to 1 April 2012 and who have not chosen to move across to the new structures)

GRADE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Prison Officer	£29,619	£30,212	£30,877	£31,649	£31,649	£32,915
Annual Increase		£593	£665	£772	£0	£1,266
Senior Officer	£31,881	£32,519	£33,235	£34,006	£34,006	£35,429

GRADE	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Annual Increase		£638	£726	£771	£0	£1,423
Principal Officer	£34,272	£34,948	£35,728	£36,622	£36,622	£38,087
Annual Increase		£686	£780	£894	£0	£1,465

2) New Fair and Sustainable (F&S) Pay Ranges – Post-April 2012

F&S BAND	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Band 3 (Prison Officer)						
Min	£21,215	£21,664	£22,293	£22,851	£23,144	£28,880
Max	£23,590	£24,061	£24,784	£25,404	£25,697	£30,410
Annual Increase Min		£499	£629	£558	£293	£5,736
Annual Increase Max		£471	£723	£620	£293	£4,713
Band 4 (Senior / Supervising Officer)						
Min	£26,953	£27,496	£28,101	£28,804	£28,804	N/A
Max	£29,981	£30,581	£31,254	£32,036	£32,036	£34,172
Annual Increase Min		£543	£605	£703	£0	N/A
Annual Increase Max		£600	£673	£782	£0	£2,109
Band 5 (Principal Officer)						
Min	£30,326	£30,933	£31,615	£32,405	£32,405	£37,121
Max	£34,136	£34,819	£35,586	£36,476	£36,476	£38,909
Annual Increase Min		£607	£682	£790	£0	£4,716

F&S BAND	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Annual Increase Max		£683	£767	£890	£0	£2,433

■ Prison Service: Termination of Employment

Steve Reed:

[48355]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison staff have left HM Prison Service in each of the last five years.

Rachel Maclean:

Table 1 - HM Prison staff(1) who have left the department between 1st April 2017

and 30th June 2022.

YEAR	HEADCOUNT OF LEAVERS
1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018	3,322
1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019	4,056
1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020	4,441
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	3,531
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	5,509
1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 (p)	5,740

HMPPS - Oracle HRMS and Single Operating Platform

Notes

1. Includes Youth Custody Service.

Figures taken from Table 7b of the quarterly "Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service workforce statistics" publication:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-june-2022>.

(p) Figures relating to current financial year are provisional and may be subject to change in future.

To help stem attrition in Operational Band 2-5's grades, HMPPS have created a retention strategy which is linked to wider activities around employee experience, employee lifecycle and staff engagement at work. As part of this strategy we are; looking at leaver trend data, undertaking in-depth exit interviews and using this

feedback to establish the drivers of attrition in HMPPS. Local, Regional or National Interventions are then agreed for establishments to ensure that we are embedding individual Retention Plans. This work consists of reviewing existing data, policy, process and benefit arrangements for staff and establishing how best to optimise them order to retain employees and stabilise the workforce.

■ Sexual Offences: Criminal Proceedings

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[47606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether victims of sexual assault can claim compensation for emotional distress in cases where court hearings have been delayed due to a backlog in cases.

Rachel Maclean:

Under the Victims' Code, all victims are entitled to be informed about the progress of their case in the system and to be provided with information about compensation. Victims of sexual assault may be eligible for compensation under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, but only for physical or mental injury which is a direct result of the crime. Victims may also receive court ordered compensation to be paid by the offender.

As a result of our decisive action to tackle the challenges the pandemic created for users of the justice system, we had seen the Crown Court backlog fall from 60,400 in June 2021 to 59,000 in June 2022. However, the barrister strike action has begun to undermine this process, disrupting the courts, and seeing victims face further delays.

In recognition of the crucial support which victims need to help them cope and recover from the trauma of these violent and abhorrent crimes, we will increase funding for victim and witness support services to £192m by 2024/25 - an uplift of 92% on core budgets from 2020/21. It is our aim for these measures to help to ensure that high quality support is available to victims when needed, and we are also using additional ringfenced funding to increase the number of ISVAs and IDVAs by 300 to over 1000 by 2024/25 - a 43% increase on the number of ISVAs and IDVAs over the next three years.

■ Small Businesses: Legal Costs

Alex Cunningham:

[\[47527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made a recent estimate of how much English and Welsh small and medium-sized enterprises could save annually if barriers to accessing legal advice and the civil justice system were reduced.

Rachel Maclean:

The Ministry of Justice has not directly made an assessment of these costs. However, we recognise the importance of businesses being able to access legal services in a cost effective way.

The Government continues to take steps to improve access to justice for small businesses and support them to resolve legal issues in a cost effective way. This

Government has undertaken extensive work on improving the reach and uptake of dispute resolution services, extending the fixed recoverable costs regime and supporting technological innovation in legal services. Through these initiatives, we aim to further improve the cost effectiveness, simplicity, and speed of resolving legal issues for small businesses. The Government has also invested in the creation of 38 Growth Hubs across England providing businesses with free one-to-one support and advice. Additionally, the Government's Business support helpline can provide guidance to businesses on what support offers are available to them.

■ Social Security and Child Support Tribunal: Costs

Marsha De Cordova:

[\[47646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the total cost to (a) his Department and (b) HM Courts & Tribunal Service was of administering appeals in the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal in each year since 2012-13 for (i) all cases, (ii) Work Capability Assessment cases and (iii) Personal Independent Payment decision cases.

Rachel Maclean:

With respect to part (a) of the question, it is confirmed that the costs of administering appeals in the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal are recorded by HM Courts & Tribunals Service and not by the Ministry of Justice as a department.

With respect to part (b) of the question, the total cost to HM Courts & Tribunal Service of administering appeals in the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal in each year since 2012-13 for (a) all cases was:

HM COURTS &

TRIBUNALS 201

SERVICE	3-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Social Security & Child Support Tribunal	139, 87,357, 720, 366 428	92,554, 070	105,776, 214	121,482, 762	117,804, 233	121,771, 734	104,792, 533	100,057, 460	

The total cost to HM Courts & Tribunal Service of administering appeals in the Social Security and Child Support Tribunal in each year since 2012-13 specifically for (b) Work Capability Assessment cases and (c) Personal Independent Payment decision cases is not held at the requested level of granularity.

■ Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation

Tim Loughton: [\[48194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the previous Secretary of State's announcement on Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) cases on 20 July 2022, when he will bring forward legislative proposals on SLAPPs.

Rachel Maclean:

I refer to my answer to the Hon. Member for Croydon North on 7 September, the Government is continuing to explore options in relation to SLAPPs.

Bob Seely: [\[48491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what advice his Department provides to journalists subject to Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is currently developing reforms regarding the challenges which Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) present to journalists and others involved in freedom of expression relating to the public interest. Our recent Call for Evidence on SLAPPs consulted media professionals and journalists, inviting their views and experiences to inform our legislative reforms.

Bob Seely: [\[48492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his timetable is for introducing legislative proposals on Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation.

Rachel Maclean:

I refer to my answer to the Hon. Member for Croydon North on 7 September, the Government is currently considering options in relation to SLAPPs.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**■ Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund**

Alex Norris: [\[45223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to publish a formal update on the proposed successor scheme to the Access to Elected Office and enable funds that support disabled candidates running for elected office, as outlined in Part One of the National Disability Strategy.

Paul Scully:

The Government wants to see more disabled people in public office. The Government has been clear that the responsibility for supporting disabled candidates sits with political parties and that the EnAble Fund was an interim measure to give parties time to put their own support in place.

The Government is committed to seeing more people with disabilities standing for local elections and becoming councillors. As part of the [DLUHC funded 2022/23 local](#)

[government sector support programme, delivered by the Local Government Association](#) and launched in April this year, DLUHC supports a scheme which includes:

- a coaching programme for disabled councillors to support them as resilient and confident leaders of their communities;
- a campaign to attract more people with disabilities to stand for council elections and a new 'Be a Councillor' guide for disabled candidates who are considering standing for the 2023 elections, and;
- a bespoke leadership development programme for disabled councillors, which provides councillors with unique networking opportunities and support.

■ Coastal Areas: Investment

Damien Moore:

[\[45120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help encourage private investment in coastal communities not covered by its policy on freeports.

Dehenna Davison:

My department is committed to supporting coastal communities flourish, strengthening their appeal as places to live, work and visit.

From 2012 – 2022, my department delivered over £187 million throughout the UK through the Coastal Communities Fund. The Evaluation has recently been published, which showed the positive effects on the economy including stimulating job growth and prosperity. Since then, we have been busy to ensure coastal communities remain at the heart of our levelling up funds.

Of 101 towns, there are 22 coastal towns that are recipients of Towns Deals worth up to £25 million and coastal areas will benefit from over £673 million of investment (inclusive of successful Future High Streets Fund bids). In addition to this, the Levelling Up Fund offers investment opportunities for coastal communities to promote regeneration and build vital infrastructure. Both of these place-based interventions should boost private sector investment through the regeneration of high streets and town centres.

■ Domestic Abuse Duty

Andrew Lewer:

[\[44962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to (a) give local authorities at least three months' notice of their 2023-24 funding allocations for the Domestic Abuse Duty or (b) provide local authorities with the minimum figure they can expect to receive for the purposes of supporting efficient planning and commissioning of services.

Andrew Lewer:

[45156]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to notify councils of their 2023-24 funding allocation for the Domestic Abuse Duty.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to ensuring victims of domestic abuse receive the support they need. We will announce the funding for 2023/24 at the earliest opportunity.

So far, local authorities are in receipt of two years of new burdens funding for the delivery of their duties - £125 million in both 2021/22 and 2022/23. This has enabled local authorities to be able to plan for and commission support services to meet the needs of victims.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

John Spellar:

[45551]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to the Answer of 16 June 2022 to Question 17012 on Elections: Proof of Identity, when he plans to publish details on the implementation of voter ID cards.

Paul Scully:

The Government recently published a letter to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee regarding the Elections Act 2022. It sets out details about voter identification and the Voter Authority Certificate, the link to the published letter can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-the-chair-of-the-public-administration-and-constitutional-affairs-committee-regarding-the-elections-act-2022>.

Further details on implementation and commencement will be published in due course.

■ Empty Property

Charlotte Nichols:

[45160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the number of self-contained residential properties that have been empty for six months or longer.

Lee Rowley:

There were 237,340 long-term vacant dwellings in England on 4 October 2021, a decrease of 31,045 (11.6%) from 268,385 on 5 October 2020. The data is published annually with the next publication scheduled for March 2023.

In this dataset, long-term vacant dwellings are defined as properties liable for council tax that have been empty for more than six months and that are not subject to Empty Homes Discount class D or empty due to specific flooding events.

■ Evictions

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[45004\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reason there has been a delay in abolishing Section 21 notices and no fault evictions.

Lee Rowley:

The White Paper "*A Fairer Private Rented Sector*", published in June 2022, provides further information on the most recent Government announcements in this policy area. We will announce next steps in due course.

■ Evictions: Equality

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[45002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has made an equality impact assessment of tenants who have been evicted under section 21 notices.

Lee Rowley:

As private landlords are not required to record when they serve a notice of possession, it is not possible to break down the volume of notices served by protected characteristics.

■ Fire Extinguishers

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[45597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make it his policy to require the fitting of sprinklers in (a) care homes, b) extra care facilities, (c) specialised housing, (d) flats and apartment blocks, (e) houses in multiple occupation, (f) schools and (g) large high bay warehousing; and if he will make a statement.

Lee Rowley:

We recognise that sprinklers are an effective means of controlling fire, but they are only one of a range of measures which make a building safe.

In 2020, following a consultation, we introduced changes to the statutory guidance to the building regulations (Approved Document B) to lower the threshold for provision of sprinkler systems in new blocks of flats from 30m to 11m.

We are also currently undertaking research on the current design approaches across the specialised housing and care home sector.

The design of schools is the responsibility of the Department for Education who are committed to increasing the safety standards in school buildings. They have consulted on updated guidance on fire safety design in schools, including the use of sprinklers. They plan to set out details shortly.

■ Freeports: Countryside

Stephen Morgan: [\[48484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of freeport zones on (a) national parks and (b) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Dehenna Davison:

National parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within Freeport outer boundaries will not be negatively impacted by Freeport policy. Freeports are at the core of our Levelling Up Agenda and, by delivering investment on specific sites which benefit from tax and customs benefits, identified for their suitability, Freeports will create thousands of high-quality jobs in some of our most deprived communities.

Those sites sit within an outer boundary, which sets the limit for how far apart they can be and indicates the area that is expected to benefit most directly from the Freeport's economic impacts. While the Outer Boundary intersects with some, this does not mean that the entire area has been earmarked for development or that it has special planning. Moreover, local authorities remain responsible for providing planning permission for any development within the Freeport area and Freeport status does not in any way undercut the local planning process.

Decisions about the locations of Freeports were taken carefully, through a competitive process detailed in the [Freeports Bidding Prospectus](#), and since then the Government has been working collaboratively with local partners to help them develop and finalise their plans, ensuring that these deliver the best outcomes for the area, wider region, and UK as a whole.

■ Freeports: Environment Protection

Stephen Morgan: [\[48486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether freeport zones will be subject to an environmental impact assessment.

Dehenna Davison:

Existing environmental regulations continue to apply in Freeports, including the requirement for consideration of environmental impacts comprising, where appropriate, a full Environmental Impact Assessment, as part of planning processes.

■ Freeports: Permitted Development Rights

Stephen Morgan: [\[48485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will publish details of how permitted development rights will be expanded within freeport zones.

Dehenna Davison:

Alongside the rest of the freeports package, in 2021, the government amended existing permitted development rights for ports so that they have the same freedoms

as airports. This amendment related to all ports and the government has not proposed new or changed permitted development rights for Freeports specifically.

■ **Homelessness: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[48405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to work with City of York Council to help ensure that it (a) finds land on which to place the NAPpad in that city and (b) maintains that service for the homeless.

Paul Scully:

As set out in the answers to Question UIN 37549 on 25 July 2022, Question UIN 37550 on 25 July 2022 and Question UIN 105631 on 25 January 2022, the Government recognises that local authorities are best placed to make decisions on what local services they provide, based on local priorities and circumstances.

■ **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**

Julian Knight:

[45375]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Ukrainian nationals have been settled in (a) Solihull constituency and (b) the UK under the Homes for Ukraine scheme as of 2 September 2022.

Paul Scully:

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

Paul Blomfield:

[45623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether it is his policy to increase the level of funding local authorities receive for each person on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, in the context of the decision to extend payments to hosts to up to 12 months.

John Penrose:

[48297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how long he plans for the scheme of giving £350 per month payments to households hosting Ukrainian refugees to last; and what plans his Department has to update or modify that scheme in the event that the war in Ukraine continues for more than a year.

Catherine West:

[48465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the (a) additional financial challenges that will be experienced by sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine scheme over the winter 2022-23 and (b) potential merits of increasing the monthly thank-you payment to hosts to help cover rising energy bills.

Andrew Stephenson:

[Holding answer 8 September 2022]: We are overwhelmed by the response we have received to the Homes for Ukraine programme and thank sponsors for their support. Lead sponsors can receive monthly £350 'thank you' payments for up to 12 months of Homes for Ukraine sponsorship per address. These payments are funded separately to the £10,500 of funding available to local authorities for 12 months per person.

Paul Blomfield:[\[45624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Homes for Ukraine placements have (a) broken down, (b) resulted in a rematching and the refugees being placed with a new host household, (c) resulted in refugees being placed in social housing, (d) resulted in refugees being placed in hotels and (e) resulted in refugees living in the private rented sector.

Andrew Stephenson:

The information requested is not held centrally. As of 19 September 2022, 90,351 guests have arrived in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (out of 134,190 visas granted) and 35,509 have arrived under the Ukraine Family Scheme (out of 51,832 visas granted). Over 17,000 are continuing to live in the UK under Ukraine Extension Scheme or domestic Ukraine Family Scheme applications.

We are helping Ukrainians to live independently, for example by supporting them in developing necessary language skills and finding jobs, while also ensuring that robust safeguarding measures are in place. There is ongoing work across Government to look at what more can be done on employment opportunities and wider support.

Gerald Jones:[\[48427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps she is taking to help ensure that Homes for Ukraine sponsors receive their £350 payments in a timely manner.

Paul Scully:

Lead sponsors are eligible for monthly payments for as long as the guest remains living in their accommodation for up to 12 months. Further information about the payment process can be accessed here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils> under the 'payment mechanism' section.

Housing: Construction**Justin Madders:**[\[45878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of legal protections for homeowners against housing damage caused by building works.

Paul Scully:

The Building Safety Act includes an ambitious toolkit of measures to allow those responsible for defective work to be pursued. This includes imposing a new duty

under section 2A of the Defective Premises Act 1972, to ensure that anyone who takes on work in a relation to any part of a relevant building owes a duty to ensure that the building is fit for habitation upon completion. The Act also extends the limitation period for prospective claims under section 1 of the Defective Premises Act 1972, from 6 to 15 years and broadens the reach of civil liability to associated companies of developers, including trusts. This is to ensure that those who have used shell companies and other complex corporate structures to evade their responsibilities, including some of the largest businesses in the sector, can be pursued for contributions.

■ Leasehold: Wales

Beth Winter:

[\[45372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department held discussions with Welsh Government on a joint approach to legislation enacting the Law Commission's recommendations for leasehold reform in England and Wales.

Lee Rowley:

The Law Commission published their recommendations for reform of leasehold and commonhold legislation in England and Wales in 2020. Officials from the UK Government and Welsh Government meet regularly on an ongoing basis to discuss the Law Commission's recommendations and will respond to the remaining recommendations in due course.

■ Levelling Up Fund

Bim Afolami:

[\[45632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when his Department plans to open the third round of applications for the Levelling Up Fund.

Dehenna Davison:

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund will invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including regenerating town centres and high streets, upgrading local transport, and investing in cultural and heritage assets.

Bidding for the second round of the Fund closed on 2 August, and we hope to announce successful bids to this round of the Fund in the Autumn.

We are determined to learn all the lessons we can in continuing to improve our support for local places. Given we will have an opportunity to evaluate the success of the first round before spring 2023, we are not yet committing to the timing or format of future rounds.

Dave Doogan:

[\[48493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment his Department has made of the potential (a) commercial risks and (b)

increased liabilities that (i) smaller councils with higher value bids and (ii) other local authorities may face following a successful levelling-up bid.

Dehenna Davison:

I hope you will understand that, for reasons of fairness, I cannot discuss bids further during this period of competition, whilst bids are being evaluated.

Applications to the Levelling Up Fund are subject to the robust assessment process set out in published guidance. This includes a deliverability assessment which considers three areas - (i) the whole funding package including how any financial risks will be mitigated (ii) the procurement strategy and (iii) maturity of the delivery plan and the capacity/ capability in place to manage that.

All successful Levelling Up Fund bids are subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation to track delivery progress.

■ **Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Coastal Areas**

Damien Moore:

[\[45111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions his Department has had with local authorities on the potential merits of supporting maritime projects through the Levelling-Up and Shared Prosperity Funds.

Dehenna Davison:

The maritime sector is a crucial part of our heritage and modern economy. Officials from my department have consistently engaged with local authorities on the design and scope of both the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

While it is up to local authorities what they wish to support with their UKSPF allocation, both UKSPF and the Levelling Up Fund are able to support and benefit maritime organisations and projects across the UK.

My department is also forging ahead with delivering new Freeports across the UK - these are special areas centred on ports of all modes that will enjoy access to a generous suite of tax incentives, customs facilitations, public funding, and government support, helping them harness the power of private investment to spread jobs and prosperity.

■ **Levelling Up Parks Fund**

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[45570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Levelling Up Parks Fund on making parks more inclusive for disabled children.

Dehenna Davison:

The UK Government launched the £9 million Levelling Up Parks Fund (LUPF) on 1 August. In England, 85 eligible local authorities have opted in to receive funding to

deliver new or significantly refurbished green spaces in the neighbourhoods most deprived of green spaces.

The Fund will increase access to quality green spaces in some of our most deprived villages, towns and cities. It is for local leaders to decide how they can best do that in their neighbourhoods, considering the needs and views of local people. Where they decide that improved facilities for disabled children falls within their local priorities, the funding can be used for renovating parks to improve their inclusivity.

Local authorities are also subject to the public sector equality duty, which requires them to consider the needs and disadvantages faced by people with protected characteristics, which includes disabled users of their green spaces.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[45175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he plans to respond to the email of 29 April 2022 from the office of the hon. Member for North Durham, regarding Right to Buy.

Lee Rowley:

A response to the Rt. Hon Member has been issued.

■ **Mobile Homes: Sales**

Justin Madders:

[\[45865\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the report on the research study his Department commissioned from Liverpool and Sheffield Hallam Universities entitled the impact of a change in the maximum park home sale commission.

Lee Rowley:

The report into park homes highlighted the complex issues around the payment of commission on the sale of a park home, residents' mobility and the financial viability of parks. We are grateful to the authors and are considering the report and the recommendations in more detail. We will publish a response in due course.

■ **Night Shelter Transformation Fund**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[45254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the announcement on 26 July 2022 that £10 million will be made available over three years to support providers of night shelters to transform their services in England through the Night Shelter Transformation Fund, if he will remove the criteria that only permits the submission of applications by organisations with a turnover of up to £5 million; if he will place a copy of his reply to the letter from Andy Winter, Chief Executive of the Brighton Housing Trust, dated 27 July 2022 about that criteria in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

The Night Shelter Transformation Fund is available to small to medium sized faith and community organisations with up to £5 million annual turnover who provide accommodation and support to people experiencing rough sleeping in a night shelter setting. DLUHC have utilised intelligence from the sector and knowledge gained from previous funds of this kind in forming this eligibility criteria. As detailed in the Fund's prospectus, organisations with a higher turnover may apply in specific circumstances, for example if an organisation is the only local emergency accommodation provider in a particular area.

I encourage Brighton Housing Trust to contact our sector partners Homeless Link or Housing Justice to discuss other grant funding opportunities. Brighton Housing Trust may also wish to contact their local authority partners to discuss further opportunities.

■ Parks: Disability**Justin Tomlinson:**[\[45812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Levelling Up Parks Fund includes provisions to help ensure that parks are more inclusive for disabled children.

Dehenna Davison:

The UK Government launched the £9 million Levelling Up Parks Fund (LUPF) on 1 August. In England, 85 eligible local authorities have opted in to receive funding to deliver new or significantly refurbished green spaces in the neighbourhoods most deprived of green spaces.

The Fund will increase access to quality green spaces in some of our most deprived villages, towns and cities. It is for local leaders to decide how they can best do that in their neighbourhoods, considering the needs and views of local people. Where they decide that improved facilities for disabled children falls within their local priorities, the funding can be used for renovating parks to improve their inclusivity.

Local authorities are also subject to the public sector equality duty, which requires them to consider the needs and disadvantages faced by people with protected characteristics, which includes disabled users of their green spaces.

■ Playgrounds: Disability**Justin Tomlinson:**[\[45524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many and what proportion of playgrounds are accessible to disabled children in England.

Justin Tomlinson:[\[45526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the guidance entitled National Model Design Code: Part 2 Guidance Notes, published by his Department in June 2021, on the creation of inclusive and accessible playgrounds.

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[45573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of working with representatives of parents of disabled children to develop new guidance for local authorities on the creation of (a) accessible and (b) inclusive playgrounds.

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[45576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the guidance entitled National Model Design Code: Part 2 Guidance Notes, published by his Department in June 2021, how his Department defines the terms (a) inclusive and (b) accessible in the context of the creation of play friendly spaces that are accessible and inclusive for all.

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[45813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to assess the impact of the guidance entitled National Model Design Code: Part 2 Guidance Notes, published by his Department in June 2021, on the creation of play friendly spaces that are accessible and inclusive for all.

Lee Rowley:

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework encourages the creation of places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being. In support of this, the National Model Design Code, which guides the production of local design codes, encourages the design of children's play areas to be inclusive and accessible. Local planning authorities are responsible for the achievement of these objectives locally and can influence the development of play areas through their local planning policies and decisions.

We aim to review the national planning and design guidance periodically, in consultation with relevant organisations.

The department does not hold data on the number and proportion of playgrounds that are accessible to disabled children in England.

■ Private Rented Housing: Social Security Benefits

Catherine West:

[\[48463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps the Government is taking to tackle private landlords that refuse to rent to benefits recipients.

Lee Rowley:

The White Paper "*A Fairer Private Rented Sector*", published in June 2022, provides further information on the most recent Government announcements in this policy area.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Neil Coyle:

[45840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of his Department's policies on the provision of support for Afghan refugees on trends in levels of homelessness for that group.

Paul Scully:

Thanks to an enormous collaborative effort across the public and private sector, we have welcomed over 21,000 Afghans and continue to receive more families each month. Work is continuing across Government to ensure the Afghans who stood side by side with us in conflict, their families and those at highest risk who have been evacuated, are supported as they now rebuild their lives in the UK. We are encouraging all councils to work alongside us to provide accommodation and support for Afghans in need of our compassion and support to rebuild their lives in the UK. C.7,000 Afghans have now been moved into permanent accommodation.

We have announced a £25.5 million Housing Costs fund to help meet the costs of housing. The additional housing support is being provided to enable local authorities to come forward with offers of accommodation to larger families as soon as possible. For example, it can be used to provide a top up payment, where it is needed to meet the gap between market rent and the Local Housing Allowance, or to help meet shortfalls which impact on a family's ability to cover their rent.

In the longer-term, the provision of affordable housing is a key element of the Government's plan to end the housing crisis, tackle homelessness and provide aspiring homeowners with a step onto the housing ladder. Our £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) will provide up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow. Around half the homes will be for affordable and social rent and we will deliver more than double the amount of social rent compared to the current programme, with around 32,000 social rent homes due to be delivered.

■ Refugees: Ukraine

Lee Anderson:

[46143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to support Ukrainian refugees to find housing after their six month sponsorship ends who are not able to provide either a down-payment for a deposit or a six month credit history.

Paul Scully:

Guidance for Ukrainian refugees on 'How to rent in England' can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>. Councils have reported that some landlords are refusing households that do not have guarantors and others because of a lack of credit history. In some instances, councils are managing this problem by running schemes in which the council acts as a guarantor for the household.

Richard Foord:

[46219]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help Ukrainian refugees find independent housing.

Paul Scully:

The updated guidance for the Homes for Ukraine guests, hosts and councils setting out all the support options available to them can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils#four-to-6-months-after-guests-have-moved-to-your-area>.

Allan Dorans:

[47651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what progress his Department has made on enabling Ukrainian families to transfer from the Ukrainian Family Scheme to the Homes for Ukraine scheme since the engagement exercise with devolved Administrations, local authorities and third parties in August 2022.

Paul Scully:

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

Tim Loughton:

[48195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing training and support for Ukrainian refugees in (a) medicine, (b) construction, (c) leadership, (d) education, (e) social care and (f) other areas that will help them rebuild their country after their eventual return to Ukraine.

Paul Scully:

We continue to review and develop plans to support guests to access economic opportunities, informed by engagement with other government departments, local councils, Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, sponsors, and guests. We have been working across government to explore wider training and support options.

■ **Salvation Army: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[48403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Salvation Army's services for rough sleepers in York in engaging with people as a first step into support services.

Rachael Maskell:

[48404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will hold discussions with City of York Council on its proposed reductions for the Salvation Army's funding for services to the homeless in York.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[48406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will meet the hon. Member for York Central to discuss helping to ensure that the Salvation Army homeless services in York are maintained.

Paul Scully:

The City of York has been allocated over £1.3 million over the three years of the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022-25. All local authorities, including York, had the opportunity to coproduce their application to the Rough Sleeping Initiative with one of the Department's specialist rough sleeping advisers. Officials and specialist rough sleeping advisers are in regular contact with the City of York, to support development, delivery and effectiveness of the local authority's plans and response to tackling rough sleeping locally.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Local Government Services**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[48402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to ensure that local authorities do not reduce services under the Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Paul Scully:

The Rough Sleeping Initiative supports local authorities to develop their rough sleeping pathways, including providing emergency beds, off-the-street accommodation and wrap-around support. This multi-year commitment gives the funding certainty to local authorities to build on the successes they have achieved, to think longer-term about their responses to rough sleeping to focus on prevention and sustaining a life away from the streets.

■ **Social Housing (Regulation) Bill: Tenant Management Organisations**

Helen Hayes:

[\[47611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Social Housing Regulation Bill on (a) existing right to manage guidance and (b) contracts between Tenant Management Organisations and local authorities.

Helen Hayes:

[\[47612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will ensure that the existing right to manage guidance for Tenant Management Organisation is reviewed in the context of the provisions of the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill.

Lee Rowley:

We do not believe that the Social Housing Regulation Bill will have a significant impact on either existing right to manage guidance or contracts between Tenant Management Organisations and local authorities. Separately, we will work with and

expert steering group to review the guidance on the responsibilities of Tenant Management Organisations and local authorities.

■ **Solar Power: Planning Permission**

Stephen Hammond:

[47493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to amend planning regulations for installing solar panels on roofs in (a) conservation and (b) other areas.

Lee Rowley:

To support the generation of renewable energy there are a range of nationally set permitted development rights that allow for the installation of micro-generation equipment, including rooftop solar panels on domestic and non-domestic properties, without having to make a planning application.

We will keep the existing permitted development rights for solar equipment under regular review.

■ **Supported Housing: Disability**

Lee Anderson:

[45669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what step his Department is taking to help ensure the provision of supported accommodation for disabled people is cost effective.

Lee Rowley:

Ensuring that local supported living specialist accommodation services for disabled people are cost effective is primarily the responsibility of the local commissioners of such services.

Where such specialist accommodation service is provided by a private registered provider (PRP), the Regulator of Social Housing's economic standards apply, which include Governance and Financial Viability and Value for Money. The Regulator expects PRPs to manage their resources effectively to ensure their viability is maintained, while ensuring that social housing assets are not put at undue risk. The Regulator also expects PRPs to demonstrate a robust approach to achieving value for money.

The Government's Affordable Homes Programme delivers new supply of supported housing, alongside a number of other housing types. Our delivery partners undertake a robust value for money appraisal on all Affordable Housing Programme bids, ensuring that public funding is used efficiently.

■ **Temporary Accommodation: Standards**

Sam Tarry:

[45078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people are quickly moved out of temporary

accommodation; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that these properties (a) are pest-free and (b) provide a safe environment for residents.

Lee Rowley:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for households owed the main homelessness duty until suitable long-term accommodation can be offered to them. They must ensure temporary accommodation is suitable in relation to the applicant and to all members of their household who normally reside with them, or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them, and there is a right of appeal.

Housing authorities should, as a minimum, ensure that all temporary accommodation is free of Category 1 hazards as identified by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). We have given local authorities very strong powers to take enforcement action when they identify seriously hazardous conditions, including the power to issue heavy fines. Consideration of whether accommodation is suitable will require an assessment of all aspects of the accommodation in the light of the relevant needs, requirements and circumstances of the homeless person and their household.

■ **UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group: Further Education**

Stephen Farry:

[\[46207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reason there are no representatives from the further education sector on the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund Northern Ireland Partnership Group.

Dehenna Davison:

The Northern Ireland UKSPF Partnership Group is convened by the UK government in collaboration with Northern Ireland partners. The intention is to ensure broad representation of key partners and sectors. DLUHC are working with representative groups for key sectors, including the voluntary and community sector, business, higher education, skills and local authorities to develop the UKSPF Investment Plan.

Its membership will be reviewed on conclusion of the Investment Plan process, as the Fund moves into its delivery phase.

Alongside the Partnership Group, we are also engaging with a wider range of stakeholders, including the further education sector in Northern Ireland, to inform and influence the development of the Investment Plan. Our approach maximises local intelligence, insight and knowledge, in recognition of the opportunities and challenges unique to Northern Ireland.

■ **UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group: Public Appointments**

Stephen Farry:

[\[45235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how representation on the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund Northern Ireland Partnership Group was decided.

Dehenna Davison:

The Northern Ireland UKSPF Partnership Group is convened by the UK government in collaboration with Northern Ireland partners. The intention is to ensure broad representation of key partners and sectors. DLUHC are working with representative groups for key sectors, including the voluntary and community sector, business, higher education, skills and local authorities to develop the UKSPF Investment Plan.

Its membership will be reviewed on conclusion of the Investment Plan process, as the Fund moves into its delivery phase.

Information on membership and a record of Partnership Group meetings are published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group: Society of Local Authority Chief Executives**Stephen Farry:****[46208]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for what reason SOLACE was used to provide local government representation on the UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group rather than the Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

Dehenna Davison:

The Northern Ireland UKSPF Partnership Group is convened by the UK government in collaboration with Northern Ireland partners, in order to jointly design the UKSPF Investment Plan for Northern Ireland. It is an officials-led group, bringing in local insight and expertise to ensure that the £127 million UKSPF allocation in Northern Ireland has maximum impact for local people. The views of elected representatives in Northern Ireland will be sought in due course.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Energy: Northern Ireland****Claire Hanna:****[47703]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to Article 11 of the Northern Ireland Protocol, what steps he is taking to help protect the single energy market on the island of Ireland from rising costs.

Mr Steve Baker:

The UK Government is acting to protect UK households from the spiralling costs of energy. The Energy Price Guarantee will apply in England, Wales and Scotland.

Energy is a devolved matter, so in the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Executive to deliver a comparable scheme, the UK Government will need to take action tailored to the particular circumstances prevailing in Northern Ireland.

The Government also continues to work with the Irish Government on a host of issues, including the Single Electricity Market. Our priority is to work at pace to ensure Northern Ireland benefits from the same level of support as the rest of the UK.

TRANSPORT

■ Bus Services: Rural Areas

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[48495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the results of the mobility fund projects; and whether he plans to release further funding to support demand responsive transport in rural areas.

Lucy Frazer:

Our £20m Rural Mobility Fund is supporting 17 innovative, demand-led minibus trials in rural and suburban areas. These pilots are exploring whether Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) can serve these communities more effectively than traditional public transport solutions alone. It is too early to assess the full impact of the pilots. Each scheme is taking part in a detailed monitoring and evaluation process. This will provide a strong base of evidence and good practice for DRT and a better understanding of both the role it can play and the challenges associated with introducing it.

There are not currently plans for further bespoke DRT funding. Whilst it is for Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) to determine and prioritise investment in local transport, the Government's National Bus Strategy asked all LTAs outside London to publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covering the full area, including parts with differing needs, such as rural elements. The Strategy encourages new forms of bus provision in areas that are currently not adequately served by conventional timetabled buses. It is clear that DRT can play a part in delivering this.

Funding has recently been allocated to 34 LTAs following assessment of their BSIPs, some of which include proposals for DRT.

■ Department for Transport: Sports

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[45329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total amount spent on her Department's sports and wellbeing day was on 22 July 2022.

Kevin Foster:

No Departmental funding was granted for this event.

■ **Doncaster Sheffield Airports: Closures**

Louise Haigh:

[\[48421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has conducted an assessment of the potential impact of the closure of Doncaster-Sheffield Airport on the Yorkshire region.

Kevin Foster:

I refer the Right Hon. Member to the Answer given to her on 20 September 2022, to Written Question 48422.

Louise Haigh:

[\[48422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has conducted an impact assessment of the potential impact of the closure of Doncaster-Sheffield Airport on local businesses operating on that site.

Kevin Foster:

The Government is committed to regional airports. They are key to serving our local communities, supporting thousands of jobs in the regions, and they act as a key gateway to international opportunities. While the UK Government supports airports, it does not own or operate them.

The Department for Transport recognises the importance of Doncaster Sheffield Airport to the region. The Aviation Minister made clear in meetings both with the South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard and the Peel Group the Government's desire to see a viable aviation future for the airport. Officials and the Minister have and will continue to meet with local stakeholders such as the Mayor, local MPs and businesses with a direct relationship with the airport to understand the potential impact of the review to the Yorkshire regions.

■ **Road Traffic Act 1988**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[48313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to launch a call for evidence on the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Kevin Foster:

The Department for Transport is currently finalising the scope and timings for the planned Call for Evidence. We hope to publish before the end of the year.

TREASURY

■ **Bank Services: Rural Areas**

Bim Afolami:

[\[45249\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take through the Financial Markets and Services Bill to protect access to in-person banking services for rural communities such as Harpenden.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government believes that all customers, wherever they live, should have appropriate access to banking services.

As part of the Financial Services and Markets Bill 2022, the Government has introduced legislation to protect access to cash. The Bill protects access to cash by establishing the Financial Conduct Authority as the lead regulator and providing it with appropriate powers to ensure reasonable provision of withdrawal and deposit facilities.

More broadly against the background of changing technology, decisions on opening and closing branches are a commercial decision for banks and building societies. However, the Government recognises that in-person access to banking services continues to be important for some customers. FCA Guidance is clear that firms are expected to carefully consider the impact of planned branch closures on their customers' everyday banking and cash access needs and consider possible alternative access arrangements.

For consumers and SMEs wishing to access over-the-counter services, the Post Office Banking Framework allows 99% of personal banking and 95% of business banking customers to carry out their everyday banking at 11,500 Post Office branches in the UK.

Firms are also working together through the Cash Action Group to develop new initiatives to provide shared services including Bank Hubs. The Government welcomes the direction set by industry's commitments and looks forward to seeing what results they deliver in protecting facilities for local communities across the UK.

■ Child Care Vouchers: Repayments**Julian Sturdy:****[45800]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will take steps to ensure that childcare vouchers purchased through an employer-run scheme are refundable if (a) employment and (b) childcare circumstances change.

Chris Philp:

Childcare Vouchers are now closed to new entrants and the Government has no plans to reopen or reform them. Existing customers can continue to use them as long as they remain with their current employer, the employer continues to offer Vouchers, and their contract of employment remains the same.

Parents can seek to get a refund from their employer for their unused Childcare Vouchers. However, there is no obligation for the employer to make a refund.

If the Voucher provider is unable or unwilling to provide recompense, they might be able to use the Childcare Vouchers for other forms of childcare. Some childcare providers do accept them towards the cost of holiday clubs and a range of after-school activities.

■ Commodity Markets

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[47615\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of lifting constraints on commodity market speculation introduced following the 2008 (a) finance and (b) food price crisis.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government believes effective commodities markets regulation is a key part of ensuring economic stability. This is a lesson reinforced by both the food and financial crises in the 2000s. In response to G20 commitments, the EU put in place a regime that sets limits on the amounts of commodity derivatives that market participants can hold, to ensure speculation does not lead to economic harm.

The Government supports the application of position limits to the most volatile commodities (including key energy and agricultural products). However, the regime that we have inherited from the EU is overly complicated, needlessly burdensome and poorly designed. In particular, it unnecessarily captures all exchange traded and economically equivalent over-the-counter commodity derivative contracts including those that have low levels of low volatility and risk. This undermines efficient pricing in many such contracts and creates burdens for firms.

To address this, the Financial Services and Markets Bill will ensure exchanges can once again set position limits, within an FCA framework. Exchanges are well placed to ensure that such position limits only apply to contracts that are subject to high volatility. Agricultural products and other key physically settled contracts such as oil and gas will remain subject to position limits. The FCA will also powers to intervene to set position limits if need be.

These changes were consulted on and received broad support^[1] and is in line with the Government's G20 commitments.

[1] Wholesale Markets Review Consultation:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/998165/WMR_condoc_FINAL_OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE_.pdf

Wholesale Markets Review Response:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1057897/Wholesale_Markets_Review_Consultation_Response.pdf

■ Cost of Living Payments: Students

Steve McCabe:

[\[48211\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons university students were excluded from cost of living support packages.

Steve McCabe:

[\[48212\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to introduce cost of living support for university students.

Andrew Griffith:

The government understands that people across the UK are worried about the rising cost of living and are seeing their disposable incomes decrease as they spend more on the essentials.

On 8 September, government announced that the energy price cap will be superseded with a new Energy Price Guarantee, which means that a typical UK household will pay no more than £2500 a year on their energy bill over the next 2 years from 1 October.

This announcement comes in addition to the £37bn of support previously announced, which will see eight million of the most vulnerable households receive £1200 support, with additional support for pensioners and those claiming disability benefits.

However, the Government recognises that students have also been impacted by the cost of living pressures that have arisen this year, and we have confirmed in our guidance to the Office for Students (OfS) on funding for the 2022-23 financial year that universities will continue to be able to support students in hardship through their own hardship funds and the student premium, for which up to £261 million is available for academic year 2022/23.

The government has also worked closely with the OfS to clarify that English providers can draw upon this funding now, to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by cost-of-living pressures.

Later this month, the Chancellor will set out a package of measures to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to cut taxes and boost growth, laying the groundwork for the change we need in the long term to make our economy stronger.

■ Cost of Living: Government Assistance**Colleen Fletcher:****[48377]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he plans to take to help support households in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England with increases in the cost of living.

Chris Philp:

The government understands that people across the UK are worried about the rising cost of living and are seeing their disposable incomes decrease as they spend more on the essentials.

On 8 September, government announced that the energy price cap will be superseded with a new Energy Price Guarantee, which means that a typical UK household will pay no more than £2500 a year on their energy bill over the next 2 years from 1 October. The Government will also introduce a six-month scheme to support businesses, charities and public sector organisations, which 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.

This announcement comes in addition to the previously announced support. Eight million of the most vulnerable households, including those in Coventry North East, will also see £1,200 support in Cost of Living Payments, provided in instalments across the year, with additional support for pensioners and those claiming disability benefits. This includes the £400 support through the Energy Bills Support Scheme – available to all households.

We continue to monitor a range of cost of living pressures and their impacts, and later this month the Chancellor will set out a package of measures to deliver on the Prime Minister's commitment to cut taxes and boost growth, laying the groundwork for the change we need in the long term to make our economy stronger.

■ Economic Situation

Ruth Jones:

[\[46118\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the strength of the UK economy.

Andrew Griffith:

The economy grew by 0.8% in Q1, faster than the United States, France, Germany and Italy.

Unemployment is at a near 50-year low of 3.8% for the three months to June, with the total number of pay rolled employees consistently above pre-pandemic levels.

■ Electric Vehicles: Electricity

Kim Leadbeater:

[\[46217\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment HMRC has made of the potential merits of increasing the Advisory Electricity Rate paid to owners of electric vehicles, in the context of rising electricity costs.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government introduced the Advisory Electric Rate (AER) in 2018. It applies to employees who use a fully electric vehicle as a company car.

The Advisory Electric Rate (AER) was changed in December 2021 from 4 pence per mile (ppm) to 5ppm. This was calculated using published consumption rates, adjusted to reflect real driving conditions, and the average cost of electricity.

However, employers are not required to use the AER. Instead, they can use different rates to reflect their employee's circumstances. Provided they can show that the bespoke rates do not result in a profit for the employee, there will be no tax to pay. Otherwise, when employers reimburse employees at a higher rate than the published AER (5ppm), the excess is subject to Income Tax and NICs.

The Government keeps this policy under review.

■ First Time Buyers: Mortgages

Tracey Crouch: [\[45313\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of encouraging mortgage lenders to use rental payments as proof of affordability for younger people applying for a mortgage to purchase a first home.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is committed to helping as many first-time buyers as possible get onto the housing ladder and agrees that a history of paying rent should be able to help with this.

In 2017, the Government launched the Rent Recognition Challenge: a £2 million competition challenging the UK's world-leading tech firms to develop innovative applications to enable tenants to record and share their rental payment data with lenders and credit reference agencies. The three winners of the challenge (CreditLadder, Bud and RentalStep) are now all using technology to verify and record tenants' rental payments. Since launching their rent recognition service, CreditLadder has recorded over £600 million in users' rental payments.

The Government will continue to work with mortgage lenders and others to encourage rent track record is used in lending decisions.

■ Military Aid: Ukraine

John Healey: [\[48221\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 5 September 2022 to Question 40737 on Ukraine: Military Aid, if he will provide a breakdown of the amount contributed by each Department listed.

Chris Philp:

I refer the rt honourable member to the answer given by my predecessor (Simon Clarke MP) on 5th September 2022 to PQ UIN 14298.

■ Pensions: Regulation

Fleur Anderson: [\[45035\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment the Government has carried out on the impact of Solvency II reforms on pensions.

Andrew Griffith:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the insurance regime remains a safe home for people's pensions. As well as that, UK insurers remain internationally competitive.

The Treasury's consultation on the prudential regulatory regime for insurers known as Solvency II closed on 21 July 2022. It included questions seeking evidence of the impact reforms would have on policyholder protection and annuity prices as well as other objectives, including investment for growth. The Government will set out its

assessment of this evidence when it publishes a response to the consultation later this calendar year.

The Solvency II consultation document can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/solvency-ii-review-consultation>

■ Public Houses: Taxation

Alex Norris:

[45136]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help ensure his taxation and fiscal policy supports the pub industry.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government understands the benefits pubs bring to our communities, recognises the pressures currently facing the sector and is taking action.

Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector will receive a tax cut worth almost £1.7 billion in 2022-23. Eligible properties will receive 50 per cent off their business rates bill, up to a maximum of £110,000 per business.

Combined with Small Business Rates Relief, this means over 90 per cent of retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will receive at least 50 per cent off their rates bills in 2022-23. The Government has also committed to freezing the multiplier for a further year, which is a tax cut worth £4.6 billion to businesses over the next 5 years.

Further, as part of the alcohol duty reform, the government will introduce a new draught relief, giving an approximate 5% duty cut to cider and beer sold in pubs. The government will provide an update on the alcohol duty reforms over the coming weeks.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Jobcentres: Disability

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[48246]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether any of the training modules for (a) Work Coaches and (b) Disability Employment Advisers have been coproduced by disabled people.

Julie Marson:

All DWP learning for Work Coaches and Disability Employment Advisers is designed in partnership with Work Psychologists, external organisations such as MIND, (a national charity providing mental health information and support), RNIB, (Royal National Institute of Blind People), SENSE, (a national charity set-up to support people who are deafblind or have other complex disabilities), and National Autistic Society alongside DWP staff who have a variety of disabilities to ensure that learning is not only accessible to all but is sensitive to everyone's requirements regardless of abilities/disabilities.

DWP are also working with Microsoft to provide Accessibility Fundamentals learning which helps work coaches / DEAs understand the various features in Microsoft that can be used to make opportunities more accessible for all our customers.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[48251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what topics are covered in the initial training received by disability employment advisers.

Julie Marson:

All Disability Employment Advisers (DEA) undertake full Work Coach learning prior to receiving DEA specific learning to ensure they understand the health and complex needs of our customers.

The DEA learning consists of number of workshops to allow a learn-consolidate-learn approach:

Workshop One

Knowledge to Support Others

Tools, resources, and support

The Equality Act (2010)

Disabilities and health conditions

Disability models and perceptions

Discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping

Types of discrimination

Challenging inequalities

Consolidation and Presenting with Impact

Workshop Two

Review of consolidation

Support and provision

Disability Hub

Advocacy

Review and close

Workshop Three

Coaching peers

Case conferencing

3-way interviewing

Review and next steps

Workshop Four

Working with Partners

Employer Engagement

Retention

Skills Exercise

All staff must also undertake specific 'Mental Health' learning for Coaching.

■ Pensioners: Fuel Poverty

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[48466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department plans to provide support for pensioners who experience fuel poverty in autumn 2022 in the context of rising energy costs.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living. These are global challenges. The government is providing over £15 billion in further support, targeted particularly on those with the greatest need. This package is in addition to the over £22 billion announced previously, with Government support for the cost of living now totalling over £37 billion this year.

This includes a £650 cost of living payment (paid in 2 lump sums of £326 and £324) which has been designed to target support at more than 8 million low-income households on means-tested benefits including Pension Credit. In addition, pensioner households will receive a one-off payment of £300 through and as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment from November and 6 million eligible disabled people will receive a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 from 20 September

Most customers with a domestic electricity meter will benefit from the £400 support being provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme, which will help around 29 million households across Great Britain. This support is in addition to the £150 Council Tax rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A-D, which was announced in February, and which millions of households have already received.

Cold Weather Payments are also available to help vulnerable people in receipt of certain income-related benefits in England and Wales to meet additional heating costs, during periods of unseasonably cold weather between 1 November and 31 March. This includes older people in receipt of Pension Credit. Those eligible will continue to automatically receive £25 when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, 0°C or below over seven consecutive days.

In winter 2022/23, the Warm Home Discount Scheme has been extended to provide a £150 rebate on energy bills to around 3 million households. Around one million households on Pension Credit guarantee credit will receive a rebate each winter, and the majority will receive their rebate automatically, without the need to claim.

■ Pensioners: Poverty**Colleen Fletcher:****[48379]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate her Department has made of the number of pensioners living in poverty in (a) Coventry North East constituency, (b) Coventry, (c) the West Midlands and (d) England; what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the rising cost of living on the levels of pensioner poverty in those areas; and what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the welfare system in helping to alleviate levels of pensioner poverty in those areas.

Alex Burghart:

National Statistics on the number of pensioners in low income in West Midlands and England are published annually in the "Households Below Average Income" publication. Statistics, covering up until 2019/20, can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>. Data for Coventry and the Coventry North East constituency is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Given the impact of the pandemic on the size and quality of sample data additional breakdowns for regions in 2020/21 were not reliable enough to be published as part of the annual statistics.

No such assessments have been made.

The Government is committed to action that helps to alleviate levels of pensioner poverty.

In 2020/21 there were 400,000 fewer pensioners in absolute poverty in the UK (both before and after housing costs) than in 2009/10.

We are forecast to spend over £134 billion on benefits for pensioners in 2022/23. This amounts to 5.4% of GDP. This includes spending on the State Pension which is forecast to be over £110bn in 2022/23.

The government understands the pressures people are facing with the cost of living and has taken further decisive action to support people with their energy bills. The new "Energy Price Guarantee" will mean a typical UK household will now pay up to an average £2,500 a year on their energy bill for the next two years from 1 October, saving the average household in Great Britain at least £1,000 from October. This is in addition to the over £37bn of cost of living support announced earlier this year which includes the £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

This includes a £650 cost of living payment (paid in 2 lump sums of £326 and £324) which has been designed to target support at more than 8 million low-income households on means-tested benefits. The payment of £326 was paid between the 14 July and the 31 July for most people and the payment of £324 will be made in the Autumn. In addition, 6 million eligible disabled people will receive a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 from 20 September and pensioner households will

receive a one-off payment of £300 through and as an addition to the Winter Fuel Payment from November.

The government is providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of household essentials, on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England this will take the form of an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £421m. Devolved administrations will receive £79 million through the Barnett formula.

The current Household Support Fund runs from 1 April to 30 September, with Coventry City Council allocated £3,224,222.30 for this period. During this period, a total of £49,520,715.25 has been allocated to West Midlands Local Authorities, which takes their total funding under both Household Support Funds to £99,041,430.50. Local Authorities have the discretion to design their own funds, within the parameters of the guidance and the grant determination.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Females**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[42249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into the communication of changes to women's State Pension age, whether the Government plans to offer compensation to those affected by the change.

Victoria Prentis:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) is independent, and it would be inappropriate to comment at this stage as the investigation is ongoing.

Section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

■ **War Pensions: Pension Credit**

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[40896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government has plans to amend the policy that only the first £10 of the war disablement pension can be disregarded in means tests for pension credit.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government acknowledges the contribution ex-service personal have made and in Pension Credit the first £10 of War Disablement Pension is disregarded when calculating a person's weekly income. Furthermore, four additions to the War Disablement Pension are completely disregarded in the Pension Credit assessment; these are Constant Attendance Allowance, Mobility Supplement, Severe Disablement Occupational Allowance and dependency increases for anyone other than the applicant or his partner. War Pensions are also considered as qualifying income for the savings credit part of Pension Credit.

Pension Credit is the income related benefit for pensioners. There are no plans to change Pension Credit to increase the current £10 War Pension disregard.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Conditions of Employment: Enforcement

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[48367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it remains the Government's policy to establish a single enforcement body for employment rights, as stated in its response of June 2021 to a consultation on proposals for such an enforcement body.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 September 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Jackie Doyle-Price:

~~The creation of a single enforcement body for employment rights requires primary legislation which will only be introduced when parliamentary time allows.~~

The creation of this new body will be a substantial organisational change, so it is right that we take our time to thoroughly consider all aspects of this reform before proceeding.

HOME OFFICE

■ Police: Complaints

Beth Winter:

[\[45572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether there are processes to (a) periodically review and (b) ensure uniformity of procedure for dealing with complaints across professional standards departments of police forces.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 September 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Jeremy Quin:

~~The Government implemented a major overhaul of police complaints and discipline in February 2020. These reforms included ensuring that those making a formal complaint against the police have a right to an independent review either by their local Police and Crime Commissioner or by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) depending on the circumstances of the complaint. Forces have the option of involving another force's Professional Standards Department if appropriate. The IOPC oversees the complaints system, producing statutory guidance and publishing statistics on force performance on handling complaints to ensure consistency. The most serious misconduct allegations must be referred immediately by forces to the IOPC for consideration and investigation at the IOPC's discretion. The Government has undertaken to review the effectiveness of the IOPC later this~~

year. The Home Affairs Committee published its own assessment of police conduct and complaints in March 2022. The Government has said in response that it will review the impact of its 2020 reforms in line with post legislative scrutiny guidance.

Beth Winter:

[46187]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming police complaints processes to ensure that complaints against a police officer are handled by a police professional standards department outside of their force.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 September 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Jeremy Quin:

The Government implemented a major overhaul of police complaints and discipline in February 2020. These reforms included ensuring that those making a formal complaint against the police have a right to an independent review either by their local Police and Crime Commissioner or by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) depending on the circumstances of the complaint. Forces have the option of involving another force's Professional Standards Department if appropriate. The IOPC oversees the complaints system, producing statutory guidance and publishing statistics on force performance on handling complaints to ensure consistency. The most serious misconduct allegations must be referred immediately by forces to the IOPC for consideration and investigation at the IOPC's discretion. The Government has undertaken to review the effectiveness of the IOPC later this year. The Home Affairs Committee published its own assessment of police conduct and complaints in March 2022. The Government has said in response that it will review the impact of its 2020 reforms in line with post legislative scrutiny guidance.

■ Police: Disciplinary Proceedings

Beth Winter:

[45641]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) establishing a single independent body with oversight of the police disciplinary system and (b) other reforms to police disciplinary processes.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 September 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Jeremy Quin:

The Government implemented a major overhaul of police complaints and discipline in February 2020. These reforms included ensuring that those making a formal complaint against the police have a right to an independent review either by their local Police and Crime Commissioner or by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) depending on the circumstances of the complaint. Forces have the option of involving another force's Professional Standards Department if appropriate. The IOPC oversees the complaints system, producing statutory guidance and publishing statistics on force performance on handling complaints to ensure

consistency. The most serious misconduct allegations must be referred immediately by forces to the IOPC for consideration and investigation at the IOPC's discretion. The Government has undertaken to review the effectiveness of the IOPC later this year. The Home Affairs Committee published its own assessment of police conduct and complaints in March 2022. The Government has said in response that it will review the impact of its 2020 reforms in line with post legislative scrutiny guidance.