



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 November 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:48 P.M., 25 November 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

■ Alternative Fuel Payments

Drew Hendry:

[\[88918\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Alternative Fuel Payment in the context of the rate of consumer price index inflation in October 2022.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: The Government has doubled support to £200 for alternatively fuelled households, in recognition of the pressures caused by these rising fuel costs. The Government is committed to delivering this payment to households as soon as possible this Winter. Further information on the delivery and timing of these payments will be announced in due course.

■ Bulb Energy

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[93405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the Office for Budget Responsibility's estimate that the administration of Bulb Energy required £6.5bn from the public purse.

Graham Stuart:

The OBR figure has been forecast in accordance with usual processes. However, the £6.5bn figure only reflects the public spending implications of the Octopus transaction and does not account for the financial support that will be repaid in accordance with an agreed repayment schedule or recovered by the established shortfall direction mechanism, which means that the Special Administration Regime (SAR) will eventually be fiscally neutral. SAR costs will continue to fluctuate, driven by high energy market volatility meaning any published figures remain uncertain.

■ Business: Billing

Angela Rayner:

[\[89829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of companies complied with the regulations under the Reporting on Payment Practices and Performance Regulations 2017 in (a) 2018 (b) 2019 (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

Angela Rayner:

[\[89830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of businesses complied with the Limited Liability Partnerships (Reporting on Payment Practices and Performance) Regulations 2017 in (a) 2018, (b) 2019, (c) 2020 and (d) 2021.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Since the Regulations were made in 2017, more than 64,000 reports have been published by around 9,400 businesses. We estimate that around 10,300 businesses are currently required to report.

	<i>REPORTS SUBMITTED</i>	<i>NO. OF COMPANIES</i>
2018	8,738	7,009
2019	15,088	7,595
2020	13,670	7,010
2021	13,393	6776

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many businesses are required to report at any one time. Company restructuring, sale or disposal of previously reporting subsidiaries, mergers and acquisitions mean that businesses previously required to report may no longer exceed two of the three reporting thresholds (£36 million annual turnover; £18 million balance sheet total; 250 employees) and vice versa.

■ Carbon Capture and Storage: Technology

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[93406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to The University of Manchester's report entitled Capturing the Carbon Opportunity published in 2022, what plans his department has to integrate carbon removal technology with existing frameworks, including the UK Emissions Trading Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

In March 2022, the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) Authority called for evidence on the role of the UK ETS as a possible long-term market for both nature-based and engineered greenhouse gas removal technologies. This asked for views on possible market design, timing of inclusion and market eligibility requirements. The Authority is reviewing the responses and will respond in due course.

The Government also recently consulted on potential business models to unlock investment and enable engineered GGR projects to deploy at scale over the next decade. The consultation closed on 27th September 2022 and we are currently analysing responses.

■ Catapult Centres

Chi Onwurah:

[\[89809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to para 5.65 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, whether any new Catapults will be created.

George Freeman:

The £1.6bn funding announced on 17 November 2022 will allow Innovate UK to fund the UK's 9 Catapults to continue supporting innovation and de-risking the transition from research to commercialisation by providing access to world-leading facilities, skills, and equipment across the UK.

Innovate UK are responsible for ensuring the UK's 9 Catapults are maximising industrial R&D, co-investment and benefit to the UK economy and any new Catapults would need to be assessed against criteria for new Catapults to ensure they are addressing market failures or clear strategic opportunities and would be subject to sustainable funding plus Ministerial agreement.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[89810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to paras 3.27 and 5.65 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, whether the extra funding for UK Catapults is included within the commitment that public spending on R&D will increase to £20 billion a year by 2024-25.

George Freeman:

The £1.6bn funding announced for the UK's 9 Catapults on 17 November 2022 is for the Catapults' five-year funding cycle starting April 2023 and running until March 2028. Therefore, part of this is included in the Government's commitments for public spending on R&D reaching £20bn by 2024/25, whereas the funding from 2025/26 onwards is additional. Funding for the Catapults up to 2024/25 will come out of current budgets agreed in the 2021 spending review (SR) with funding beyond this SR being a first call on Innovate UK's future SR settlements.

■ **Clean Steel Fund**

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[93561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the Clean Steel Fund is allocated at the earliest opportunity.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government recognises the vital role that the steel sector plays across the economy of the United Kingdom. We will continue to work with the sector to support its decarbonisation efforts and we have already established various funding schemes such as the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF) and the Industrial Decarbonisation and Hydrogen Revenue Support (IDHRS) in this regard. Further proposals, including the approach to the Clean Steel Fund, will be unveiled at the earliest possible occasion.

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

Angela Rayner:

[\[93559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 11 November 2022 to Question 77438 on Department for Business,

Energy and Industrial Strategy: Consultants, which three external management consultants commissioned by his Department it has the highest spend.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Management consultancy services were provided by two suppliers – Ernst and Young LLP and WSP UK Ltd.

■ District Heating: Price Caps

Neil Coyle:

[\[89838\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on bringing communal heating networks under OFGEM regulation and making them subject to the energy price cap.

Graham Stuart:

The Government remains committed to the important measures in the Energy Security Bill to deliver change in the energy system over the long term, including giving new powers to Ofgem as the preferred regulator for the heat networks sector. The UK is facing a global energy crisis and the Government must ensure it prioritises, delivering the measures in the Energy Prices Act, including introducing the Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bill Relief Scheme. The Energy Security Bill contains powers to set price caps in the heat network sector but government has committed only to utilising these powers in the future cautiously as 'heat tariff' caps would risk deterring investment and innovation in a nascent market key to lowering emissions and reducing consumer bills over the longer term.

■ Emergency Services: Power Failures

Angela Rayner:

[\[84890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it is his Department's policy that major emergency services sites are included on the Protected Site List under the Electricity Emergency Supply Code, in the context of potential energy consumption restrictions in winter 2022.

Graham Stuart:

Emergency services of regional significance are included on the list of Approved Designated Services as set out in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code.

In order for a critical site or service to be placed on the Protected Sites List, the site must meet the criteria set out in the Electricity Supply Emergency Code guidance and apply to their local Network Operator.

■ Employment: Health

Peter Dowd:

[\[93563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to assess the health and wellbeing of the night shift workforce.

Peter Dowd:

[\[93564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will create a departmental working group which brings together industry stakeholders to discuss conditions for night shift workers.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Working Time Regulations provide specific protections to night workers. Before someone starts working at night, they must be offered a free health assessment to see if they are fit to work nights before they become a night worker and on a regular basis after that. A record of this must be kept by the employer. Employers must also make sure that night time workers do not work more than an average of 8 hours in a 24-hour period. Employers can make collective or workforce agreements to change or exclude this limit.

■ Energy Bills Rebate

Dave Doogan:

[\[93642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there is a minimum unit price at which the UK Government's Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund will be applied to those paying aggregated bills, including park home residents who do not have a direct relationship with an energy supplier.

Graham Stuart:

There is no minimum unit price for the Alternative Funding. It will provide equivalent support of £400 for the small percentage of households who are not reached through the Energy Bills Support Scheme, including those who do not have a direct relationship with an electricity supplier.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Meters

Andrea Leadsom:

[\[88869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his Department's policy is on (a) how and (b) when the £400 support under the Energy Bills Support Scheme will be paid to people who use electricity from a shared meter but receive individual bills.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Energy suppliers are delivering the Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) to households with a domestic electricity contract in monthly instalments over six months from October. The Energy Prices Act 2022 includes provisions to require landlords and other intermediaries to pass this to end users. In addition, Alternative Funding will provide equivalent support for the small percentage of households who are not reached through the main EBSS fund. This includes those who do not have a direct relationship with an electricity supplier. Further details on this will be announced in the coming weeks.

■ Energy Bills Rebate: Northern Ireland

Peter Kyle:

[\[87924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to HC debate on 9 November 2022 col 241, relating to Benefits of the Union, what the timetable for delivery in Northern Ireland of (a) the £400 energy support scheme and (b) £100 alternative fuels payment; and if he will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: Households in Northern Ireland will receive a £400 discount on their energy bills through the Northern Ireland Energy Bills Support Scheme (NI EBSS) this winter. The Government is working intensively with electricity suppliers to deliver a solution and to provide the support as soon as possible.

The Government has doubled to £200 the level of support for households that use alternative fuels to heat their home, which will be delivered as soon as possible this winter. The Government will provide this payment to all Northern Ireland households in recognition of the prevalence of alternative fuel usage.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Mr Toby Perkins:

[\[89784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to remove the UK from the Energy Charter Treaty.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The Government is closely monitoring developments in the Energy Charter Treaty as part of its engagement with the Treaty's modernisation process.

■ Energy Supply

Lee Anderson:

[\[83759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase energy security.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has a secure and diverse energy system. We are confident in our plans to protect households and businesses in the full range of scenarios this winter, in light of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

To strengthen this position further, we have put plans in place to secure supply this winter. This includes supporting coal plants to remain open, ensuring an additional 2.4GW of generating capacity to be used as a last resort over the coming months. We continue working closely with key international partners, to monitor and share information on energy supply, demand, and preparedness for the winter.

■ Energy Supply: Finance

Sir Bill Wiggin: [\[84821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to increase funding to promote energy security.

Graham Stuart:

The Department has set out an ambitious set of measures to promote energy security both in the short and longer term. The Government funding for these measures has been allocated through the Spending Review 2021 settlement. Future Departmental expenditure limits will be agreed with HM Treasury at the next Spending Review.

■ Energy: Houseboats

Emma Hardy: [\[89897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an estimate of the number of houseboat residents who are not protected by the domestic energy price cap as they purchase electricity through residential mooring operators who pay commercial rates; and whether he is taking steps to help those residents with the cost of energy.

Graham Stuart:

Non-domestic customers, including marina operators, can benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS). EBRS provides a price reduction ensuring that eligible businesses and non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills. Marina operators that act as intermediaries and are eligible for the EBRS discount are expected to pass this on to their end users in a just and reasonable way. EBRS discounts to eligible customers are provided directly by energy suppliers, therefore the Department cannot provide an estimate of the number of houseboat residents who will be entitled to the EBRS nor the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG).

■ Energy: Local Government

Matt Western: [\[88984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many local authorities have a Local Area Energy Plan; and what steps his Department is taking to help local authorities produce a Local Area Energy Plan.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: The Government is considering the role of Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) in delivering Net Zero, including working closely with Ofgem as part of its ongoing governance review into local energy institutions. Government has supported the development of LAEP through Innovate UK's Prospering from the Energy Revolution Programme.

The Government has not undertaken an assessment of the number of local authorities with a Local Area Energy Plan.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Bill Esterson: [\[93520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the report entitled Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme, published by the National Audit Office on 8 September 2021, which found that it took on average 137 days to issue a voucher to a homeowner who applied to the scheme in October 2020, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the processing arrangements for that scheme.

Graham Stuart:

Based on the report by the National Audit Office and its recommendations, the Public Accounts Committee took evidence from HM Treasury and the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and published its report on the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme on 1 December 2021. The Government response to the Committee's report was published on 24 February with the Government agreeing with all of the Committee's recommendations.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [\[93519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme, how long on average his Department took to process applications to that scheme received from homeowners in the Sefton Central constituency, from the time the application was submitted to the time the homeowner received vouchers.

Graham Stuart:

Based on the report by the National Audit Office published on 1 December 2021, 'It took 138 days on average to issue a voucher to those homeowners who applied in September 2020, but the time taken to issue vouchers reduced over time reaching 50 days in March 2021'. The information requested by constituency is not available.

The Government designed the voucher application process to automate checks where possible. All valid applications made up until the deadline were processed.

■ Heat Pumps

Charlotte Nichols: [\[89913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he expects there to be 30,000 fully trained heat pump installers in the UK.

Graham Stuart:

Analysis by the Heat Pump Association suggests that over 30,000 heat pump installers will be needed by 2028. Training is widely available, and the Government expect installers to continue to train in response to increasing demand.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Dan Carden:

[\[93610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 7 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool Walton relating to the proposed Rosebank oil field.

Graham Stuart:

The Department acknowledges receipt of the hon. Member's correspondence of the 7 November. It aims to answer 80% of correspondence within 15 working days.

A response to the hon. Member has been issued.

■ **Minority Groups: Environment Protection**

Jim Shannon:

[\[86675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to negotiate greater protections for the environmental rights of vulnerable minorities at COP27.

Graham Stuart:

COP26 saw strengthened language on Indigenous Peoples, urging Parties to actively involve Indigenous Peoples in designing and implementing climate action and engage with the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) three year work plan.

Throughout our Presidency year we have continued to work closely with vulnerable minorities including Indigenous Peoples. At COP27, the UK not only engaged with the activities under the LCIPP work plan, but also funded seven Indigenous young people to attend COP27 to ensure their voices and expertise were heard in Sharm-el-Sheikh.

■ **National Grid: Solar Power**

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[93714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that homeowners who contribute electricity generated by solar panels on their property to the national grid are adequately compensated by electricity companies following the rise in electricity prices charged to consumers.

Graham Stuart:

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) is a cost-reflective and market led mechanism and it is for suppliers to determine the value of the exported electricity and to take account of the administrative costs associated when setting their tariffs. The SEG contract that a supplier has with a householder is at a set price which is not directly linked to the wholesale market. The Government is reviewing Ofgem's annual SEG report, which was recently published, to ensure that small-scale generators continue to have an effective route to market.

■ Oil: Russia

Owen Thompson:

[\[93592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that Russian oil does not enter the UK after 5 December 2022 by being incorrectly marked as oil from elsewhere.

Graham Stuart:

Enforcement of trade sanctions is achieved through a combination of awareness, export and import licencing, intelligence, electronic targeting measures and enforcement activity.

Commercial goods such as oil are required to be presented and declared to Customs on import before they enter the domestic market.

Information collected by Customs, together with Border Force intelligence, is used to risk assess movements for checks and clearance. Customs checks can be performed on the accompanying commercial and other documentation the importer may have to prove the origin of the goods.

The Government recently published guidance on the ban which sets out further detail.

■ Postal Services: Universal Service Obligation

Holly Lynch:

[\[89860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with Royal Mail Group on the Universal Service Obligation.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department has regular discussions with Royal Mail on a wide range of issues.

The Government has no current plan to change the minimum requirements of the universal postal service that are set out in the Postal Services Act 2011.

Ofcom has been given the powers and tools to protect the universal service and it has in place an effective monitoring regime that is able to identify any threats to it.

■ Renewable Energy

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[89079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2022 to Question 47709 on Renewable Energy, what steps he is taking to decouple charges for low carbon electricity from gas prices.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: The Government launched the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) which is considering a range of wholesale market reforms that could help to reduce the link between the gas and electricity price.

■ Renewable Energy: Community Development

Dr Jamie Wallis:

[\[89904\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to encourage growth in community-driven renewable energy projects.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem supports community energy projects and welcomes applications from community interest groups, co-operative societies, and community benefit societies to the Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme.

The Government is enabling local areas to tackle net zero goals through UK-wide growth funding schemes. The Government encourage community energy groups to work closely with their local authority to support the development of community energy projects within these schemes.

The Government has also reintroduced the Community Energy Contact Group to strengthen our engagement with the sector.

■ Renewable Energy: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson:

[\[88864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his funding his Department has provided to support the development of renewable energy sources in Sefton Central constituency in the last five years.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The information requested can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[93534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the ONS data on Gross domestic expenditure on research and development published on 22 November 2022, if his Department will make an estimate of total research and development investment as a proportion of GDP for the time period covered by this data.

George Freeman:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is an independent body, and this update is part of a wider programme of work to improve economic statistics and data capture. Its 22 November 2022 release estimated that £59.7bn was invested in UK R&D in 2019, increasing to £61.8bn in 2020. The ONS has not published R&D as a percentage of GDP, to make clear that they have not yet incorporated the improvements to the measurement of R&D in the business and higher education sectors into the calculations of GDP.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) understands the complexity and timelines involved in feeding the R&D changes through to GDP as part of National Accounts and looks forward to this calculation in due course. If the ONS had made the calculation, BEIS believes it would have produced a figure between 2.6% and 2.7% of GDP for 2019 and between 2.9% and 3.0% for 2020.

Chi Onwurah: [\[93536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the ONS data on Business Gross domestic expenditure on research and development published on 22 November 2022, what assessment his Department has made of the impact in the reduction in other EU funding for research and development between 2020 to 2021 on research and development.

George Freeman:

The UK agreed to associate to EU R&D Programmes but there have been persistent delays from the EU in finalising UK association. This is creating significant uncertainty for our scientific communities.

The Government's priority remains to support the UK's research and development sector through this period. This is why we have already put in place the guarantee, which ensures that eligible, successful applicants to Horizon Europe can receive, via UKRI, the full value of their funding at their UK host institution for the lifetime of their grant. The guarantee covers all calls that close by 31st December 2022. On 21 November, the Government announced up to £484m additional funding to be invested in the UK R&D sector.

Association to Horizon Europe remains the UK's preference and the Government continues to do everything we can to secure this.

■ Research: Investment

Chi Onwurah: [\[93537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Office for National Statistics dataset entitled Business enterprise research and development, UK, published on 22 November 2022, whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of that dataset's aggregation of regions into single figures on the ability of his Department to evaluate the impact of (a) local and (b) regional research and development investment; and if he will take steps to ensure the ONS provides more detailed data.

George Freeman:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is an independent body, and this update is part of a wider programme of work to improve economic statistics and data capture. The ONS published estimates of country and regional breakdown of expenditure on R&D in the UK by sector of performance for 2018, 2019 and 2020 in table 4 of their Gross Expenditure on R&D release on 22 November 2022, with business enterprise R&D shown separately and with English regions aggregated into three groups.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is in contact with the ONS and they intend to publish further detailed data on regional spend in due course.

■ **Royal Mail: Industrial Disputes**

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[93653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to help ensure the Communication Workers Union and Royal Mail reach an agreement in their industrial dispute.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government is monitoring the situation closely however the industrial dispute is a matter for Royal Mail, as a private company, and the Communication Workers Union to resolve.

The Government strongly urges Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union to continue their negotiations to reach a resolution as soon as possible and minimise the disruption to consumers and businesses.

■ **Royal Mail: Universal Service Obligation**

Wendy Chamberlain: [\[93652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his Department has held with Royal Mail about their capacity to fulfil their Universal Service Obligation.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Department has regular discussions with Royal Mail on a wide range of issues.

The Postal Services Act 2011 gives Ofcom responsibility to secure the provision of the UK's universal postal service.

Ofcom has the powers and tools to protect the universal service and it has in place an effective monitoring regime that is able to identify any threats to it.

■ **Wind Power**

Wera Hobhouse: [\[89884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential contribution of onshore wind farms to the sustainability of the UK energy sector.

Graham Stuart:

Onshore wind is an important part of the energy mix, accounting for around a quarter of both installed renewable capacity and generation in the UK. The costs of onshore wind have fallen dramatically and are around 50% cheaper than in 2015. The British Energy Security Strategy set out that the Government is serious about delivering cheaper, cleaner, more secure power, and will consider all options for increasing onshore wind deployment in ways that local communities will support. More low-cost

renewables like onshore wind on the system will limit household electricity bills by ensuring Britain is less affected by fluctuations in volatile global gas prices.

■ Wind Power: Taxation

Owen Thompson: [\[86536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to help ensure that locally owned and co-operative wind farms are exempted from revenue caps.

Graham Stuart:

The Government recognises the role community and locally owned renewable energy schemes can, and do, play in supporting the UK's national net zero targets. The Government will continue to ensure that policies will support the success of these schemes.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Consultants

Angela Rayner: [\[93558\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on external recruitment consultants in (a) 2020, (b) 2019 and (c) 2018.

Jeremy Quin:

Between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2020 Cabinet Office spent £5.016 million on external recruitment services (consultancy). Included within this total figure is expenditure totalling £3.082 million, attributed to the Government Recruitment Service (GRS) for external recruitment services (consultancy) which was incurred by the Cabinet Office and recharged to other Government Departments.

The breakdown per calendar year is as follows.

1. In the 2020 calendar year, Cabinet Office spent £2.507 million on recruitment services (consultancy), of which £2.036 million was attributed to GRS and recharged to other Government Departments.
1. In the 2019 calendar year, Cabinet Office spent £1.556 million on recruitment services (consultancy), of which £1.042 million was attributed to GRS and recharged to other Government Departments.
1. In the 2018 calendar year, Cabinet Office spent £0.953 million on recruitment services (consultancy), of which £0.004 million was attributed to GRS and recharged to other Government Departments.

■ Cabinet Office: Directors

Angela Rayner: [\[93556\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much his Department spent on recruitment for Non-Executive Director appointments in (a) 2019, (b) 2020 and (c) 2021.

Jeremy Quin:

Assuming the Rt Hon Lady's question refers to the appointment of non-executive directors to Arms Length Bodies, the Cabinet Office does not hold specific information on the recruitment costs.

■ Cabinet Office: Edenred

Wes Streeting: [\[92287\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what contracts the Cabinet Office currently hold with Edenred; and what the total cost to the public purse of those contracts is.

Jeremy Quin:

Edenred is a cross-government supplier procured through fair and open competition via the Crown Commercial Service procurement frameworks.

The Cabinet Office currently has one contract with Edenred which acts as a benefits hub for our employees. The current value of the contract is £1,960,000; however, a proportion of this money is an initial outlay from the Cabinet Office which will be returned to the public purse through contribution which will be made to the two employee salary sacrifice schemes (cycle to work and childcare vouchers).

■ Cabinet Office: Redundancy Pay

Fleur Anderson: [\[93660\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much ministerial severance pay has been (a) paid out by his Department and (b) accepted since 1 June 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

The provision of payments connected to the loss of ministerial office is set out in legislation. Outturn figures will be published in the department's audited annual reports and accounts in due course.

■ Department for Exiting the European Union: Staff

Angela Rayner: [\[92238\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many staff worked for the Department for Exiting the European Union in June 2018.

Jeremy Quin:

The National Statistics show that at 30 June 2018, there were 560 staff on a headcount basis and 550 staff on an FTE basis working at the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU). There were approximately 110 staff in addition to this

figure who remained on the payroll of their home department whilst on loan to DExEU.

This information was published by ONS as part of their Public Sector Employment Statistics release and is available at the following ONS web address:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/datasets/publicsectoremploymentreferencetable>.

■ Geospatial Commission

Florence Eshalomi: [\[93718\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister in his Department is responsible for the Geospatial Commission.

Jeremy Quin:

The Minister of State for the Cabinet Office Baroness Neville Rolfe is responsible for the Geospatial Commission.

■ GREAT

Florence Eshalomi: [\[93717\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister in his Department are responsible for the GREAT campaign.

Jeremy Quin:

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is responsible for the GREAT campaign with support provided by other Cabinet Office Ministers as required.

■ Julian Assange

Kenny MacAskill: [\[93656\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89037 on Julian Assange, when and what was the nature of the work that his officials were involved in.

Jeremy Quin:

Operation Pelican was the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) response to the continued presence of Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, and the maintenance of a police presence in the vicinity. Officials in the Cabinet Office, along with other relevant departments, liaised on that response, the operational details of which are a matter for the MPS.

DEFENCE**■ Ajax Vehicles: Testing****Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[93473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November to Question 87760 on Ajax Vehicles: Testing, whether any neurological tests of any sort are required of Army crews as part of user validation trials for Ajax family vehicles.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[93474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November to Question 87759 on Ajax Vehicles: Testing, what protocols are in place in case noise levels exceed values outlined in the Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005 and the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations 2005.

Alex Chalk:

The trials are conducted under a safe system of work endorsed by the Ajax Safety Assurance Panel. This safety protocol includes the use of the live monitoring of crew noise and vibration exposure levels to ensure exposure remains within the appropriate legislative action value.

In my previous Answer of 18 November to Question 87760 I stated that Army crews are not required to undertake neurological tests as part of the trial protocol. It has now become clear that the enhanced audiometric surveillance used to assure the User Validation Trials' safety protocol in fact meets the definition of neurological testing. The enhanced audiometric surveillance (hearing tests) are tests of which the House is already aware since the Written Ministerial Statement of 19 May 2022 (HCW42).

■ Armed Forces: Housing**John Healey:**[\[92105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many boilers in Single Living Accommodation have been replaced as part of Project Hydra.

Alex Chalk:

Since April 2020, 33 boilers have been replaced in Single Living Accommodation as part of Programme Hydro.

Programme Hydro will be delivered over a 10-year period and is predominantly focussed on resilience and timely responses to heating and hot water issues (boiler replacement does not typically sit within it).

John Healey:[\[92107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what much Pinnacle Group has recovered from service families for damages and deficiencies in relation their accommodation since June 2022.

Alex Chalk:

This information is not held because Pinnacle Group are not responsible for recovering payments from Service families for any damages in relation to their Service Family Accommodation.

John Healey:

[\[92108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has spent (a) replacing and (b) repairing boilers in service family accommodation in 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The Department's planned spend on new boilers for the Financial Year 2022-23 is £6 million.

The Department does not hold the information on repairing boilers in the format requested and it can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Challenger Tanks

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[93491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the number of Challenger 2 main battle tanks due to be upgraded to Challenger 3 in the context of the War in Ukraine; and whether he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey) on 14 March 2022 to Question 135702 to the hon. Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers).

Attachments:

1. Tanks: Procurement [UIN 135702.docx]

■ Defence Equipment: Foreign Companies

Dave Doogan:

[\[92337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of the UK Defence Budget was spent on equipment manufactured outside the UK in financial years (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19, (d) 2019-20 and (e) 2020-21.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Defence publishes information on gov.uk for all expenditure with UK commerce and industry since 2013-14. From this it is possible to extract an overall estimate of expenditure overseas, including equipment, between 2016-17 and 2020-21, which is shown in the table below.

The industry expenditure figures below are based on the location of contracted work and exclude expenditure with foreign governments. Expenditure with the US Government through Foreign Military Sales (FMS) is available from 2018-19 onwards and has been provided separately.

Orders placed in the UK may include those placed with the UK arms of multinational companies.

FINANCIAL YEAR	UK DEFENCE BUDGET (£MILLION)	UK INDUSTRY EXPENDITURE (£MILLION)	OVERSEAS INDUSTRY EXPENDITURE (£MILLION)	FMS EXPENDITURE WITH US (£MILLION)
2016-17	35,283	18,547	2,414	
2017-18	36,605	18,853	3,123	
2018-19	38,026	19,238	2,334	460
2019-20	39,834	20,260	2,944	808
2020-21	42,365	20,500	2,473	976

Figures for overall and UK expenditure can be found within Table 1 of the latest bulletin which can be accessed at the following link:

[MOD regional expenditure with UK industry and supported employment: 2020/21 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-regional-expenditure-with-uk-industry-and-supported-employment-2020-21)

FMS expenditure data is set out in Table 9 of the statistics covering MOD Trade, Industry and Contracts 2022, which can be accessed via the following link:

[MOD trade, industry and contracts: 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mod-trade-industry-and-contracts-2022)

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

Mr Kevan Jones:

[93472]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November to Question 89762 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts, whether his Department has asked Harland & Wolff what the average duration of the 1200 shipbuilding jobs will be.

Alex Chalk:

The duration of contracts offered to employees of companies contracted by the Ministry of Defence is a matter for those companies.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[93476]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, why the design contract for the Fleet Solid Support Ship was paid to Navantia if the Fleet Solid Support Ship design was undertaken by BMT.

Alex Chalk:

The structure of the winning team is a matter purely for the companies themselves.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the £5 million design contract for the Fleet Solid Support Ship was paid to (a) Navantia UK or (b) Navantia.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor on 23 September 2021 to Question number 51616.

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Procurement [UIN 51616.docx]

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89763 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts, what estimate he has made of when the prime contractor for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract will be decided.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given on 22 November 2022 to Question 88827.

Attachments:

1. Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts [88827 - Fleet Solid Support Ships.docx]

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Intellectual Property

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with regard to the Fleet Solid Support Ship Contract, whether any aspects of intellectual property will be transferred to the UK under that contract.

Alex Chalk:

The Fleet Solid Support ships have been designed in the UK by BMT, a leading firm of Naval Architects. Intellectual Property rights in the design rest with BMT. The terms of the contract will give the Ministry of Defence free user rights under the FSS contract to operate, support and maintain the vessels through life.

■ Military Aircraft: Costs

John Healey: [\[90738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the fleet cost of the a) C130-J b) C17 and c) A400M fleets was in each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

The costs for the C-130J Hercules, Atlas A400M and C-17 for the last five financial years are given in the table below.

£ MILLION	FY2017-18	FY2018-19	FY2019-20	FY2020-21	FY2021-22
Atlas A400M	339.064	106.951	26.678	236.738	185.243

£ MILLION	FY2017-18	FY2018-19	FY2019-20	FY2020-21	FY2021-22
C-130J Hercules	140.291	109.703	88.391	135.916	128.199
C-17	79.619	100.476	91.37	97.274	109.41

Costs are non-ringfenced Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL) and Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) combined. Figures for the years prior to financial year 2020-21 do not include payroll costs, as these were separately accounted prior to that date. As Atlas Force is still building up, Atlas A400M costs include Equipment Programme costs. However, the C-130J costs exclude the centre wing replacement programme costs and support contract fees that relate to the revision of the Out of Service Date following the Integrated Review.

■ Ministry of Defence: Foreign Companies

Dave Doogan:

[\[92338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many foreign countries received orders from his Department in financial years (a) 2016-17, (b) 2017-18, (c) 2018-19, (d) 2019-20 and (e) 2020-21; and which were the top five countries that received the most orders from his Department in those years.

Alex Chalk:

The information needed to answer the hon. Member's question is taking time to collate. I will write to him with an answer shortly, and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

■ Pinnacle Group: Contracts

John Healey:

[\[92104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the Key Performance Indicators are in his Department's contract with Pinnacle Group.

Alex Chalk:

The Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) accommodation contracts came into service on 1 April 2022. The contracts comprise of one National Accommodation Management Services (NAMS) contract, held by Pinnacle, and four Regional Accommodation Maintenance Services contracts held by Amey and VIVO.

The Key Performance Indicators for the NAMS contract held with Pinnacle, will be placed in the Library of the House.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Holiday Accommodation: Licensing****Rachael Maskell:**[\[90849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will bring forward legislation to provide for licensing of short term holiday lets in the present Parliament.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government supports the sharing economy and the benefits it can bring. However, it is also aware of concerns about the uneven regulatory requirements in the guest accommodation sector, and possible negative impacts on some local communities compared to other types of accommodation.

In June, DCMS issued a Call for Evidence on the benefits and challenges presented by the rise in short-term and holiday letting seen in England over the last 10 to 15 years.

The Call for Evidence closed on 21 September and we are now carefully analysing the 4,000 responses we received. The analysis of the responses will inform the next steps, and we will look to provide updates to the sector in due course.

■ Social Enterprises**Rachael Maskell:**[\[93574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has a target for the proportion of her Departmental budget that will be used to fund social enterprises by the end of this Parliament.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government recognises the social enterprise sector's positive contribution to society and the economy and supports the sector in a number of ways.

This includes;

- access to finance, including £485 million of dormant assets funding that has been allocated to social investment, supporting thousands of charities and social enterprises across England;
- increasing participation in delivering public services through the £900,000 VCSE Contract Readiness Fund announced in September;
- encouraging social enterprises and entrepreneurs to flourish in left-behind places and building the evidence of what works to encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs, as committed to in the Levelling Up White Paper.

EDUCATION**■ Carers: Finance****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[90864]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the financial support available to kinship carers.

Claire Coutinho:

The recently published Independent Review of Children's Social Care set out recommendations on how the government can better support kinship families

The department is now considering these recommendations, including the recommendation to create a financial allowance. The department is working on a comprehensive response to the recommendations in the review, which will set out how we intend to help kinship families.

■ Children: Disability**Jim Shannon:****[92205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what targeted steps her Department has taken to help ensure that children with complex disabilities and their families are supported during the cost of living crisis.

Claire Coutinho:

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

The government understands that people are worried about the cost of living challenges ahead, we have announced further support for next year worth £26 billion, designed to target the most vulnerable households.

The government continues to provide access to grant funding for families on low incomes who are raising disabled or seriously ill children. This is done through a grant to the Family Fund Trust. This funding amounts to £27.3 million per year and allows families to receive grants for a range of items, including white goods, resources for learning and play, technology, or family breaks. This helps families raising disabled and seriously ill children to manage their child's care and support needs, whilst helping the family manage better financially.

The department is offering support to help people with the costs of childcare, housing, transport, and bills. Families can find out the support that they could be eligible for by accessing the government's list of cost of living support, available at: https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/?_ga=2.188236392.1101001340.1669046187-1414152061.1644494944.

■ Department for Education: Redundancy Pay**Fleur Anderson:** [\[93659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much ministerial severance pay has been (a) paid out by her Department and (b) accepted since 1 June 2022.

Nick Gibb:

The provision of severance payments for Ministers is set out in legislation.

Details of the severance payments made to ministers when leaving office are published in Departments' annual reports and accounts.

■ Pre-school Education: Food**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[90866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the nutritional value of meals provided to children in early years settings.

Claire Coutinho:

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards that all early years providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to age five. The framework can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2>.

The framework requires that where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. This is set out at Section 3.38, which also refers to example menus and guidance designed specifically for early years settings. These can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/example-menus-for-early-years-settings-in-england>.

The example menus guidance has been promoted to early years settings in various ways, such as via correspondence to the sector and links to the guidance being published on the help for early years providers online platform. The platform can be accessed here: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/>.

■ Pupils: Ukraine**Duncan Baker:** [\[92368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the adequacy of the steps taken to support children and young people from Ukraine adapt to UK schools; and whether her Department has any plans to review the requirement for Ukrainian pupils to take English and Maths' GCSE exams if they cannot show physical proof of having passed previous similar exams.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is clear that the best place for all children to be educated is in school and that attending school will help newly arrived Ukrainian children integrate into the

communities in which they are living. It is the experience and skill of local authorities and schools that provides the support and care necessary for these children as they adjust to their new lives in the UK.

Schools and colleges are responsible for deciding which qualifications they enter pupils for, based on what is in their best interests. Schools will want to carefully consider the individual circumstances of the students before deciding the appropriateness of an exam entry. Exam centres should make these decisions carefully on a case-by-case basis.

■ **Special Educational Needs**

Jim Shannon:

[\[92206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to implement the recommendations of the report by the Children's Commissioner *Beyond the Labels: A SEND system which works for every child, every time*, published on 14 November.

Claire Coutinho:

The department welcomes the Children's Commissioner's report, a response to the department's consultation, which provided a range of recommendations for the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, including improving the educational health care (EHC) plan process, and support that is available for alternative provision (AP) providers. The SEND and AP green paper set out the department's proposals for how the SEND system can be improved, so that it delivers better outcomes, experiences and financial sustainability. The department will publish a SEND and AP Improvement Plan that will set out the consultation feedback and next steps in due course.

■ **Students: Finance**

Munira Wilson:

[\[87998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help support university students with the rising cost of living in winter 2022.

Robert Halfon:

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

There is £261 million of student premium funding available in the 2022/23 academic year to support disadvantaged students who need additional help. The department has worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure that universities support students in hardship, using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

In addition, all households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Bill, introduced on 12 October 2022, includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate,

onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this legislation will be set out in regulations.

Students whose bills are included in their rent, including energy charges, will typically have agreed their accommodation costs upfront when signing their contract for the current academic year. Businesses, including those that provide student accommodation, are covered by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme which provides energy bill relief for non-domestic customers in the UK.

A Treasury-led review will be launched to consider how to support households and businesses with energy bills after April 2023.

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[89919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support post-16 students with the rising cost of living.

Dr Neil Hudson: [\[89920\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Autumn Statement 2022 on students.

Robert Halfon:

The 2022 Autumn Statement ensures the most vulnerable are protected from the worst of the price rises, with increases to benefits, targeted support with energy bills, one-off payments to people on benefits, disabled people and increases to the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage.

There were significant increases in funding for other education sectors announced at the last Spending Review. The department is investing an additional £3.8 billion on skills over the course of this Parliament (comparing 2024/25 with 2019/20).

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

There is £261 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support disadvantaged HE students who need additional help. The department has also worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure universities support students in hardship using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

In addition, all households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Bill, introduced on 12 October, includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate, onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this legislation will be set out in regulations.

Students whose bills are included in their rent, including energy charges, will typically have agreed their accommodation costs upfront when signing their contract for the current academic year. Businesses, including those that provide student

accommodation, are covered by the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which provides energy bill relief for non-domestic customers in Great Britain.

A Treasury-led review will be launched to consider how to support households and businesses with energy bills after April 2023.

The department provides a range of financial support for further education (FE) students aged 16-19 (or aged up to 25 with an Education and Health Care Plan) who need it to enable them to participate in post-16 education, including free meals, bursaries to help with the cost of education (such as travel, books, equipment, and trips), plus support for childcare and residential costs where required. We have increased total discretionary Bursary funding by 6.8% in 2022/23 to support disadvantaged students to continue in FE or training.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[90862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she makes of the adequacy of the progress of implementing the Action Plan for Animal Welfare.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to strengthening animal welfare standards and protections, and our Action Plan for Animal Welfare sets out our vision to introduce a wide range of ambitious improvements. We continue to drive forward this agenda through legislation as Parliamentary time allows, and through non-legislative reforms.

The passing of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 realises the Government's manifesto commitment to introduce tougher penalties for animal cruelty. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2022 has delivered on the commitment to introduce new laws for animal sentience.

We have also introduced new powers for police and courts to tackle the illegal and cruel sport of hare coursing through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and we also backed bills introducing penalty notices for animal welfare offences and to ban glue traps, all of which have received Royal Assent.

The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was reintroduced in May 2022 and will continue its passage through the Commons when parliamentary time allows. The Bill delivers key manifesto commitments to end the export of live animals for fattening and slaughter, crack down on illegal puppy smuggling, and ban the keeping of primates as pets. It will also update the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, introduce a new pet abduction offence following the work of the Pet Theft Taskforce and reform legislation to tackle livestock worrying.

■ Countryside: Motor Vehicles

Alexander Stafford: [\[89926\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to prevent off-road vehicles used for recreational purposes causing damage to farmland and the countryside in Rother Valley constituency.

Alexander Stafford: [\[89927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what powers local authorities have to regulate the use of off-road vehicles for recreational purposes on public rights of way.

Alexander Stafford: [\[89928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help protect people using rural footpaths, bridleways and trails from irresponsibly driven off-road vehicles.

Trudy Harrison:

Some rural public rights of way and unsealed unclassified roads allow for the legal recreational use of motor vehicles and such routes often provide essential vehicular access for local residents and businesses.

Whilst many users make use of these rights in a responsible way, the Government is aware of damage and disturbance caused by excessive use of off-road motor vehicles on some unsealed routes.

The Government is working with stakeholders to explore options for protecting our green lanes while maintaining most public and private access rights, particularly for residents and businesses.

Local authorities already have powers through Traffic Regulation Orders to control the amount and type of traffic on all roads.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Public Expenditure

Alex Sobel: [\[73123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding (a) his Department allocated to and (b) was spent by the (i) Blue Planet Fund, (ii) Darwin Plus Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund and (iii) Darwin Initiative in each year since 2010; and how much funding his Department has allocated to each project in each of the next five years.

Trudy Harrison:

The requested information on allocation and spend for financial years 2010/11 to 2021/22 is provided in table 1 attached. Specific annual allocations for the Darwin Initiative, Darwin Plus and the Blue Planet Fund over the next five years will be subject to ministerial decisions and any future Spending Review. The Blue Planet Fund has a total anticipated budget of £500 million over at least five years delivered

jointly by Defra and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and HM Government has committed to scaling up the Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus.

Attachments:

1. Table 1 – Allocations and spend [PQ 73123 attachment.pdf]

■ **Dogs: Travel**

Liz Twist:

[\[89888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment for the implications of her policies of Dogs Trust's recommendation to introduce a requirement to visually check animals entering the country at ports to ensure that the pet animal is (a) the same as the animal listed on the pet passport, (b) the age stated, (c) not heavily pregnant and (d) not suffering from poor welfare conditions.

Rebecca Pow:

We do not intend to make such an assessment. We already operate one of the most rigorous and robust pet travel checking regimes in Europe. All non-commercial dogs, cats and ferrets entering Great Britain on approved routes (every route other than Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies) under the Pet Travel rules undergo 100% documentary and identity checks by authorised pet checkers.

■ **Insects: Conservation**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[93572\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help protect insect populations in the UK.

Trudy Harrison:

Responsibility for the domestic environment is devolved. However, in England, we are taking unprecedented steps to address biodiversity decline and protect nature, not least through our world leading Environment Act, which requires a new, legally binding target to be set to halt the decline in species abundance including insects, by 2030.

Through our new environmental land management schemes farmers and land managers will play an essential role in halting the decline in species, including insects. The schemes will offer choice of support for more regenerative approaches to farming, and creation or restoration of habitats in appropriate areas.

Specifically for pollinators, Government is working alongside many partners to implement the provisions in the National Pollinator Strategy. The Strategy sets out how Government, conservation groups, farmers, beekeepers and researchers can work together to improve the status of wild and managed pollinating insect species in England on farmland, in urban areas and in gardens. We published our Pollinator Action Plan for 2021-2024 in May this year to set out more specifically how we will continue to act to fulfil the vision, aims and objectives of the strategy.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences****Preet Kaur Gill:****[93605]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what was the budget of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team in each of the past three years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) remains a top priority for the UK Government. Since 2012, the FCDO has allocated over £50 million to PSVI-related activities. The UK committed £2.6 million in FY 20-21 and £4.2 million in FY 21-22 to the PSVI. On 28 November at the PSVI International Conference, the Foreign Secretary will announce a new PSVI Strategy and programmes over the next three years to deliver PSVI strategic objectives. Across these objectives, we will harness world-class UK expertise, including the UK's PSVI Team of Experts and by bringing our diplomatic and defence levers to bear on tackling the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). PSVI funding is complemented by wider investments across FCDO, such as the What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale programme, which will contribute to generating a world-class evidence base on what works to prevent CRSV.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Prisoners**Mr David Lammy:****[88790]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many requests for assistance from UK citizens imprisoned abroad his Department received in each of the last five years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO provided consular assistance to around 5,000 new arrest and detention cases in 2018 and 2019, 2,700 in 2020, 2,500 in 2021 and 3,000 so far in 2022.

Mr David Lammy:**[88791]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the (a) median and (b) mean number of days between initial contact received from a UK national imprisoned abroad and consular support being offered were in each of the last five years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

We do not keep statistics on the time between notification of arrest and provision of direct assistance, however consular staff can be contacted 24/7 by phone to offer assistance and advice. When we hear about a detention or arrest from a third-party, consular staff aim to contact the individual as soon as possible. We will then provide assistance according to their circumstances and local conditions. This can include keeping in regular contact, either by visiting in person, or by telephone or letter. How frequently we visit will depend on the nature and context of the case. Our Support for

British Nationals Abroad pages on GOV.UK provide information on the assistance we can and cannot give to those arrested or detained overseas.

■ **Development Aid: Armed Conflict**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[93603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the UK aid budget has been targeted at those living in fragile and conflict-affected countries in each of the last five years.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Official statistics on the UK Government's bilateral Official Development Assistance broken down by recipient country (including fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS)), is published annually in Statistics on International Development which is available online on GOV.uk.

As set out in the International Development Strategy, HMG will target its work in FCAS, including ensuring our work takes account of the causes and effects of conflict and draws on our combined diplomatic, defence and development capabilities.

■ **East Africa: Poverty**

Patrick Grady: [\[90828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of spending by other Government Departments, including the Home Office, being classed as Official Development Assistance on his Department's funding for programmes tackling poverty in East Africa.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO has considered the impact of Official Development Assistance (ODA) pressures across the whole of the FCDO ODA budget, including on humanitarian work.

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

Mr David Lammy: [\[88795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs how many officials in his Department have relocated out of London under the Places for Growth Programme.

David Rutley:

As at 30 September 2022, 27% of FCDO UK based staff are based overseas with 73% of UK based staff working in the UK. Of our staff working in the UK, 23% are located outside of London. FCDO has joint headquarters in East Kilbride and between 02 September 2020 and 30 September 2022, the number of staff who changed office location from London as part of the Places for Growth programme was 9.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff**Mr David Lammy:** [88792]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, which of his Department's overseas posts are staffed by one Diplomatic Service Officer.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

There are 24 overseas posts that are staffed by one Diplomatic Service Officer. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office publishes a list of locations where there are HMG Overseas Missions that is available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-foreign-office-posts>

Julian Assange**Kenny MacAskill:** [89033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he or his officials have had discussions with their counterparts in the US Administration on reported attempts to assassinate Julian Assange.

David Rutley:

We have discussed issues relating to Julian Assange as part of our routine diplomatic engagement with a number of countries, including the US. We are not aware of any specific discussions on the specific issue of reported assassination attempts.

Kenny MacAskill: [89034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has received representations from its international counterparts on (a) human rights and (b) press freedom in relation to Julian Assange.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The FCDO has only received one representation about Mr Assange from the group Reporters Without Borders which was addressed to the Home Secretary and has been passed to the Home Office. We have not received any representations from diplomatic counterparts.

Myanmar: Arms Trade and Aviation**Catherine West:** [93600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with regional partners on Myanmar since his appointment; and whether he has made representations for the suspension of (a) jet fuel and (b) arms sales to Myanmar.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK regularly raises the situation in Myanmar with regional counterparts, including at Ministerial and Secretary of State level.

The UK has been clear that we oppose the provision of jet fuel, arms and military equipment to Myanmar. Since the military coup on 1 February 2021, the UK has

imposed 12 tranches of sanctions targeting the military's leadership and its access to revenue, arms and military equipment. On 27 March, the UK coordinated a statement, agreed by 47 countries, on working together to prevent the flow of arms to Myanmar. The UK is exploring both sanction and non-sanction measures to tackle the Myanmar military's air capabilities and ability to target civilians.

■ **Palestinians: Development Aid**

Steve McCabe:

[\[88802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2022 to Question 63915 on Palestinians: Development Aid, what assessment his Department's December 2021 review of the Partnership Principles made of the Palestinian Authority's commitment to the principle of non-violence.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer given on 25 October 2022 to Question 63915, the answer can be found on the Q&A web pages on <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-10-17/63915>

■ **Ukraine: Development Aid**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[93606\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance has been disbursed to projects in Ukraine in (a) conflict prevention and resolution and (b) ending violence against women and girls in each of the last five years.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has committed £394 million in economic and humanitarian aid in response to the current crisis in Ukraine. As part of our humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis in 2022, we have provided £1m to UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) which provides urgent sexual and reproductive health assistance to women and girls in Ukraine who have experienced gender-based violence. We have also deployed UK experts as part of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative to Ukraine, to support the work of national and international bodies and NGOs. The last five years of ODA spend can be found in the more detailed breakdowns of UK ODA, published annually in Statistics on International Development publications (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-on-international-development>).

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Arthritis: Medical Treatments**

Yvonne Fovargue:

[\[93513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many rheumatoid arthritis patients received a biologic in each of the last three years.

Yvonne Fovargue: [\[93514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of rheumatoid arthritis patients received a biologic in the last 12 months.

Helen Whately:

This information is not collected in the format requested.

■ **Cancer: Health Services**

Jim Shannon: [\[92212\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the 10 year cancer plan.

Helen Whately:

Following a call for evidence to inform a new cancer plan earlier this year, we are currently analysing the responses received.

■ **Cancer: Waiting Lists**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[89893\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what is the average waiting time for urgent referrals for suspected cancer in England.

Helen Whately:

This information is not collected in the format requested.

■ **Cardiovascular Diseases**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[89695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of (a) cavernous sinus thrombosis, (b) myocarditis and (c) pericarditis were diagnosed by the NHS in England in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020 and (iv) 2021.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: This information is not held in the format requested.

■ **Health Services: Females**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[93650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department are taking to ensure that community diagnostic centres have sufficient equipment and expertise to effectively diagnose menstrual health conditions.

Maria Caulfield:

We are allocating £2.3 billion to open up to 160 community diagnostic centres by 2024/25 to provide gynaecological tests such as ultrasound scanning, blood tests and hysteroscopy to diagnose menstrual health conditions.

■ **Mental Health Services: Children and Young People**

Liz Twist:

[\[89887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the data quality for NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services in (a) Tyne and Wear and (b) England.

Maria Caulfield:

NHS England has made guidance available for services related to specific care pathways to improve the data submitted to the Mental Health Services Dataset and issued guidance for the recording of outcomes data, access data and for the measurement of waiting times for non-urgent access to community children and young people's mental health services. NHS England is providing additional support to assist local areas to overcome local data flow challenges and to make data products such as dashboards routinely available for services to review. Existing guidance is being improved to support local National Health Service commissioners supporting voluntary and community sector providers to submit data to the Mental Health Services Dataset and question and answer sessions have been delivered to respond to enquiries and examine barriers to submitting the data.

■ **NHS**

Helen Morgan:

[\[92396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish their review of the NHS Long Term Plan.

Will Quince:

Following the autumn statement on 17 November 2022, the Government and NHS England will prepare detailed financial and delivery plans for future years, including for the commitments made in the NHS Long Term Plan. Further information will be available in the new year.

■ **NHS: Migrant Workers**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[93703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November to Question 80951 on Nepal: Migrant Workers, whether the Government plans to continue to recruit health workers from nations classified as red list by the World Health Organisation.

Will Quince:

International recruitment in England is guided by the Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel. The Code states that active international recruitment from the 47 countries on the World Health Organization's Health Workforce Support and Safeguards list should not take place, except where a Government-to-Government agreement is in place. Of countries on this list, the United Kingdom currently has a Government-to-Government agreement on the recruitment of healthcare workers with Nepal.

However, the Code acknowledges an individual's right to migrate and individuals from countries on this list can make direct applications for vacancies in the UK health and social care sectors of their own accord.

■ **Nurses: Labour Turnover**

Fiona Bruce: [\[93506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve the retention of experienced nurses in (a) Congleton constituency and (b) nationally.

Will Quince:

NHS England's retention programme seeks to understand why staff leave and provide targeted interventions to support staff to stay, with each trust required to have retention action plans, including in Congleton.

NHS England is working with each integrated care system to support a dedicated retention resource for 2022/23. Support for line managers has been provided, including a staff retention guide with information on induction, reward and recognition, menopause support and online resources to support colleagues in late and early career.

In July 2022, NHS England asked each National Health Service organisation to prioritise the delivery of five actions on nursing and midwifery retention, including enhanced support for those joining the NHS, menopause support and improved advice and guidance for those later in their career with flexible working and pensions. The Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan. The plan will consider the number of staff and the roles required and will set out the actions and reforms needed to improve workforce supply and retention, including in Congleton.

■ **Prescription Drugs**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[93720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November 2022 to Question 89696, if he will list the interventions which have been introduced in (a) community pharmacy and (b) general practitioner practices and the estimated annual savings achieved as a result.

Will Quince:

The Regional Medicines Optimisation Committees were established in 2016 to support and optimise local prescribing practice and reduce unwarranted variation. In addition, community pharmacies offer the New Medicines Service, providing further support to patients newly prescribed certain medicines. The Discharge Medicines Service enables hospitals to refer recently discharged patients to a community pharmacy for support with new medication. Structured Medicine Reviews are offered by general practitioner (GP) practices and increasingly pharmacists as part of multi-disciplinary teams to review patients' medication. Electronic Repeat Dispensing

allows a GP to send repeat prescriptions to a patient's pharmacy to manage the dispensing of the specific medicines required. No specific estimate of the annual savings has been made.

■ **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors: Sexual Dysfunction**

Steve McCabe:

[\[92076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to undertake research into the (a) causes of and (b) treatments for post-SSRI sexual dysfunction.

Will Quince:

The Department funds health and care research through the National Institute for Health And Care Research (NIHR). The NIHR has funded studies into sexual dysfunction and use of antipsychotic drugs or antidepressant medication. This includes a review to understand the management of sexual dysfunction where participants were taking antidepressant medication or antipsychotic medication. Subject to receiving high quality applications, the NIHR expects to commission a new Policy Research Unit dedicated to reproductive health. The new unit will undertake research to inform policy in areas such as contraception, with user experience highlighted as a theme for this research. Applications are currently being reviewed with the unit expected to be operational from January 2024.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Staff**

Geraint Davies:

[\[93414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the number of specialist staff that will be required to implement the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan; and whether his Department has this number of specialist staff as of 22 November 2022.

Maria Caulfield:

We have made no specific assessment. The 'SEND review: right support, right place, right time' green paper sets out proposals to commission analysis to ensure that the health needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported through effective workforce planning. We plan to work with Health Education England, NHS England and the Department for Education to complement existing evidence and understand the demand for support for children and young people with SEND from the therapy and diagnostic workforce.

■ **Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme: Coronavirus**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[93722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2022 to Question 88799, in how many of the 157 claims where medical records have not been produced after more than six months subject access requests have been made; and if he will make it the policy of the Government that a subject

access request must be made in every case when records are not provided within one month of being requested.

Maria Caulfield:

To date, no Subject Access Requests (SARs) have been submitted. The NHS Business Services Authority is currently implementing this process to begin from the week commencing 12 December 2022. SARs will be submitted where there is no engagement from the healthcare provider within 28 days of the request.

HOME OFFICE

■ Animal Experiments

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[86511]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's Animals in Science Regulation Unit Annual reports 2019 to 2021, published 26 October 2022, what assessment she has made of the incident in which four dogs were administered a substance that was not authorised for testing; and whether a letter of reprimand and inspector advice was an adequate response to that breach.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 22 November 2022]: The Home Office take any allegations regarding non-compliance with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 very seriously.

The investigation and measures taken for the case involving four dogs were in accordance with the agreed Regulator's Compliance Policy that is aimed to minimise the risk of recurrence. The Compliance Policy can be found on gov.uk. The Home Office will continue to assess the proportionality of responses to non-compliances with the Act.

■ Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare

Dr Rupa Huq:

[88963]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Animals in Science Regulation Unit annual reports 2019 to 2021, published on 26 October 2022, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) investigating that report's findings on animal welfare in laboratories and (b) taking steps to support scientists in the development of new approach methodologies to help reduce animal testing.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Regulator has strengthened its regulatory oversight and published its process establishment audits at: www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-research-technical-advice#process-and-standards-for-establishment-full-system-audits. The audit process includes an animal welfare assessment.

Government policy is to actively support and fund the development and dissemination of techniques that Replace, Reduce and Refine the use of animals in research (the 3Rs). This is achieved through funding UK Research and Investment who fund the National Centre for the 3Rs and fund further research through Innovate UK, the Medical Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council into the development of alternatives.

The Regulator has a responsibility to assess all project licence applications for the full application of the principles of the 3Rs and all licence holders have a standard condition in their licences that requires them to deliver the 3Rs. In addition, all establishments have an Animal Welfare and Ethical Review body that has a responsibility to advise the Establishment Licence Holder and Project Licence Holders on the 3Rs.

■ Asylum: Contracts

Christopher Pincher:

[\[93527\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many sub-contractors are managed by SERCO in respect of (a) housing, (b) clothing and (c) feeding asylum seekers who are resident in temporary hotel accommodation as of 22 November 2022; and if she will make an assessment of whether those sub-contractors have adequate (i) skills and (ii) experience to meet her Department's requirements for these services.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office expects the highest standards from our accommodation providers, who are contractually obliged to provide adequate accommodation and to conduct regular quality assurance checks across the asylum estate. The standards of accommodation and service are set out within the Asylum Accommodation & Support Contracts (AASC). Details of the AASC can be found at: [New asylum accommodation contracts awarded - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)\(opens in a new tab\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-asylum-accommodation-contracts-awarded)

Robust compliance and governance protocols exist to ensure that the providers' operational delivery and overall performance consistently meet the required standards. If any issues are identified providers are required to redress concerns.

■ Asylum: Employment

Dan Carden:

[\[93611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions her Department has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential merits of allowing asylum seekers who have been waiting for over six months for a decision on their asylum claim to work in the UK.

Dan Carden:

[\[93613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of permitting asylum seekers to work on the attractiveness of the UK labour market to foreign workers.

Dan Carden: [\[93614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the guidance by her Department entitled Permission to work and volunteering for asylum seekers, published on 28 October 2022, what the evidential basis is for saying that asylum seekers should be restricted from working to ensure a clear distinction between economic migration and asylum that discourages those who do not need protection from claiming asylum.

Robert Jenrick:

Asylum seekers are allowed to work in the UK if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own. Following last year's review and in light of wider priorities to fix the broken asylum system, reduce pull factors, and ensure our policies do not encourage people to undercut the resident labour force, we have decided at this stage not to pursue any changes to the policy. Instead, we are focusing our resources on transforming the asylum system and making faster decisions. This will prevent people becoming stuck in the system for long periods of time and allow genuine refugees to integrate and contribute into society more quickly.

■ Asylum: Hotels

Rachael Maskell: [\[87871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of signing contracts to use hotels to house asylum seekers on the existing residents of those hotels.

Rachael Maskell: [\[87872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with representatives from York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust on hotel rooms used by NHS staff before signing contracts to use hotels in York for asylum seekers.

Rachael Maskell: [\[87873\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any NHS staff have been displaced due to the use of hotel rooms in York as temporary accommodation asylum seekers.

Rachael Maskell: [\[87874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of using of hotels used by York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust staff as temporary accommodation for people seeking asylum on community tensions.

Robert Jenrick:

[Holding answer 18 November 2022]: The record numbers of individuals illegally crossing the Channel has impacted not only our ability to find suitable accommodation for people as quickly as is necessary to meet our statutory need, but also our engagement with MPs and Local Authorities.

As advised in my letter to MPs issued on 18th November we have taken immediate steps to rectify this and improve levels of engagement with key stakeholders around required hotel accommodation sites, to ensure colleagues are kept updated and better informed and to ensure we understand and act on any concerns appropriately and swiftly. These performance standards will be reviewed regularly and, wherever possible, service levels will be progressively raised. We also continue to work closely with local authorities on full asylum dispersal to ensure fairer distribution across the UK.

Using hotels to accommodate asylum seekers is not a long-term solution. Central to our focus is the impact on local communities, including access to public services, community cohesion and public order; delivering value for money for the taxpayer; and reducing pull factors to enter the UK illegally. It is against these criteria that we will consider further contingency accommodation options.

■ Asylum: Housing

Navendu Mishra:

[93704]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department routinely checks the conditions of properties used to house asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

The welfare and safety of all vulnerable asylum seekers in our care is of the utmost importance to the Home Office, and we expect the highest standards from our accommodation providers. Our accommodation providers are contractually obliged to provide adequate accommodation and to conduct regular quality assurance checks across the asylum estate. Robust compliance and governance protocols exist to ensure daily engagement is undertaken with our service providers by Home Office officials to ensure and assure that the providers' operational delivery and overall performance consistently meet the required standards. This is supplemented by weekly, monthly and quarterly governance meetings.

The Home Office also has a Contract Assurance team which conducts a range of activities to ensure accommodation providers deliver to the required standards. All contingency accommodation sites are inspected by the team. Dispersal accommodation is also inspected on an intelligence led basis. Properties are checked against the high standards set by the contract, and by the law and the licensing conditions set by local authorities. Providers are required to take immediate action to address any issues that are found.

Asylum seekers can also raise specific issues or concerns about their accommodation through the 24/7 Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) service operated via Migrant Help. Home Office officials also review the issues and feedback received via Migrant Help to help understand the health of the service and address any problems, for example, by targeting inspections of properties about which issues have been raised.

■ Asylum: Saffron Walden

Mr David Davis: [\[89703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in Saffron Walden constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of North East Cambridgeshire (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Fareham (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Braintree (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Suffolk Coastal (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Monmouth (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Chippenham (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Hertsmere (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Salisbury (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Surrey Heath (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of the Forest of Dean and how many were housed in that constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Daventry (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of South West Surrey (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in the constituency of Dumfries and Galloway (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in Newark constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in Chichester constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in Plymouth constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in Sutton Coldfield constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Mr David Davis: [\[89722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers were accommodated in Portsmouth North constituency (a) on 17 November 2022, (b) in 2019, (c) in 2020, (d) in 2021 and (e) in 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation and other support to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute while their application for asylum is being considered.

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of how many asylum seekers are accommodated in each constituency. This is as these figures are not available in reportable format, and to provide the information could only be done at a disproportionate cost. However, the latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 25 August 2022, and the next quarterly figures are due to be released later this month.

■ Cybercrime

Dr Jamie Wallis: [\[89905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help reduce the severity of ransomware attacks.

Tom Tugendhat:

Tackling cyber crime is at the heart of the Government's new National Cyber Strategy which is supported by £2.6bn of new investment over the three-year Spending Review period. The [National Cyber Strategy](#) (2022-2025) has set the direction and ambition for investment and efforts in UK Cyber.

Delivery of the National Cyber Strategy is driving significant improvements in the UK's response to cyber crime. It is strengthening the law enforcement response and driving greater collaboration with the National Cyber Security Centre and the National Cyber Force.

Ransomware is a top priority for the Government. It is clear that ransomware attacks are increasingly common globally and represent one of the most significant, and growing, international cyber threats.

The Home Office launched a focused campaign to accelerate our response to this growing threat in June 2021. Key work strands include understanding the threat landscape; incident reporting, ransom payment, cyber sanctions; crypto assets policy,

cyber insurance; and collaborating with colleagues across Government, law enforcement, industry and our international partners to tackle threat.

It is clear that ransomware attacks are increasingly common globally and represent one of the most significant, and growing, international cyber threats. As a transnational problem, any solution will need to be developed in close step with our international partners.

The UK works closely with allies across the world to disrupt ransomware gangs and the infrastructure they use to target UK businesses and organisations. In December 2021, the UK held a G7 Senior Officials' Forum on ransomware to combat the threat, and the UK is taking a leading roles in the international US-led Counter Ransomware Initiative.

Resilience against these attacks is our best defence. The Home Office works alongside law enforcement and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to mitigate any harm to the UK from ransomware. The NCSC and the National Crime Agency (NCA) continues to advise organisations which fall victim to ransomware and provide guidance on how to protect yourself and your business.

■ Gambling

Simon Hoare:

[\[84921\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has made a recent assessment of the financial impact of gambling-related (a) fraud and (b) other acquisitive crimes on the victims of those crimes; what the value was of assets recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 from offenders who committed gambling-related crimes in the latest period for which data is available; if she will make an estimate of the financial compensation provided to the victims of gambling-related crimes by (a) each and (b) all gambling companies in the latest period for which data is available; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: The Home Office does not hold the information which you have requested on the value of assets recovered under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) from offenders who committed gambling related crimes.

The Home Office holds information on the value of assets recovered under POCA 2002 from offenders who committed other types of offences including fraud and money laundering. This data is included in the Asset Recovery Statistical Bulletin which is published every year.

Its latest release was in September 2022, covering the period between financial year 2016 to 2017 and 2021 to 2022 . The total value of proceeds of crime recovered under POCA from fraud related offences over the last six financial years, is £388m as shown in [Table 11](#).

■ Home Office: Expenditure**Gareth Bacon:** [\[89048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much was spent on external speakers at events run by her Department in the last 12 months; and who these external speakers were.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not report the information sought to the level of granularity required so identifying spending on external speakers specifically from our financial system can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Identifying all external speakers is not readily available from our management systems as there is no central database for this.

■ Home Office: Redundancy Pay**Fleur Anderson:** [\[93661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much ministerial severance pay has been (a) paid out by her Department and (b) accepted since 1 June 2022.

Chris Philp:

The provision of payments connected to the loss of ministerial office is set out in legislation. Outturn figures will be published in the department's audited annual reports and accounts in due course.

■ Immigration: ICT**Sir Stephen Timms:** [\[93420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 87716 on Immigration: ICT, when she expects the Atlas caseworking system to provide further information on numbers of applicants having the No Recourse to Public Funds condition attached to their Leave to Remain.

Robert Jenrick:

Whilst the majority of in-country immigration casework is now carried out through Atlas, remaining areas will complete their transition to Atlas in 2023, after which time it will be possible to explore what further information can be produced using the new system.

■ Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner**Karen Bradley:** [R] [\[93531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will appoint the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

Miss Sarah Dines:

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.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Carol Monaghan: [\[89847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress has been made to conclude visa application GWF066655972 lodged on 1 September 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

This visa application is currently under consideration.

Dan Carden: [\[93619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 9 November to Question 76099 on Members: Correspondence, when he expects the technical issue to be resolved.

Robert Jenrick:

We expect to have a fix for the technical issue tested and implemented within a month.

■ **Police: Sussex**

Tim Loughton: [\[93407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) FTE police officers and (b) PCSOs have been deployed in each local authority area in Sussex in each of the last 5 years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes data on the size 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). These data are collected by Police Force Area only and information at lower levels of geography, such as local authority are not held by the Home Office.

Data on the number of police officers and PCSOs in Sussex Police, on both a full-time equivalent (FTE) and a headcount basis are available in the Open Data Table that accompanies the release:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005761/open-data-table-police-workforce-280721.ods

The deployment of officers across a police force area is a decision for operationally independent Chief Constables.

■ **Proceeds of Crime: Cannabis**

Stephen Hammond: [R] [87800]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to make clear that investment in a firm that profits from the legal overseas recreational cannabis market should fall within the scope of the Proceedings of Crime Act 2002; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

Decisions on investments are a matter for those investing, and they must obtain their own legal advice.

There is no current intention to bring forward additional legislation and therefore no intention to make a statement.

■ **Security Guards: Training**

Mr Virendra Sharma: [93490]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) adequacy of training required to acquire an SIA license and (b) potential impact of the current training regime on the treatment of the visually impaired.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) is responsible for setting mandatory training requirements for the roles within the private security industry that it licenses. It reviews its training standards every five years, with the most recent changes coming into force in October 2022. This process involves the industry and expert stakeholders and a significant amount of research and consultation. For this round of qualifications, the public consultations attracted approximately 6,000 responses. The Home Office is satisfied that the SIA has the expertise to set standards of the appropriate quality.

'Principles of Working in the Private Security Industry' is a unit included in the current door supervision, security guarding and CCTV training. In relation to the treatment of individuals who have visual impairment, a protected characteristic, the unit covers the key legislation (including the Equalities Act 2010) and the need to recognise diverse customer needs and expectations, and to understand how to keep vulnerable people safe.

■ UK Border Force: Patrol Craft

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[93470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made on the replacement of Border Force vessels.

Robert Jenrick:

I refer the Rt. Hon. member to the answer I provided to Question 92145.

■ Visas: Applications

Carol Monaghan: [\[89848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to expedite visa applications when there is a known imminent threat to life of the applicant.

Robert Jenrick:

UKVI will expedite all cases where there is a compassionate need to do so including where an individual may face a threat to their life due to a medical emergency.

■ Visas: National Security

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[84798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been identified by the Department's review of Tier 1 investor visas as posing a security risk to the UK.

Mr Ben Bradshaw: [\[84799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her department has made an assessment the impact of (a) Tier 1 and (b) Tier 2 visa schemes on national security.

Tom Tugendhat:

[Holding answer 21 November 2022]: We do not comment on matters of national security. As the Government has set out previously, we will provide a summary of the findings of the Tier 1 Investor historic review in due course.

■ Wind Power: Migrant Workers

Kenny MacAskill: [\[89907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department consulted with relevant stakeholders prior to extending the Offshore Wind Workers Immigration Rules Concession 2017.

Kenny MacAskill: [\[89908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he made an assessment of the potential impact of extending the Offshore Wind Workers Immigration rules concession 2017 on the number of jobs available for UK seafarers.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government regularly reviews the existence of concessions against the general principles of the immigration system to check whether they are necessary and regularly undertakes engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. This will continue to be the case in future.

Kenny MacAskill:

[89909]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to take action against firms found to have dismissed UK seafarers and replaced them with workers from overseas following the extension of the Offshore Wind Workers Immigration rules concession 2017.

Robert Jenrick:

Employment law is a matter for the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Exports: Preferential Tariffs

Gareth Thomas:

[92075]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the preference utilisation rate is for goods exports under each active free trade agreement for businesses with a headcount of (a) 250 or more, (b) between 50 and 249, (c) between 10 and 49 and (d) less than 10 employees in each year since January 2020.

Andrew Bowie:

The data required to calculate preference utilisation of UK goods exports is collected through customs declarations of the importing partner country. At present this data is not publicly available for non-EU FTA partners. Preference utilisation of EU imports from non-EU partner countries (including Great Britain since 2021) is published by the European Commission: https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/enforcement-and-protection/implementing-and-enforcing-eu-trade-agreements_en (file link)

The Department for International Trade has committed to publishing a monitoring report for trade agreements every two years from 2023. This will include preference utilisation rates from all partner countries where available.

Preference utilisation rates by business size is not centrally collected.

■ Trade Agreements: Australia

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[93590]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the impact of the UK-Australia free trade agreement on (a) gross value added to, (b) exports from, (c) tariffs paid by and (d) levels of employment within of small and medium sized enterprises in the UK in the next (i) three years and (ii) 10 years.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:[\[93591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will make an estimate of the potential impact of the UK-New Zealand free trade agreement on annual (a) gross value added to, (b) exports made by, (c) tariffs paid by and (d) changes to levels of employment for small and medium sized enterprises in the next (i) three and (ii) ten years.

Greg Hands:

Our published impact assessments for the Australia and New Zealand free trade agreements (FTAs) set out the potential long-run impacts of these FTAs on UK GDP, sectors, and employment. They also make an assessment of the potential implications for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

These assessments show the proportion of UK SMEs that are present in sectors most likely to be affected by the FTAs. Estimating the impacts of UK FTAs on gross value added (GVA), tariffs and employment specifically for SMEs is not possible using the currently available trade data and modelling methodology.

■ Trade Agreements: Japan**Gareth Thomas:**[\[93434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to Article 20.2 of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, what assessment she has made of the work of the Japanese government to strengthen cooperation between the UK and Japan on (a) identifying ways to assist small and medium enterprises to take advantage of the commercial the agreement and (b) promote and facilitate trade and investment opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises since that agreement came into effect.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade is content that both the UK and Japan are meeting their obligations with regards to Article 20.2.

The UK and Japan have made resources available on their respective government websites to support businesses to take advantage of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), including tariff lines and essential business guidance.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Investment have agreed to a series of workshops, policy dialogues and commercial engagement with business in line with the small and medium-sized enterprises chapter of the CEPA.

Gareth Thomas:[\[93435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to Article 20.2 of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, how many online seminars, workshops or other related activities (a) her Department and (b) the Japanese government has held with the purpose of informing small and medium sized enterprises

of the benefits available to them under the Agreement, (i) before and (ii) since the Agreement came into effect; and on which dates they took place.

Greg Hands:

Between March to June 2021, the Department for International Trade (DIT) ran a promotional campaign including events, webinars and podcasts to raise awareness of the Agreement to UK businesses. This resulted in DIT:

- Engaging with 1,100 UK companies and 1,240 Japanese companies;
- Introducing at least 370 UK companies to Japanese buyers; and
- Responding to 437 enquiries from UK companies requesting support on exporting to Japan and identifying Japanese partners.

The UK Government continues to promote the Agreement to business, including via Export to Japan, a not-for-profit organisation, part funded by DIT.

The UK is content that Japan has met its objectives under Article 20.2.

Gareth Thomas:

[93436]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to Article 20.2 of the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, how many discussions (a) ministers and (b) officials from her Department have had with the Japanese government on (i) training programmes, (ii) trade education, (iii) trade finance, (iv) identifying commercial partners in the other Party, (v) establishing good business credentials, (vi) participating and integrating into global supply chains and (vii) using electronic commerce, to support small and medium sized enterprises, since the agreement came into effect.

Greg Hands:

The UK and Japan engage regularly at official and ministerial level to discuss how to support businesses to use the UK-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), trade education, ecommerce and training programmes.

For example, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry have agreed to workshops, policy dialogues and commercial engagement with business in line with the small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) chapter of the CEPA. In 2021, Department for International Trade and Japanese officials exchanged information on awareness-raising activities of the CEPA. In February 2022, the former Secretary of State for International Trade, my Rt Hon. Friend for Berwick-upon-Tweed, and Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs discussed the importance of trade digitalisation for businesses, particularly SMEs.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Standards

Afzal Khan:

[93634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has made a comparative assessment of variations in the length of waiting lists in (a) county and (b) family courts in each region of England.

Edward Argar:

A comparative assessment of variations in the lengths of waiting lists in the county and family courts in each region of England is not available, however the Ministry of Justice publishes quarterly statistics on civil and family justice on the GOV.UK website. These datasets were most recently updated in September and October 2022: [Civil justice statistics quarterly: April to June 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/civil-justice-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2022) [Family Court Statistics Quarterly: April to June 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/family-court-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2022).

The impact of the pandemic in courts has been felt across all jurisdictions. However, the impact has been uneven across England and Wales, with civil and family court users in some areas experiencing longer waiting times than in others.

We are continually working, in close partnership with the judiciary, to improve the service in the county and family courts. We are replacing inefficient processes with our reformed digital services, using available courtroom capacity and supporting the use of remote hearings (where a judge deems it appropriate) to maximise the number of sitting days utilised in the jurisdiction.

These efforts are beginning to show improvements, for example, in possession cases measures of timeliness to first hearing have improved, with over 90% of courts now offering a first hearing within eight weeks compared to 60% in January.

The MoJ and the judiciary have taken and are taking action to increase judicial capacity across all jurisdictions. This includes a recruitment programme of around 1,000 judges and tribunal members in 2022/23. HMCTS is also working to ensure we have sufficient staffing resource in place to support the number of sitting days utilised across jurisdictions.

■ Criminal Injuries Compensation

Liz Saville Roberts:

[93597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department is taking steps with the (a) Police and (b) Crown Prosecution Service to raise awareness of Criminal Injuries Claims in those eligible to make such claims.

Edward Argar:

Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, victims are entitled to be told about how to claim compensation for any loss, damage or injury caused as a result of crime. Victims injured by violent crime are also entitled to be told by the police how to

apply for compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (the Scheme).

The draft Victims Bill will send a clear signal about what victims can and should expect from the criminal justice system and includes measures to increase oversight of delivery of services to victims by criminal justice agencies including the police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, which administers the Scheme, also provides awareness sessions to stakeholders, including the police, who deliver frontline services to victims of violent crime.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[93598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the two-year time limitation for Criminal Injuries Claims for providing financial redress for victims of historical crimes.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[93599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people that would be eligible to make new Criminal Injuries Claims if the general two-year time limitation for was extended to (a) three, (b) four, (c) five and (d) over five years.

Edward Argar:

The Government is committed to ensuring every victim gets the compensation to which they are entitled, which is part of the wider package of general and specialist support available to victims of crime. The government-funded Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 2012 (the Scheme) exists to compensate for serious physical or psychological injury attributable to being a direct victim of a crime of violence.

Under the 2012 Scheme there is a general time limit of two years from the date of the incident giving rise to an injury to apply for compensation under the Scheme. In the 2012 Scheme we introduced separate provisions for applicants who were aged under 18 years at the time they sustained the injury that is the subject of their claim. In these circumstances, if the incident was reported to the police before the applicant reached 18, an application must be made before their 20th birthday. If the incident was reported after their 18th birthday, an application must be made within two years of the date it was first reported. Additionally, the claims officer must be able to determine the case on the evidence provided without further extensive enquiries. In all cases where a claim is made outside of the applicable time limit they can be considered in exceptional circumstances and where claims officers can determine the case on the evidence provided without further extensive enquiries.

Our recent review of whether the Scheme could be simpler and more accessible for victims of violent crime, considered how the time limits are working. Our 2020 consultation set out our findings that the current rules appeared to allow sufficient opportunity for the majority of victims to make a claim for compensation. The consultation included analysis of a three-year caseload data set which showed that

the proportion of claims refused on the grounds of being “out of time” was small compared to refusals on other grounds, and that the exceptional circumstances discretion was working well. 18% of personal injury cases were submitted outside the two-year time limit, and of these 63% went on to receive an award. Data demonstrated that of all rejected personal injury cases, only 4% (approximately 1,700 cases over the three year period) were rejected for being outside the two-year time limit.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (the Inquiry) published its final report on 20 October 2022. We are considering carefully one of the concluding recommendations to extend the time limit for victims of child sexual abuse to seven years.

Our conclusion to the Scheme review and response to the Inquiry’s report will be shared in due course.

■ Domestic Abuse

Apsana Begum:

[\[92371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the impact of the Defamation Act 2013 on victims of domestic abuse and coercive control.

Edward Argar:

A Post-Legislative Memorandum reviewing the impact of the Defamation Act 2013 was published in October 2019. The broad conclusion is that the Act ensures the right balance in law is achieved; that free speech is not unjustifiably impeded by actual or threatened libel proceedings, while ensuring that people who have been libelled are able to protect their reputation.

The fear of being threatened with libel should never stop anyone from reporting abuse.

■ Legal Aid Scheme: Legal Profession

Afzal Khan:

[\[89901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will take steps to improve the level of retention of legal aid lawyers.

Edward Argar:

Legal aid lawyers play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and are a fundamental part of our justice system.

We have already invested up to £74m in criminal legal aid over the last 4 years. This includes up to £51m for both barristers and solicitors in 2020, and £23m for a reformed Advocates’ Graduated Fee Scheme (AGFS) in 2018.

Following the recommendations of the Criminal Legal Aid Independent Review, we have implemented a 15 per cent fee increase for nearly all criminal legal aid fees worth £63 million annually for solicitors.

Our proposals to increase legal aid fees will put criminal legal aid on a sound footing and ensure there is a sustainable supply of practitioners. With our further proposals we are increasing expected criminal legal aid spend to £1.2 billion per year.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Gatenby Sanderson**

Angela Rayner: [\[93557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 7 November 2022 to Question 77437 on Ministry of Justice: Recruitment, on what date the supplier Gatenby Sanderson was awarded the £52,000 contract for Recruitment for NED's Appointment.

Edward Argar:

We can confirm that a contract for Recruitment for NED's Appointment with Gatenby Sanderson was awarded on 27th June 2022.

■ **Victims' Commissioner: Public Appointments**

Afzal Khan: [\[93633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether there is a timeline for the appointment of a new Victims Commissioner.

Edward Argar:

A recruitment campaign is underway and we expect to identify a new Victims' Commissioner in early 2023.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ **Chinese Embassy**

Mr Virendra Sharma: [\[93492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential security implications of the siting of the Chinese Embassy at Royal Mint Court.

Lucy Frazer:

A planning application for a new Chinese Embassy is currently before the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. As the Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in the planning system, it would not be appropriate to comment on the merits of the proposal in case it were to come before Ministers in the future.

In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

■ Government Departments: Devolution

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[93503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent discussions he has had with the devolved Administrations on data sharing arrangements between government Departments and those administrations.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government aims to improve data sharing and comparability of data across different parts of the United Kingdom and therefore works closely with the UK Statistics Authority to promote efficient data sharing arrangements, in line with the Concordat on Statistics. The Concordat, which was signed in 2016 and refreshed in October 2021 sets out a framework for statistical co-operation between the UK Government and devolved administrations. The UK Statistics Authority regularly meets with the devolved administrations to uphold the Concordat, working together to improve data linking and sharing.

UK Government Departments and devolved administrations also engage on the National Data Strategy, which sets out our ambitions to transform the way data is collected, managed, used and shared across government and across the UK.

■ Parking: Fees and Charges

Sarah Atherton:

[\[89078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when the review of levels of private parking charges and additional fees will be complete.

Dehenna Davison:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [54476](#) on 12th October 2022.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Lisa Nandy:

[\[93530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether the £400m Shared Prosperity Fund funding allocated for 2022-23 has been (a) spent or (b) returned to the Exchequer.

Dehenna Davison:

There has been no change to UKSPF funding.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Endometriosis: Northern Ireland

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[92315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to ensure women in Northern Ireland with suspected or confirmed deep endometriosis

involving the bowel, bladder or ureter are able to attend a BSGE specialist centre in accordance with NICE guidance.

Mr Steve Baker:

The provision of specialist BSGE care in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland Department of Health and a future Northern Ireland Executive. This is one of many examples of how the absence of a functioning Executive could delay action being taken to address pre-existing problems with healthcare in Northern Ireland.

The Government is acutely aware of the broader pressures facing the health service. A programme of reform at the devolved level is needed to tackle long-standing and systemic problems. Consecutive Executive Ministers have failed to adequately address this issue.

In the absence of an Executive, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has introduced a Bill that clarifies the powers for Northern Ireland Departments to maintain delivery of public services but these powers are limited. The Secretary of State has also set a Budget for this financial year. This Budget for Health provides £7.28bn in funding which is an increase of £228m above 2021/22 spending which included significant COVID-19 funding, or £786m if we compare to last year's funding excluding the one-off COVID-19 funding. This will protect spending to address the critical health pressures in Northern Ireland.

The Government's immediate priority remains facilitating the restoration of a fully functioning Executive that can progress long-term solutions to transform healthcare in Northern Ireland.

■ Gynaecology: Northern Ireland

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[92314]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for gynaecological services in Northern Ireland.

Mr Steve Baker:

The Government is acutely aware of the pressures facing the health service and the lengthy waiting times across all services in Northern Ireland, including gynaecological services. A programme of reform at the devolved level is needed to tackle long-standing and systemic problems. Consecutive Executive Ministers have failed to adequately address this issue.

The absence of a functioning Executive is exacerbating severe delays to healthcare reform. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has introduced a Bill that clarifies the powers for Northern Ireland Departments to maintain delivery of public services and has set a Budget for this financial year. This Budget for Health provides £7.28bn in funding which is an increase of £228m above 2021/22 spending which included significant COVID-19 funding, or £786m if we compare to last year's funding excluding the one-off COVID-19 funding. This will protect spending to address the critical health pressures in Northern Ireland.

The Government's immediate priority remains facilitating the restoration of a fully functioning Executive that can progress long-term solutions to transform healthcare in Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT

■ A66

Dr Neil Hudson:

[\[92383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent progress his Department has made on implementing the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine scheme.

Mr Richard Holden:

Good progress has recently been made on the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine scheme.

The planning application for the scheme was accepted by the Planning Inspectorate on 19 July. The examination of the application is due to commence next week and is expected to take six months.

On 13 October National Highways awarded contracts to the four contractors helping to develop the scheme.

■ Avanti West Coast

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[92142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the service provided by Avanti.

Huw Merriman:

Avanti West Coast has started to increase its service levels, targeting additional trains every day where they are most needed and train crew resources allow, but the current service remains insufficient. The issues experienced on Avanti West Coast are exactly why we need to modernise the railways, to ensure passengers get a reliable timetable no matter when they travel and are not relying on drivers working overtime in order to run a full service.

■ Driving Licences: Northern Ireland

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[93512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland on its graduated driving licence pilot scheme.

Mr Richard Holden:

We have not had discussions to date with Northern Ireland on their graduated driving licence schemes but we have asked officials to keep us updated on progress.

■ Electric Vehicles: Excise Duties

Dan Carden: [\[90878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to take steps to incentivise the take up of electric vehicles in the context of changes to Vehicle Excise Duty in the Autumn Statement 2022.

Jesse Norman:

From 2025, electric vehicles will still have preferential first year rates of VED in comparison to the most polluting vehicles, in addition to having preferential rates of company car tax out to April 2028.

The UK has one of the most ambitious programmes of any country in the world to phase out the sale of internal combustion engine cars and vans by 2030. The UK was the first G7 country to make this commitment, demonstrating a real environmental benefit of Brexit.

Amy Callaghan: [\[92352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of introducing Vehicle Excise Duty on the uptake of electric (a) cars, (b) vans and (c) motorcycles.

Jesse Norman:

HMT is responsible for setting tax rates, including vehicle excise duty and company car tax rates, and carry out assessments relating to fiscal measures they take.

From 2025, electric vehicles will still have preferential first year rates of vehicle excise duty in comparison to the most polluting vehicles, in addition to having preferential rates of company car tax out to April 2028. This will continue to support the uptake of all electric vehicles.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Amy Callaghan: [\[92353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to introduce incentives to encourage the uptake of low emission vehicles, in the context of the removal of the Vehicle Excise Duty.

Jesse Norman:

From 2025, electric vehicles will still have preferential first year rates of VED in comparison to the most polluting vehicles, in addition to having preferential rates of company car tax out to April 2028.

■ Railways: Finance

John Redwood: [\[92046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the total amount that the Government will pay in railway subsidies in 2022-3.

Huw Merriman:

The Department's Spending Review settlement and Main Estimate for net spend (subsidy) on rail passenger services in 2022/23 is around £2.7 billion.

■ Roads: Rural Areas

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[93511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Rural Roads Working Group last met; and if he will publish the (a) attendee list, (b) agenda and (c) minutes of that meeting.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Rural Roads Working Group will be part of the forthcoming Road Safety Strategic Framework.

■ Taxis: Licensing

Gill Furniss:

[\[89883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to address cross-border working by private hire vehicles.

Mr Richard Holden:

Taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs) are permitted to undertake pre-booked work outside of the area in which they are licensed. PHVs are subject to a triple licensing lock; the operator fulfilling the request, the driver and vehicle must all be licensed by the same local authority. The Government is aware of the challenges out-of-area working can present to licensing authorities, but also sees the value this system provides in meeting otherwise unmet demand in areas where drivers might not be immediately available.

The Government is responsible for setting the regulatory structure within which local licensing authorities in England license the taxi and private hire vehicle trades. The Department for Transport's Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards recommends enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for taxi and private hire vehicle drivers. All licensing authorities require these checks.

TREASURY

■ Child Care Vouchers: Compensation

Carol Monaghan:

[\[92253\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will ensure that his Department provides compensation for unused Kiddicare vouchers to parents whose children no longer require childcare.

Victoria Atkins:

Childcare vouchers are a contractual arrangement between the parent, employer, and voucher provider. The Government is not party to these arrangements and the

availability of a refund will depend on the precise terms and conditions of the employer's scheme.

While some voucher schemes allow for refunds in certain circumstances, this is not a legal requirement.

Where an employer or provider does offer a refund, any refund is treated as income from employment and subject to deduction of tax and National Insurance contributions in the normal way.

■ Child Care Vouchers: Repayments

Carol Monaghan: [\[89850\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps parents can take to claim a refund for unused Kiddicare vouchers.

Carol Monaghan: [\[89851\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to enable parents to claim a refund for unused Kiddicare vouchers.

Victoria Atkins:

Childcare vouchers are a contractual arrangement between the parent, employer, and voucher provider. The availability of a refund will depend on the precise terms and conditions of the employer's scheme, and is not something the Government is party to.

Parents may request a refund by contacting their employer or childcare voucher provider directly. Where an employer or provider does allow the vouchers to be returned and a refund is offered, the refund is treated as income from employment and subject to deduction of tax and National Insurance contributions in the normal way.

While some voucher schemes allow for refunds in certain circumstances, this is not a legal requirement to do so. If a refund provision is not in the contract, the employer or voucher provider does not legally have to issue a refund.

■ Import Duties

Jonathan Edwards: [\[93505\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department of made of the prevalence of carrier companies making unfair profits through the incorrect application of trade tariff codes on imported goods following the UK's exit from the EU.

Victoria Atkins:

Following the UK's exit from the EU, the Government's priority was to keep goods moving and avoid delays at the border without compromising security.

Compliance with the new customs declaration processes for EU trade has been high and businesses have adjusted well to the new requirements. HMRC is aware there

has been some non-compliance. HMRC and Border Force are working with hauliers, carriers and importers to address this, and take action where appropriate.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Taxation**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[93648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a pay-as-you-drive scheme for vehicle taxation.

James Cartlidge:

The Treasury keeps all taxes, including vehicle taxation, under review. Decisions on taxation are a matter for the Chancellor and are considered as part of the Budget process. Any changes are announced at fiscal events.

■ **Tax Allowances: Disability**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: [\[92309\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the equity of Tax Allowance provisions for (a) blind and (b) deaf people in comparison to other tax taxpayers.

John Glen:

The Blind Person's Allowance provides an extra amount of tax-free allowance for individuals who are registered as blind. The Government announced at Autumn statement 2022 that the Blind Person's Allowance will be uprated by September CPI figure in 2023-24 to £2,870.

The Government also provides support to help disabled people with the additional costs associated with living with a disability via non-means-tested extra-costs disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The Government provides specific support for those with disabilities who are unable to work in the form of incapacity benefits such as new style Employment and Support Allowance (for those who have paid 2-3 years of National Insurance contributions) and through the health component of Universal Credit (which is means-tested).

■ **Treasury: Redundancy Pay**

Fleur Anderson: [\[93662\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much ministerial severance pay has been (a) paid out by his Department and (b) accepted since 1 June 2022.

James Cartlidge:

The Provision of severance payments for Ministers is set out in legislation.

Details of the severance payments made to ministers when leaving office will be published in the HM Treasury Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

■ VAT**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[93471\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will raise the basic VAT taxable turnover threshold.

Victoria Atkins:

To give businesses certainty, it was announced at Autumn Statement that the VAT registration threshold will remain at £85,000 for a further period of two years from 1 April 2024.

The UK has a higher VAT registration threshold than any EU Member State and the second highest in the OECD at £85,000. This keeps the majority of businesses out of VAT altogether.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Conversion Therapy****Alex Cunningham:** [\[93533\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when the Government will publish its response to the consultation on its plan to ban LGBT+ conversion practices.

Stuart Andrew:

We are carefully considering all the responses to the consultation and will respond in due course. In the meantime, we have launched a support service open to all victims or those at risk of conversion practices regardless of their background or circumstances.

■ Equality Act 2010**Mr Virendra Sharma:** [\[93494\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has made an assessment with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of establishing an independent Equality Act regulator.

Stuart Andrew:

My assessment is that such a body already exists. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is the independent public authority which enforces the Equality Act 2010. The EHRC's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 makes clear that acting as an independent, authoritative, agile regulator of equality and human rights is central to its strategy.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme**

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[93540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Access to Work grant cap will be uprated for the 2023-24 financial year.

Tom Pursglove:

A decision on the level of the Access to Work upper limit from April 2023 will be made in due course, taking into consideration information from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, published by the Office for National Statistics on 26 October 2022. The upper limit has been uprated in the April of each year since its introduction in 2015 and since April 2022 has been £65,180.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[93541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average waiting time was for a decision on an Access to Work application in each of the last 12 months.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[93542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average period of time between the approval of an Access to Work application and the payment of Access to Work provision was in each of the last 12 months.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[93543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applicants reporting mental health conditions were waiting for a decision on their Access to Work applications in each of the last 12 months.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[93544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many applicants reporting difficulty in seeing were waiting for a decision on their Access to Work applications in each of the last 12 months.

Tom Pursglove:

Access to Work has had a significant increase in applications over the last year and have recruited new staff to meet the increased demand and reduce the time it takes to make decisions. Customers making new applications where they are starting work within the next 4 weeks, or have a grant coming to an end that requires renewal, are prioritised to ensure customers are able to enter and remain in the labour market. We are also transforming the Access to Work service through increased digitalisation, that will make the service more efficient, will make the application process easier, and improve the time taken from application through to decision.

The data below shows the average clearance times between the initial date of contact (IDOC) and the date cleared.

MONTH	IDOC TO CLEARANCE (DAYS) AACT
Nov-21	32.5
Dec-21	33.8
Jan-22	37.1
Feb-22	40.3
Mar-22	37.7
Apr-22	37.9
May-22	49.1
Jun-22	56.0
Jul-22	59.7
Aug-22	58.6
Sep-22	61.1
Oct-22	63.1

The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency.

The data to produce the following outputs is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

- How many applicants reporting mental health conditions were waiting for a decision on their Access to Work applications in each of the last 12 months.
- The information for the average period of time between the approval of an Access to Work application and the payment of Access to Work provision was in each of the last 12 months.
- How many applicants reporting difficulty in seeing were waiting for a decision on their Access to Work applications in each of the last 12 months

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Redundancy Pay

Fleur Anderson:

[\[93663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much ministerial severance pay has been (a) paid out by his Department and (b) accepted since 1 June 2022.

Mims Davies:

The provision of payments connected to the loss of ministerial office is set out in legislation. Outturn figures will be published in the department's audited annual reports and accounts in due course.

■ Pension Rights: Inflation

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[93504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to protect pension rights accrued prior to the 1995 Pensions Act from the effects of inflation.

Laura Trott:

The Pensions Act 1995 required all defined benefit pension rights accrued from April 1997 to be indexed once the pension is in payment. This provides members with a measure of protection against inflation on the pensions rights they accrue after this date.

Before 1997, only contracted out pension rights, which replace the additional State Pension, were required to be indexed. However, many pension schemes voluntarily provided indexation on pensions accrued before 1997. If scheme rules provide for increases on pensions in payment earned before April 1997, those increases must continue to be paid.

Pensions legislation does not usually apply new provisions retrospectively to rights that have already been accrued. It is generally seen to be unreasonable to add liabilities to pension schemes that could not have been taken into account in the funding assumptions that determined the contributions to be paid at the time.

There are no current plans to change these arrangements.

■ Social Security Benefits

Sir Stephen Timms:

[\[93418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to his written statement of 17 November 2022 on Social Security Update, HCWS374, for what reasons he has set the benefit cap at the new level.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has completed his statutory review of the benefit cap levels and in doing so has considered a wide range evidence and statistics held in the department, and the implications of, and for, other policies and decisions.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Energy and Climate Update

Minister of State (Minister for Energy and Climate) (Graham Stuart):
[\[HCWS387\]](#)

After COP26 we were able to say with credibility that we kept the pulse of 1.5C alive. We welcome the progress made at COP27, but there is no cause for complacency.

We have seen progress since COP26 during our Presidency year and outstanding work is taking place to cement the gains of the Glasgow Climate Pact. A full breakdown of progress has been captured in the [Presidency's Outcomes Publication](#) and I will place a copy in the Libraries of the House.

In the challenging geopolitical context and amidst a global energy crisis, the UK's objective at COP27 was to secure continued delivery of the Glasgow Climate Pact, make further progress to keep 1.5 in reach and support those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pledged at COP27 to speed up the transition to renewables, to create new high-wage jobs, protect UK energy security and deliver on net zero. He also chaired a high-level meeting on forests which built on momentum secured through the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration for Forests and Land Use.

With regard to support for the most vulnerable, the Prime Minister reinforced that the UK is delivering on the commitment of £11.6 billion in international climate finance, and made a number of other financial announcements within this: the tripling of funding for climate adaptation from £500m in 2019 to £1.5bn in 2025; recommitting to spend £1.5bn on forests; £90m for conservation programmes in the Congo Basin; £65m in funding for the Nature, People and Climate Investment Fund; and £65.5m for the Clean Energy Innovation Facility.

In parallel to COP27, at the G20, leaders agreed to implement fully their Glasgow Climate Pact commitments to limit global warming to 1.5C and accelerate coal phase down and the transition to clean energy.

To demonstrate delivery on COP26 commitments, we hosted a series of high level side events at COP27 which helped to drive progress on the key sectoral areas: the Breakthrough Agenda; forests and nature; energy transition; and zero emission vehicles. Events at the UK Pavilion covered a range of topics, including: finance, adaptation, indigenous leadership, youth and education, gender, forests and nature, energy, and sustainable agriculture.

The negotiations were challenging, concluding only in the early hours of Sunday morning. The UK negotiating team played a key role throughout and particularly in the final 24 hours in mobilising countries behind ambition. The deal made significant progress on loss

and damage and the agreement reached to establish new funding arrangements, including a fund, took place against the backdrop of increasing climate impacts globally. Designed and implemented well, this has the potential to increase support for the most vulnerable from a range of sources.

The deal in Egypt also preserves the historic commitments to keep 1.5 alive that countries agreed to last year in the Glasgow Climate Pact. The UK rallied nearly half the Parties to push for further ambition - including on fossil fuels and peaking global emissions before 2025 - which were not taken up by the Presidency but we did secure a reiteration of the commitment made in Glasgow for countries to revisit their NDCs before the end of 2023 to ensure that they are aligned with the Paris Agreement, as the UK has done. Progress was made on the work programmes on mitigation and adaptation agreed in Glasgow, carbon markets, and on the new post 2025 finance goal.

My right hon. Friends the [Foreign Secretary](#), Business Secretary and Environment Secretary also announced a range of investments throughout the summit, including more than £100 million to support developing economies to respond to climate-related disasters and £65 million for the world's first large scale Industry Transition Programme.

Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) were pioneered with UK leadership at COP26. At COP27 a joint statement on the South Africa Investment Plan was published during the World Leaders Summit, while the PM joined other world leaders announcing the [Indonesia JETP](#) at the G20 Summit in Bali.

The Government is grateful to my right hon. Friend Alok Sharma and his team for their service and leadership as COP Presidency over the past two and half years. The UK will continue to deliver net zero in the UK and to support other countries in their own transitions, ensuring we leave no communities behind and keep 1.5C alive. We will use all our levers, including through the G7 and G20, our bilateral partnerships, our climate finance, trade and diplomacy, as well as our deep UK expertise and track record, to uphold the legacy of COP26, and we will continue to work with all countries through to COP28 in the UAE.

JUSTICE

■ Intimate Images Abuse Offences

Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab):

[\[HCWS388\]](#)

I wish to inform the House that the Government intends to legislate to introduce a package of new criminal offences on intimate image abuse when Parliamentary time allows. We also intend, to make some of these changes earlier by way of Government amendments to the Online Safety Bill.

Intimate or sexual images can now easily be taken, copied or shared without consent and used for unacceptable, cruel or malicious reasons. This behaviour can be highly intrusive, humiliating and distressing. It is therefore important that we ensure that our legal framework effectively deals with this behaviour.

The Government intends to bring forward a package of criminal offences based on the recommendations made in the Law Commission's report 'Taking, Making and Sharing of Intimate Images Without Consent', which was published in July 2022. We will create a new 'base' offence of taking or sharing an intimate image without consent, and three further, more serious, offences. Two of these more serious offences will cover instances where the intimate image is taken or shared without consent, and with the intention of obtaining sexual gratification, or of causing humiliation, alarm or distress to the victim. The third more serious offence will target those 'threatening to share' an intimate image. Finally, we intend to introduce a fifth new offence, aimed at prohibiting a person from installing equipment with the intention, or enabling them or another person, to commit the offence of taking an intimate image without consent.

These measures will involve the repeal or amendment of several current offences, and the creation of a new, more coherent package of measures. Whilst we have already created criminal offences to deal with upskirting, revenge porn and breastfeeding voyeurism, this new package of offences will also ensure that we deliver on the PM's pledge to criminalise "downblousing".

These new offences will provide the police with the powers they need to fully investigate this increasingly intrusive and disturbing behaviour; and address mounting public concern around the law's ability to deal effectively with the harms caused by non-consensual taking, making and sharing of intimate images.

In addition to this medium-term plan, we do have the opportunity in the Online Safety Bill, to address some of the current concerns with the criminal law. We will therefore bring forward a Government amendment to the Online Safety Bill during the Lords stages of the Bill to address concerns in relation to the sending of intimate images including addressing matters concerning intent and the type of images the offence will cover. Introducing these specific measures in the Online Safety Bill will ensure that we provide victims with the additional protection they deserve sooner rather than later.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for all the important work that the Law Commission has carried out as part of this review and which has enabled the Government to conclude there is a need to legislate.