Daily Report

Tuesday, 29 November 2022

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 29 November 2022 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 29 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Crime: Victims

Priti Patel: [92192]

To ask the Attorney General, what discussions she has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions on the Crown Prosecution Service making representations on compensation orders in criminal cases for victims of crime.

Michael Tomlinson:

THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS) IS COMMITTED TO DELIVERING JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, AND WHERE APPROPRIATE THIS INCLUDES OBTAINING COMPENSATION ORDERS. SECTION 134 OF THE SENTENCING ACT 2020 SETS OUT THAT COMPENSATION ORDERS ARE AVAILABLE TO THE COURT WHEN AN OFFENDER IS CONVICTED OF AN OFFENCE. HM COURTS AND TRIBUNAL SERVICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF ANY COMPENSATION ORDER MADE. THE CPS HAS PRODUCED PUBLICLY AVAILABLE GUIDANCE WHICH STATES THAT ALL CPS PROSECUTORS SHOULD BE READY TO ASSIST THE COURT TO REACH THE APPROPRIATE DECISION AS TO SENTENCE, WHICH INCLUDES DRAWING THE COURT'S ATTENTION TO ITS OBLIGATION TO CONSIDER COMPENSATION, INVITING THEM TO MAKE SUCH AN ORDER WHERE APPROPRIATE AND PROVIDING INFORMATION IN ORDER TO ASSESS AN APPROPRIATE AWARD. WHERE A CASE RELATES TO ACQUISITIVE CRIME, THE MATTER WILL BE DEALT WITH BY THE PROCEEDS OF CRIME DIVISION WHO WILL SEEK A CONFISCATION ORDER AND, WHERE THERE ARE IDENTIFIABLE VICTIMS, WILL ALSO SEEK A COMPENSATION ORDER. £118M OUT OF £530M RECEIVED IN PAYMENT OF CONFISCATION ORDERS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS HAVE BEEN RETURNED TO VICTIMS BY WAY OF COMPENSATION.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

[Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Sir Stephen Timms: [902480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to establish a garment supply chain adjudicator.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Last year the Government reaffirmed its commitment to continue engaging with the enforcement bodies and industry partners to strengthen our understanding of the garment trade. We will continue to review this issue and consider options to drive up standards.

Dr Kieran Mullan: [902481]

If he will make an assessment of the potential contribution of onshore UK critical mineral supply chains to the levelling up agenda.

George Freeman:

A secure supply of critical minerals is fundamental to supporting almost all other UK manufacturing industries – such as automotive, aerospace, defence, energy and electronics. Without a reliable supply of critical minerals, the health of these industries, and the communities in which they operate would be adversely affected.

The Critical Minerals Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to increase domestic capabilities in critical mineral supply chain, which has the potential to create well-paid jobs and boost productivity, particularly in areas such as Cornwall, Merseyside and Yorkshire.

Mr Virendra Sharma: [902484]

Whether his Department plans to take further steps to help tackle late invoice payments to small businesses.

Kevin Hollinrake:

We are tackling the culture of late payments with measures including Payment Practices Reporting, the Small Business Commissioner and Prompt Payment Code. Government is setting an example: the Cabinet Office Procurement Bill will ensure 30-day payment terms in contracts throughout the public sector supply chain.

Margaret Ferrier: [902485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the Rosebank oil field development in the North Sea on the UK's international climate obligations and commitments.

Graham Stuart:

Supporting domestic oil and gas production is not incompatible with our international climate obligations. Oil field developments under existing licences, including Rosebank, are assessed by the North Sea Transition Authority, who integrate net zero considerations into the development consent process.

Alternative Fuel Payments

Kerry McCarthy: [84825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the £100 Alternative Fuel Payment to support off-gas grid customers in winter 2022-2023.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has doubled support to £200 for alternatively fuelled households, in recognition of the pressures caused by rising fuel costs. The Government is committed to delivering this payment to households as soon as possible this Winter.

The Government will announce further information on the delivery and timing of these payments in due course.

Dave Doogan: [85004]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to issue the £100 Alternative Fuel Payment to households who are not on the mains gas grid.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: The Government has doubled support to £200 for alternatively fuelled households, in recognition of the pressures caused by rising fuel costs. The Government is committed to delivering this payment to households as soon as possible this Winter. The Government will announce further information on the delivery and timing of these payments in due course.

Alternative Fuel Payments: Park Homes

Fay Jones: [92344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how park home residents will receive their Energy Bills Support Scheme-Alternative Fund allowance.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch on 8th November 2022 to Question 78634.

Business: Finance

Esther McVey: [87832]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he will take to take to support remote rural businesses in 2023 to help assist those organisations with financial planning for 2024.

Kevin Hollinrake:

At the Autumn Statement, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £13.6 billion of support for businesses over the next five years, reducing the burden of business rates for SMEs.

The Government is providing a range of support to help small and medium-sized businesses across the UK with rising costs, including those in rural communities. Government has cut fuel duty for 12 months, raised the Employment Allowance to £5,000, and is zero-rating VAT on energy-saving materials.

The 'Help to Grow' schemes help SME businesses learn new skills, reach more customers and boost profits. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provides a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from high energy bills.

Furthermore, the British Business Bank's Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund, Midlands Engine Investment Fund and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Investment Fund all work with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), combined authorities and Growth Hubs, as well as local accountants, fund managers and banks, to provide a mixture of debt and equity capital to SMEs across their entire regions, including in rural locations.

Carbon Emissions: North West

Bill Esterson: [94741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the work of the Net Zero North West local hub through the Local Authority Delivery Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

Assessment of the impacts of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme are made as standard practice and will be published once complete administrative data from the scheme are made available. This will be at least two months after the scheme completes delivery.

■ China Electronics Corporation: Octopus Energy

Siobhain McDonagh:

[86391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, in the context of Octopus Energy's takeover of Bulb, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of Octopus Energy's commercial links with the China Electronics Corporation.

Graham Stuart:

In the context of the sale of Bulb to Octopus Energy, the Government has assessed commercial aspects of Octopus. This review has not identified any areas for concern.

The Government's priority is to ensure continued energy supply to Bulb's customers at the lowest practicable cost.

Climate Change Convention

Rachael Maskell: [92266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what priorities he will set for COP28.

Graham Stuart:

Ahead of COP28, the UK will continue to work with all countries using our levers including the G7 and G20, our bilateral partnerships, climate finance, trade and diplomacy, as well as our track record and legacy of COP26.

The Government will push for emissions peaking before 2025; actively follow up on the phase down of coal and phase out of all fossil fuels; and pursue outcomes from the Global Stocktake that enable us to shift gears on delivering the Paris Agreement goals. The Government will provide support to developing countries and work with partners to shape the design of the funding arrangements for loss and damage.

Climate Change: Research and Technology

Rachael Maskell: [92264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will provide increased funding for (a) scientific research into the climate and (b) investing in new technologies to help reduce climate change.

Graham Stuart:

The Net Zero Strategy committed at least £1.5bn of funding to support net zero innovation between 2022-25. The Department will deliver its share of this through the £1bn Net Zero Innovation Portfolio. Investment in climate science research also remains a priority and the Hadley Centre Climate Programme has received more than £60m of funding in the last spending review for 2022 - 2025.

Companies House: Staff

Seema Malhotra: [93546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many staff worked for Companies House in October 2022.

Kevin Hollinrake:

As of 31st October 2022, Companies House headcount was 1213 staff (1129.63 full time equivalents). These figures exclude all contractors, non-executives and people on loan or secondment.

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Location

Angela Rayner: [95850]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a full breakdown of payments made to officials to relocate from London Government offices to Government offices in Manchester in 2021.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Total Expense claims paid by the Department recorded as Relocation Costs for those relocating from London Government offices to Manchester Government offices in 2021 was £64,103.

District Heating

Ms Harriet Harman: [94671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to Answer of 23 November 2022 to Question 89687 on District Heating, when he expects people on heat networks to receive the benefits of this financial assistance; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that any savings are passed onto the consumer by the administrators of heat networks.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provides a price reduction to eligible Heat Suppliers on non-domestic tariffs. Energy supplies to communal heat networks use commercial contracts. The prices being charged on non-domestic contracts are already being reduced by the Energy Prices Act and accompanying regulations. The EBRS Pass-through Requirement (Heat Suppliers) Regulations 2022 requires eligible heat suppliers to pass on the benefits of the discount in a just and reasonable way. Heat suppliers should start to receive any EBRS discounts for October energy usage in their November bills and must inform their customers within 30 days of themselves receiving the discount. The regulations appoint the Energy Ombudsman to resolve disputes about the pass-through of these discounts in Great Britain.

■ District Heating: Price Caps

Dr Alan Whitehead: [86385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October 2022 to Question 55021, by what mechanism heat network customers will receive support equivalent to the Energy Price Guarantee; and when those support payments will begin.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 17 November 2022]: Heat network customers are benefiting from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. These customers will therefore not receive the Alternative Fuel Payment of £200, which has been designed to support households using fuels such as oil, LPG or coal.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that the EBRS will be reformed from April 2023. The Government will bring forward a route to deliver bespoke support for on heat network consumers from this date.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [86386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October 2022 to Question 55021 on District Heating: Price Caps, whether his Department has established the mechanism they will use to ensure customers on heat networks will receive the £400 payment as part of the Energy Bills Support scheme; and what his expected timetable is for when customers will receive that payment.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 17 November 2022]: Heat network customers with a domestic electricity meter will already be in receipt of the EBSS. The Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount off energy bills for the small percentage of households who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an electricity supplier. Eligibility, timescales and method of delivery will be announced in the coming weeks.

Electricity: Rural Areas

Selaine Saxby: [92385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the resilience of rural electricity networks.

Graham Stuart:

The Government works closely with industry to improve and maintain the resilience of old and new energy infrastructure, networks and assets, to reduce vulnerabilities, and ensure an effective response to actual or potentially disruptive incidents.

For example, the Department published the <u>Storm Arwen Review</u> in June 2022 which includes actions being undertaken to reduce the impact of electricity disruption in rural areas.

Energy Bills Rebate: District Heating

lan Mearns: [84873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish details on the additional £100 Energy Bills Support payment for households who are part of a local domestic heat network.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 16 November 2022]: Heat network customers are benefiting from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. These customers will therefore not receive the Alternative Fuel Payment of £200, which has been designed to support households using fuels such as oil, LPG or coal.

My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has said that the EBRS will be reformed from April 2023. The Government will bring forward a route to deliver bespoke support for on heat network consumers from this date.

Energy Bills Rebate: Meters

Steve McCabe: [93442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number and proportion of households with submeters that are receiving the Energy Bills Support Scheme payment.

Graham Stuart:

The Government does not hold an estimate for households with submeters receiving the Energy Bills Support Scheme payment. Only primary meters are eligible for EBSS, as stated in the guidance: Energy Bills Support Scheme – Guidance for Electricity Suppliers, clause 5.1.

Energy Bills Rebate: Park Homes

Tonia Antoniazzi: [92316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on ensuring those in park homes are able to access the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Tonia Antoniazzi: [92317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on ensuring those who are off grid are able to access the Energy Bills Support Scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Government confirmed that further funding would be available to provide equivalent support of £400 for energy bills for the small percentage of domestic energy consumers not reached by the Energy Bill Support Scheme. This will include those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an energy supplier. The Government has had initial engagement with the Welsh Government on this Alternative Funding and will engage with relevant parties over the coming weeks.

Anne McLaughlin: [94786]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to introduce legislation which requires park home owners in receipt of energy support to pass on savings to residents of those parks.

Graham Stuart:

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide an energy price reduction for eligible non-domestic customers, including park home owners, over the winter. Regulations covering pass-through requirements came into force on 1 November (GB) and 5 November (NI), requiring any park site owner to pass these reductions on to park residents in a just and reasonable way.

In addition, Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount on energy bills for the small percentage of households who are not reached through the main EBSS fund, such as park home residents. The Government will announce more details shortly.

Energy Bills Rebate: Rural Areas

Helen Morgan: [94930]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the (a) mechanism and (b) date by which those in homes off the gas grid will be able to access the support announced by the Chancellor.

Graham Stuart:

The Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) will be delivered via electricity bills, under a similar delivery model to the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Eligible households will

receive payment this winter. Further details on the timing and delivery of these payments will be announced in due course.

Households that are eligible for the payment, but do not receive it directly, because they do not have a relationship with an electricity supplier for example, will receive the £200 via the AFP Alternative Fund which will be provided by a designated body. The Government will confirm details of the AFP Alternative Fund shortly.

■ Energy Charter Treaty

Patrick Grady: [93567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Departments position on the UK's membership of the Energy Charter Treaty of the withdrawal of (a) Germany, (b) France, (c) the Netherlands, (d) Spain, (e) Poland and (f) Luxembourg from that treaty.

Graham Stuart:

The UK is closely monitoring the situation surrounding the Energy Charter Treaty's modernisation process, including the positions taken by other Contracting Parties.

Kenny MacAskill: [95943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the compatibility of the UK's membership of the Energy Charter Treaty with commitments made under the Paris Agreement.

Graham Stuart:

The UK has been an advocate for the Energy Charter Treaty modernisation on the basis that the modernised Treaty would be compatible with the Paris Agreement. The UK is monitoring developments on the modernisation process, including the positions taken by other Contracting Parties.

Energy Company Obligation

Bill Esterson: [94739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of whether the Energy Obligation Company Scheme has met its policy goals as of 23 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The <u>Energy Company Obligation</u> (covering Great Britain) has been one of the Government's key domestic energy efficiency policies, improving 2.4 million homes since it began in 2013. The current iteration of the scheme, ECO4, will last until March 2026 and is focussed on providing support to low-income and vulnerable households living in the least efficient properties. The Government estimates that around 800,000 measures may be installed in around 450,000 households during the course of ECO4.

ECO4 has installed an estimated 37,600 measures in around 20,700 households since it commenced in April 2022. This is reflective of industry's adjustment to the

new scheme's requirements and the Government will monitor this progress. A long-term evaluation of the ECO scheme is underway. The initial findings have been published here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eco-evaluation-wave-1-interim-report-2020 and ECO4 will be subject to an in-depth impact evaluation to assess whether it has met its stated policy goals.

Energy Efficiency Taskforce

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92056]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what stakeholders will be represented on the Energy Efficiency Taskforce.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Autumn Statement 2022, if he will make it his policy to publish the (a) terms of reference, (b) membership and (c) minutes of the Energy Efficiency Taskforce.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92058]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he will take to ensure civil society is represented on the Energy Efficiency Taskforce.

Graham Stuart:

More details on the scope and membership of the Taskforce will be announced in due course.

Darren Jones: [92313]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to establish the Energy Efficiency Taskforce announced in the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022; and which organisations he plans to invite to join that body.

Graham Stuart:

More details on the timing, scope and membership of the Taskforce will be announced in due course.

Alexander Stafford: [92392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Energy Efficiency Taskforce will consider the redeployment of social housing decarbonisation funding.

Alexander Stafford: [92393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether local government representatives will form part of the Energy Efficiency Taskforce.

Alexander Stafford: [92394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that the Energy Efficiency Taskforce takes into account local government input.

Graham Stuart:

The Autumn Statement announced a new national ambition to reduce the UK's final energy consumption from buildings and industry by 15% by 2030 against 2021 levels.

In order to support the delivery of this target, a new Energy Efficiency Taskforce will be established. More details on the scope and membership of the Taskforce will be announced in due course.

Energy Price Guarantee: Personal Records

Chi Onwurah: [90797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November to Question 83815 on Energy Price Guarantee, what electricity and gas meter personal data is collected through the Energy Price Guarantee scheme.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS does not currently collect, hold or process any personal data through the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) scheme. The scope of the data required to support the EPG scheme and how regularly it is collected and processed is still being defined.

■ Energy: Conservation

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to paragraph 5.13 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751 published on 17 November 2022, if he will make it his policy to regulate to (a) tighten the domestic minimum energy efficiency standards and (b) phase out fossil heating systems.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is considering a number of options for increasing energy efficiency standards. For the domestic Private Rented Sector, the Government has consulted on raising the standard to EPC Band C for new tenancies from 1 April 2025, and for all tenancies by 1 April 2028.

The Government is committed to decarbonising heating by 2050, and aims to phase out the sale of new and replacement gas boilers by 2035. The Government will introduce a package of measures that will increase the number of heat pump installations to 600,000 a year by 2028. Heat networks will expand through the Green Heat Networks Fund whilst the feasibility of using hydrogen for heating is assessed.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to help ensure the take-up of voluntary measures to reduce energy demand.

Graham Stuart:

The Government's existing public information campaign, Help for Households, is driving up the public's awareness of all the support available to help them with the

cost of living. The Help for Households website includes simple actions people can take to save money on their energy bills, alongside automatic Government support like the Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bill Support Scheme. The Government is also investing £6.6 billion this Parliament to improve energy efficiency across the country, with much of its support targeting low income and vulnerable households.

Energy: Housing

Charlotte Nichols: [92379]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to reduce the average cost of retro-fitting a household.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is providing support to those on low incomes through our 'Help to Heat' schemes.

The Government is working to reduce the cost of low carbon heating technologies like heat pumps, including through the £60 million Heat Pump Innovation Fund and the £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme.

Launched in 2019, the Whole House Retrofit Cost Reduction Trajectory Competition is a key step in exploring the potential for reductions in domestic retrofit costs. Through the competition, £7.7 million has been awarded to three organisations. The results of the competition are due in the summer of 2023.

Energy: Infrastructure

Dr Alan Whitehead: [94667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to (a) increase grid infrastructure and (b) speed up the planning consent process for energy infrastructure in the context of the Government's renewable energy targets for 2030.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem is responsible for regulating network companies, but the Government engages in and supports their work to increase grid infrastructure by speeding up approvals and bringing forward strategic investment through the price control process.

The Government will produce and publish revised National Policy Statements in due course, bring forward measures to improve the performance of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) planning process and accelerate development consent. The Government will publish a full NSIP Reform Action Plan, as well as consultations on national policy statements and on further regulatory and guidance changes to improve the operation of the system.

Energy: Prices

Henry Smith: [92160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support (a) households and (b) businesses with fuel costs in winter 2022-23.

Graham Stuart:

For households, the Energy Price Guarantee limits the amount that can be charged for gas and electricity and will save a typical British household around £900 this winter. The Energy Bills Support Scheme provides households with a non-repayable £400 discount off energy bills, delivered automatically via electricity suppliers. Support is also available for households using alternative fuels and households not on standard electricity contracts.

For businesses the Energy Bill Relief scheme provides a reduction in energy prices automatically applied to eligible bills. Equivalent support will be provided for non-domestic consumers who use alternative fuels instead of gas. There will be further details to follow as soon as possible.

Mark Menzies: [93508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support households who pay their energy bills through an intermediary during this winter fuel crisis.

Graham Stuart:

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.

Alternative Funding will provide a £400 discount off energy bills for the small percentage of households who are not reached through the main EBSS fund, including those who do not have a direct relationship with an electricity supplier. Further details on eligibility, timescales and method of delivery will be announced shortly.

Patrick Grady: [93568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of decoupling the cost of renewable energy from gas prices.

Graham Stuart:

The Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) is considering how to reduce the role of gas as a price setter for electricity. This includes reforms for bringing forward investment in low carbon generation, leading to less frequent use of gas, as well as options around wholesale market reform.

■ Energy: Profits

Patrick Grady: [95875]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to cap the profits of Distribution Network Operators.

Graham Stuart:

Ofgem, as the independent energy regulator, uses the price control process to set the amount that Network Operators can spend and the returns they can make on investment, in a way that allows the funding needed for a more resilient, low-carbon network while protecting consumers from excessive costs. The Government engages regularly with Ofgem and the network companies throughout the development of the price controls. The next electricity distribution network price control will commence in April 2023, with Final Determinations from Ofgem expected shortly.

■ EU Framework Programme

Fleur Anderson: [92370]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what his planned timetable is for the conclusion of agreements with the EU on the UK's participation in (a) Horizon Europe, (b) Euratom Research and Training Programme, (c) Fusion for Energy and (d) Copernicus.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 24 November 2022]: The Government's policy remains to seek association to EU Programmes as negotiated and agreed in December 2020 and we continue to do everything we can, but we cannot wait much longer. The EU is in breach of the agreement reached under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement for the UK to participate in EU programmes. At the UK-EU Specialised Committee meeting, which marked the end of the consultation period, the UK once again requested that the EU fulfil its obligation to finalise the UK's association. It is regrettable that the EU continues to decline this request. The Government is now considering next steps. Our priority is to support the UK's world leading R&D sector and we have already introduced the Horizon Europe guarantee scheme, announced up to £484m additional funding to be invested in the UK R&D sector and outlined potential options for increasing international research collaborations.

■ Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme

Stephen Crabb: [90772]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the role of the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme funding in developing port infrastructure to support floating offshore wind power.

Graham Stuart:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues on several issues, including the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme.

Stephen Crabb: [90773]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to announce the allocation of Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme funding to support the development of floating offshore wind power.

Graham Stuart:

The Government understands the importance of ports for the development of floating offshore wind to support the opportunities that this new industry offers the UK. The Government is engaging with stakeholders and analysing feedback following the launch of the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme Request for Information earlier this year, and the next steps on the Scheme will be set out soon.

Stephen Kinnock: [90824]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the £160 million funding for Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme will be maintained.

Graham Stuart:

The Government understands the importance of ports for the development of floating offshore wind to support the opportunities that this new industry offers the UK. The Government is engaging with stakeholders and analysing feedback following the launch of the Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Scheme Request for Information earlier this year, and the next steps on the Scheme will be set out soon.

■ Fuel Oil: Business

Priti Patel: [92195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to make available financial support for businesses using heating oil.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is in discussions with electricity suppliers and delivery bodies and will set out the timings for payments as soon as possible.

Fuel Poverty

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the potential number of households in fuel poverty after April 2023.

Graham Stuart:

The latest projections for fuel poverty in England in 2022 can be found on GOV.UK here: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics#2020-statistics.

An updated projection of the number of households in fuel poverty for 2022 and 2023 will be produced in the 2023 annual fuel poverty statistics.

■ Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [94740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes have been retrofitted as a result of the Local Authority Delivery Scheme in Sefton Central constituency.

Graham Stuart:

The Government estimates that 54 homes have been retrofitted in Sefton Central, under the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) Schemes. This includes 28 homes through LAD Phase 2, 22 through LAD Phase 3, and 4 through HUG Phase 1. More information on these schemes is available here.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme

Bill Esterson: [95831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the average amount was given to homeowners who had successful applications to the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme.

Graham Stuart:

The Green Homes Grant Voucher (GHGV) scheme launched in September 2020, to help householders and landlords with the cost of installing energy efficient improvements in their home.

There were 113,700 household applications associated to 169,400 vouchers. For all measures installed, of which there were 49,400, the average Government contribution was £4,710. The average Government contribution was £6,200 for low income households where higher funding was available.

■ Green Homes Grant Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [95827]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes were retrofitted as a result of the Green Homes Grant in Sefton Central constituency, as of 24 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

As of 24 November 2022, 134 Homes have been retrofitted in Sefton Central under the Green Homes Grant Voucher (GHGV), Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) Schemes.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Research

Rachael Maskell: [92263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps to support scientific research into ways to reduce methane emissions.

Graham Stuart:

The Department is undertaking research and working with partner organisations including the Met Office and National Physical Laboratory, to understand sources of methane emissions in the UK. The Department supports research into the restoration of UK wetlands, which if done appropriately, can avoid methane emissions. The Department also supports a wide range of innovation projects that look at alternatives to the use of methane as a fuel, including projects which trial the use of hydrogen.

■ Housing: Insulation

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help increase home insulation by 2025.

Graham Stuart:

The Government is investing over £6.6 billion over this Parliament to help decarbonise homes and buildings, including insulation, and an additional £6 billion will be made available from 2025-2028.

The Government has committed to a]-year, £4 billion extension and expansion of ECO with ECO4 to accelerate its efforts to improve homes to meet fuel poverty targets. The Government has also announced a further £1 billion extension of the scheme through ECO+ to start in Spring 2023.

The Government has also launched a digitally led service 'find ways to save energy in your home'. The site provides tailored guidance to help consumers make their homes greener and cheaper to run.

Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [90765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when plans to respond to the letter of 13 September 2022 from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA60601 relating to the rising prices of oil, liquid petroleum gas and solid fuel.

Rosie Cooper: [90770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans respond to the letter of 3 October 2022 from the Hon. Member for West Lancashire, reference ZA60665, relating to the cost of home heating oil.

Graham Stuart:

I wrote to the honourable Member on 21 November in response to the letters from 13 September and 3 October about rising fuel costs.

National Grid: Seas and Oceans

Priti Patel: [92194]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits providing support for an offshore energy grid rather than the new overhead powerlines and pylons proposed as part of the East Anglia Green Energy Enablement project.

Graham Stuart:

Private network operators, in this case National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), are responsible for delivering network infrastructure necessary to meet consumer needs. This includes identifying preferred options for the infrastructure, considering a range of factors.

In the case of East Anglia Green, NGET recently published a letter to MPs outlining the total estimated lifetime costs of the onshore route, costing £1,136m, and the equivalent offshore option, costing £7,332m. Given the Secretary of State's role in the consenting process for nationally significant infrastructure, no assessment has been made by the Department which would prejudice the outcome of the independent planning processes.

Oil: Russia

Dr Matthew Offord: [92165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether any (a) oil and (b) oil-based products that originated from Russia have been imported into the UK since the implementation of sanctions.

Graham Stuart:

On 8 March 2022, the UK announced it would ban the import of all Russian oil and oil products by the end of 2022. Legislation was passed on 3 November to implement the ban which will come into effect from 5 December. A parallel Maritime Services ban will apply from 5 December for crude oil and 5 February for refined oil products. Since the announcement of the ban, the industry has been self-sanctioning to move away from Russian oil and products.

Provisional data shows in the three months to September 2022, the UK imported 0.1 per cent of gross oil supply (production + imports) from Russia, down from 4.4% in the same period in 2021. Of these imports all were products, the UK did not import crude oil from Russia in the three months to September 2022.

Source: <u>Energy Trends</u>.

■ Park Homes: Energy Bills Rebate

Sir Christopher Chope:

[94677]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November to Question 78634, when he will make an announcement in relation to eligibility, time scales and method of delivery.

Graham Stuart:

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 8th November 2022 to Question 78634.

The Department will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Postal Services: Fees and Charges

Catherine West: [92302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Ofcom's Residential Postal Tracker Q3 2021 - Q2 2022 published September 2022, what assessment he has made of that report's findings that 25 per cent of consumers have cut back on sending post to be able to afford essentials; and whether he has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of the price of sending post.

Kevin Hollinrake:

As a private business, Royal Mail's management sets the prices for its services. The Government does not have a role in Royal Mail's commercial decisions.

In setting prices Royal Mail must observe the regulatory framework set by Ofcom, the independent regulator. This framework imposes price caps, 'safeguard caps', on certain second-class products to ensure a basic universal service is available to all at affordable prices and users of postal services, especially vulnerable consumers, are protected from on-going price rises.

Ofcom will include consideration of the findings of its Residential Postal Tracker Q3 2021 - Q2 2022 in its upcoming review of safeguard caps including a consultation and statement during 2023/24.

Postal Services: Standards

Catherine West: [92300]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has had recent discussions with Royal Mail on Saturday letter deliveries.

Kevin Hollinrake:

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

The Government's objective continues to be ensuring the provision of a sustainable, accessible, and affordable universal postal service. The Government has no current plans to change the statutory minimum requirements of the universal postal service which are set out in the Postal Services Act 2011.

Catherine West: [92301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the 4-week suspension of Royal Mail's quality of service targets over Christmas 2022.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Royal Mail's quality of service targets for the delivery of universal postal services are set by Ofcom under its regulatory framework which includes an exemption from meeting performance targets during the Christmas period (defined as the first Monday of December until the first working day after the following New Year public holiday). It requires Royal Mail to notify Ofcom and the consumer advocacy bodies and publish, no later than two months from the end of each Christmas period, its performance during that period.

In its recent review of postal regulation, Ofcom decided to retain the exemption as it considered that its current approach remained appropriate.

Power Failures: Medical Treatments

Mrs Pauline Latham: [92173]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department is taking steps with Cabinet colleagues to provide (a) support and (b) advice to people who are medically dependant on refrigerated medicines in the event of power cuts in winter 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Department of Health and Social Care is responsible for working with the nation's health and social care sectors to support individuals with electricity dependent medical equipment at home, including those who need to use medical equipment that requires a power supply.

The UK has a secure and diverse energy system. The Government is confident in its plan to protect households and businesses in the full range of scenarios this winter, in light of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. BEIS continues to work closely with industry and across Government to mitigate the impacts associated with the upcoming winter.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [95829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes were retrofitted as a result of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Demonstrator in Sefton Central constituency, as of 24 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme does not provide funding to retrofit homes. The scheme provides grants for public sector bodies to fund heat decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures in public sector buildings such as hospitals and schools.

Rented Housing: Energy

Tim Loughton: [92067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish how households who are not eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme because they pay for their energy as part of their rent or service charge or are on alternative fuel arrangements will receive the equivalent support.

Graham Stuart:

Customers who have a direct domestic electricity supply with a licensed electricity supplier are eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS). The Government has legislated to ensure landlords pass through support provided by EBSS to households paying for energy through a rent or service charge.

Under Ofgem's Maximum Resale Price rules, landlords with a domestic contract with an energy supplier are required not to charge tenants more than they have paid suppliers for the energy.

EBSS Alternative Funding will provide equivalent support for households who will not be reached through EBSS. Eligibility, timescales and delivery method will be announced shortly.

Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah: [92204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Written Statement of 21 November 2022, HCWS 376 on Programmes: Announcement of £484 million immediate investment for the UK R&D and fusion sectors, which body will decide (a) eligibly for and (b) which organisations will receive that funding.

George Freeman:

[Holding answer 24 November 2022]: As announced on 21 st November, £484 million in targeted investment will provide immediate funding to the UK R&D sector whilst UK association to European Research Programs continues to be blocked. The Government's preference remains association to Horizon Europe and we continue to do everything we can to achieve this, but we cannot stand by and allow UK research to suffer.

The package aims to target support at universities and research organisations affected by the EU's continued refusal to finalise the UK's association to EU programmes. All aspects of the programme will be delivered by existing trusted and experienced UK delivery partners, such as UKRI who are experienced at delivering R&D funding at scale.

Shipping: Minimum Wage

Angela Rayner: [90817]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport on the potential

impact of the proposals in the Seafarers Wages Bill on the enforcement of the national minimum wage law by HMRC in the maritime sector.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Officials from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Low Pay Commission (LPC) speak to a wide range of stakeholders in relation to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and its enforcement.

Almost all workers in the UK are entitled to be paid at least the NMW. This includes seafarers who ordinarily work within the UK and its territorial waters. HMRC takes a risk-based approach to enforcement, which means they can flex their resources to tackle an emerging threat or issue, including for seafarers working in the shipping industry.

HMRC will continue to enforce the NMW with this approach.

Sizewell C Power Station

Dan Carden: [90876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he will announce the investment decision on Sizewell C.

Graham Stuart:

As announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the Autumn Statement on 17th November, the Government intends to proceed with developing a new nuclear power plant at Sizewell C, backing the project with £700 million.

The Government aims to reach a conclusion on negotiations this month, subject to final approvals for the investment. Further details will be announced in due course.

Skilled Workers: Vacancies

Alexander Stafford: [92386]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of local skills shortages on achieving net zero targets.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS is working with the Department for Education and local partners to ensure green skills are considered through Local Skills Improvement Plans. The Secretary of State for Education may only approve a plan, if satisfied that net zero targets, adaptation to climate change, and other environmental goals, have been considered. To build its understanding of green skills strengths and needs, the Government has reviewed Local Skills Reports across England and is working with the Green Jobs Delivery Group to explore how central Government, local Government and businesses, can further support local areas to deliver a successful labour market transition to net zero.

Small Businesses: Billing

Seema Malhotra: [93545]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has had recent discussions with relevant stakeholders on tackling late invoice payments to small and medium sized enterprises.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Government recognises the impact late invoice payments have on small and medium businesses and engages with a range of businesses to understand these challenges as well as explore ways to mitigate them.

We are tackling the culture of late payments, which is still affecting too many small businesses, through a range of measures, including the Small Business Commissioner, Payment Practices Reporting and Prompt Payment Code. The Code was last reviewed and changes made in 2021, we will keep these measures under review and bring forward further changes where necessary.

Small Businesses: North East Hampshire

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

92285

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support SMEs in North East Hampshire.

Kevin Hollinrake:

Businesses in North East Hampshire will have benefitted from a range of Government measures, including reversal of the National Insurance rise, which will save SMEs approximately £4,200 on average, cut to fuel duty for 12 months and the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which will protect small businesses from high energy costs over the winter. Furthermore, we have raised the Employment Allowance to £5,000 and are freezing the business rates multiplier for another year to protect businesses from rising inflation, worth £9.3 billion over the next 5 years.

In addition, finance is available to SMEs across the UK through the Recovery Loan Scheme, and the Start Up Ioan scheme has provided 84 SMEs in North East Hampshire with Ioans to the value of £926,620 as of October 2022.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund: Sefton Central

Bill Esterson: [90785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an estimate of the number of homes that have been retrofitted through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in Sefton Central constituency since the introduction of that fund.

Bill Esterson: [90789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many successful projects have been carried out through the Government's Social Decarbonization Fund in Sefton Central constituency as of 18 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

[Holding answer 23 November 2022]: Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 awarded around £179m of grant funding, delivering from 2022 into 2023, of which £11m was awarded to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority consortium, including housing associations in Sefton, to retrofit around 1,250 homes. The SHDF Wave 2.1 competition, which closed on 18th November 2022, will allocate up to £800m of grant funding, with successful projects likely to be notified in March 2023.

Bill Esterson: [95828]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many homes were retrofitted as a result of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator in Sefton Central constituency, as of 24 November 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period. The 2020 Summer Economic Update announced the SHDF Demonstrator project, launched in 2020, which awarded around £62m of grant funding in 2021 to social landlords across England and Scotland to test innovative approaches to retrofitting. The SHDF Demonstrator did not retrofit any social homes in the Sefton Central constituency.

Social Rented Housing: Energy

Alexander Stafford: [92390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the report by UK100, entitled End the wait, Insulate, Social housing energy efficiency and the energy crisis, published on 16 November 2022, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of that report.

Graham Stuart:

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social homes. Grant funding allocated to SHDF has totalled over £1bn.

In the Autumn Statement the Government announced £6 billion of new Government funding that will be made available from 2025 to 2028 for energy efficiency. The design of future waves of the SHDF will consider all relevant evidence to ensure effective delivery.

Alexander Stafford: [92391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of redeploying existing social housing energy efficiency funding.

Graham Stuart:

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of social homes, reducing fuel bills and carbon emissions.

The total committed grant funding for the SHDF and associated Demonstrator to date is just over £1bn. Due to demand, the level of grant funding awarded for previous competitions exceeded the initial committed amounts of£50m for the SHDF Demonstrator and £160m for Wave 1, with around £62m and around £179m of grant funding awarded respectively. The recent Wave 2.1 competition will allocate up to £800m of grant funding.

■ Tidal Power: Finance

Virginia Crosbie: [94922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he will include ringfenced tidal energy in the upcoming AR5 contracts for difference auction.

Graham Stuart:

The Department is currently developing Allocation Round (AR) 5 auction parameters for all technologies, including for tidal stream, taking into account evidence from stakeholders. Full parameters will be published in the Budget Notice in March 2023.

Warm Home Discount Scheme: Disability Living Allowance

Grahame Morris: [94734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons the Government changed the Warm Home Discount eligibility criteria to exclude 290,000 disability benefit claimants.

Graham Stuart:

The Government has expanded and reformed the Warm Home Discount scheme in England and Wales to target fuel poverty, provide most rebates automatically and standardise the eligibility across energy suppliers.

Households in receipt of means-tested benefits with high energy costs based on certain characteristics of their property are eligible for the rebate. Around 62% of Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance recipients receive a means-tested benefit; those with high energy costs are eligible.

As a result of expanding and reforming the scheme 160,000 more households where a person has a disability or long-term illness will receive a rebate.

Wind Power: Research

Rachael Maskell: [92262]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to invest more funding into the research and development of onshore wind power.

Graham Stuart:

Onshore wind is an important part of the energy mix, accounting for around a quarter of installed renewable generation in the UK and the Government will continue to support innovation programmes in wind technology. This includes programmes exploring new blade technologies, resolutions to wind turbine interference with radar systems, and digital approaches to operation and maintenance totalling around £40 million of investment.

Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Dr Alan Whitehead: [92064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of proposed fast-track planning for offshore wind on the marine environment.

Graham Stuart:

The Fast Track process will reduce formal consenting times for high quality offshore wind farm development consent order applications from 17-months to 12-months. In the British Energy Security Strategy the Government strengthened the National Policy Statements and implemented a new Offshore Wind Environmental Improvement Package, which introduces strategic compensation, a Marine Recovery Fund and a more strategic approach to Habitats Regulation Assessments. This will allow the UK to accelerate offshore wind deployment needed to meet our 50GW by 2030 ambition, while maintaining protection and improving the natural environment.

Working Hours: Conditions of Employment

Peter Dowd: [94781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to provide additional statutory protections for night shift workers, in the context of the potential health risks associated with night shift work.

Kevin Hollinrake:

The Working Time Regulations provide extensive 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.

CABINET OFFICE

Civil Servants

Jessica Morden: [94720]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions he has had with representatives of civil service staff networks on the government reform strategy.

Jeremy Quin:

I have not yet met with civil service staff networks, but I look forward to doing so.

This government is committed to working closely with our brilliant civil servants to ensure we deliver for the public. 14,000 civil servants responded to a 2020 survey that helped inform the Declaration on Government Reform and new vision for A Modern Civil Service. Since then, a network of Reform Champions from across grades, professions and locations have been regularly giving their views on our plans for reform and helping to make change happen where they work.

■ Civil Servants: Trade Unions

Priti Patel: [92191]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants are entitled to leave for (a) trade union and (b) activities; what assessment he has made of the total value of facilities provided to trade unions; and what estimate he has made of the total cost to the public purse of facility time.

Jeremy Quin:

There are 4,427 Trade Union representatives across the civil service. Trade union representatives have a statutory right to reasonable unpaid time off to carry out trade union activities. Facility time in the Civil Service as of the most recently reported annual data cost approximately £10 million.

Dominic Raab

Angela Rayner: [92230]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department received any complaints regarding the former Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union's conduct between July and November 2018.

Jeremy Quin:

The Prime Minister has appointed Adam Tolley KC to conduct an independent investigation into formal complaints which have been made about the conduct of the Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, the Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice.

The Terms of Reference for the investigation have been published on gov.uk. [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terms-of-reference-investigation-into-formal-complaints-formal-complaints-about-the-conduct-of-the-deputy-prime-minister-html]

Angela Rayner: [95851]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants have been assigned to work on the investigation into the conduct of the Deputy Prime Minister as of 24 November 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

As set out in the published Terms of Reference, the investigation will be undertaken by Adam Tolley KC, with support from officials in the Cabinet Office.

Those officials will work under the direction of the investigator and in line with the Civil Service Code.

The number of officials assigned to the investigation at any one time will vary. The investigation will be provided with the necessary resources to be carried out in line with the Terms of Reference.

Fraud

Angela Rayner: [92227]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent discussions he has with the Public Sector Fraud Authority on protecting the public purse by reducing fraud.

Jeremy Quin:

I had an introductory meeting with the Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) on 31 October. We discussed how the PSFA is providing expert support to departments and public bodies about the fraud risks and threats they face, and its progress towards delivering £180m of identified fraud benefits within its first year.

Angela Rayner: [92233]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much of the Public Sector Fraud Authority target of identified fraud benefits has been recovered as of 18 November 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

The £180m target for the PSFA in 2022/23 includes recovered fraud and fraud prevented by early action. Therefore, all fraud benefits are required to go through a multi stage review process and also be independently audited. Until this audit process has been completed, we are unable to report progress against the target. However, early indications are that we are on track to meet the target.

Future of Work Review

Peter Dowd: [94780]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government plans to take in response to the Future of Work Review, published on 1 September 2022.

Jeremy Quin:

On 12 May, the former Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, asked Matt Warman MP to lead a review into how the government can best support a thriving

future UK labour market. Matt Warman MP's response was published on <u>GOV.UK</u> on 1 September 2022.

In line with departmental responsibilities, this work is being followed up across government through collaboration between departments including the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Education.

■ Government Communication Service

Fleur Anderson: [94881]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister in his Department is responsible for the Government Communications Service.

Jeremy Quin:

The Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon Jeremy Quin MP, is responsible for the Government Communications Service, supported by Parliamentary Secretary Alex Burghart MP.

■ Government Property Agency

Fleur Anderson: [94878]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Minister in his Department is responsible for the Government Property Agency.

Jeremy Quin:

The Minister for the Cabinet Office, Rt Hon Jeremy Quin MP, is responsible for the Government Property Agency, supported by Parliamentary Secretary Alex Burghart MP.

■ Government Property Agency: Contracts

Chris Stephens: [R] [94791]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government Property Agency's new Facilities Management contracts under its Workplace Transformation Programme will be let; and when the new companies will start to provide the contracted services.

Jeremy Quin:

The GPA's Workplace Services Transformation Programme (WSTP) continues to progress the new Facilities Management contracts, with all Tender processes now complete and bid responses received across all Lots of the procurement exercise. There will now follow a due diligence process of evaluating the bids received on Quality and Price. The GPA remains on track to let the new contracts from April 2023, with the mobilisation of the new contractors taking up to six months to complete. A proposed final hand-over date is scheduled for October 2023.

Ministers: Email

Angela Rayner: [95849]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Pursuant to the Answer to the answer of 31 October 2022 to Question 74642 on Electronic Messaging, when his Department plans to publish new guidance on the use of personal email addresses by Ministers.

Jeremy Quin:

The Cabinet Office intends to issue guidance to departments on the use of non-corporate communications channels early in 2023. This will replace the guidance on the use of private email that was issued in 2013.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions: Inflation John Healey: [93461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to parliamentary question 89733 on Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions: Inflation, how much and by what proportion his Department increased payments under the (a) Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and (b) War Pensions Scheme, in each financial year since 2009-10.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The table below details the percentage increase in rates payable under both the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions Scheme since Financial Year(FY) 2009-10. From 2011-12 the inflation index changed from RPI to CPI.

FY	% INCREASE	INFLATION INDEX
2009-10	5.0%	RPI
2010-11	0.0%	RPI
2011-12	3.1%	CPI
2012-13	5.2%	CPI
2013-14	2.2%	CPI
2014-15	2.7%	CPI
2015-16	1.2%	CPI
2016-17	0.0%	CPI
2017-18	1.0%	CPI
2018-19	3.0%	CPI

FY	% INCREASE	INFLATION INDEX	
2019-20	2.4%	CPI	
2020-21	1.7%	CPI	
2021-22	0.5%	CPI	
2022-23	10.1%	CPI	

Armed Forces: Health

John Healey: [90747]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many and what percentage of Armed Forces personnel were classed as medically (a) non deployable and (b) limited deployable, in each year since 2010.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The following table provides the number and percentages of UK Armed Forces personnel with a Medical Deployability Standard of Medically Limited Deployable (MLD) and Medically Non Deployable (MND), as at 1 April of each year from 2010 to 2022.

DATE	MLD PERSONNE	L	MND PERSONNEL		
	Number	%	Number	%	
1 April 2010	18,101	10.2%	13,615	7.7%	
1 April 2011	18,828	10.6%	13,800	7.8%	
1 April 2012	17,666	10.4%	14,211	8.4%	
1 April 2013	15,464	9.6%	14,352	8.9%	
1 April 2014	13,811	9.2%	14,396	9.5%	
1 April 2015	13,401	9.3%	14,547	10.1%	
1 April 2016	13,551	9.6%	14,822	10.6%	
1 April 2017	13,860	10.0%	13,916	10.0%	
1 April 2018	13,989	10.2%	12,990	9.5%	
1 April 2019	14,248	10.6%	13,046	9.7%	
1 April 2020	14,023	10.6%	13,272	10.0%	
1 April 2021	13,732	10.1%	12,801	9.4%	

DATE	MLD PERSONNEL		MND PERSON	MND PERSONNEL	
1 April 2022	14,152	10.3%	14,763	10.8%	

The figures provided are for full time trained (Royal Navy and RAF), trade trained (Army) and serving against requirement personnel in service. This includes Reserve Forces personnel filling Regular posts whilst serving on Full Time Reserve Service. The figures do not include other Reserve, civilian, foreign service or non-UK military personnel.

Armed Forces: Housing

John Healey: [92099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average response time is to complaints from service families about the heating and hot water in service accommodation.

John Healey: [92100]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average response time is to complaints from service families about repairs to their service accommodation.

John Healey: [92101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average response time is to complaints from service families about missed maintenance appointments for their service accommodation.

John Healey: [92109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many complaints Pinnacle has received about (a) heating and (b) hot water since June 2022.

John Healey: [92110]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service family accommodation properties are awaiting repairs to their boilers.

John Healey: [92111]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many boilers in service family accommodation properties have been (a) repaired and (b) replaced in each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

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

John Healey: [92102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many maintenance appointments in service family accommodation have been missed since June 2022.

Alex Chalk:

Between 1 June and 31 October 2022, there were 5,007 confirmed missed maintenance appointments in Service Family Accommodation. 2,643 of these were in June as a result of a single system integration issue which was resolved within a matter of weeks. For context, during this period, there were a total of 93,181 reactive maintenance appointments booked; missed appointments were 5.4% of this total and 2.8% attributed to the month of June.

John Healey: [92103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service families have been moved from service accommodation as a result of an absence of heating or hot water in each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 27 October 2022, to Question 66896.

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces: Housing [UIN 66896.docx]

John Healey: [92106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service family accommodation properties have been without (a) heating and (b) hot water for longer than 24 hours in 2022.

Alex Chalk:

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

No home should be left without heating or hot water for more than 24 hours. Alternative forms of heating and sources of hot water, or alternative accommodation should be provided. If the family declined the offer of a hotel, the use of bathing facilities in a welfare house should be provided.

Army

Hywel Williams: [94700]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average career length is for an infantry soldier who joins aged (a) under 18 and (b) 18 or above, including time spent in training.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The average career length on outflow for Trade Trained Regular Army infantry soldiers who join aged 18 and under is nine years. For those who join aged 18 and above, the average career length is seven years. These figures have been rounded to the nearest completed year and are subject to available data.

Army: Recruitment

Hywel Williams: [94699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many infantry enlistees were (a) aged 16, (b) aged 17, and (ci) aged 18 or above, between 2001 and 2020, and how many individuals joined the infantry as officer cadets over the period.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The data requested by the hon. Member can be found below:

AGE OF INFANTRY ENLISTEE*	INFANTRY ENLISTEE FIGURES	
16	13,035	
17	12,670	
18+	42,686	
Total	68,391	

^{*}Figures relate to the Regular Army

2,634 Officer Cadets joined the infantry during this time period. Due to how the data was captured historically, data from the years 2005-06 and 2006-07 is not held centrally. Therefore, the data above is comprised of years 2001-2005 and 2007-2020.

China: Armed Forces

John Healey: [89726]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to Answer of 15 November to Question 66885, how many individuals has the Government been provided information by NATO and Five Eyes allies on their work to train Chinese Armed Forces personnel, since 2015.

James Heappey:

It is not Ministry of Defence policy to divulge the details of intelligence shared to us by our allies. As previously announced, we understand up to 30 UK former serving pilots are believed to be currently providing training to Chinese Armed Forces Personnel.

■ Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts

Mr Kevan Jones: [94706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether quality assurance testing for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract will be undertaken by UK officials in Spain before blocks are transferred to the UK.

Alex Chalk:

There are quality assurance processes which apply to the whole manufacture process, regardless of the location of manufacture.

Mr Kevan Jones: [94707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any advance payments have been made to (a) Navantia UK, (b) Harland & Wolff and (c) BMT since the preferred bidder announcement for the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract.

Alex Chalk:

No advance payments have been made to any member of Team Resolute since it was announced as the preferred bidder in the Fleet Solid Support ship competition.

Mr Kevan Jones: [94716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence Spokesperson's comments on 22 November 2022, which vital skills and technology transfer will be transferred to the UK as a result of the Fleet Solid Support Ship contract.

Alex Chalk:

The transfer of technology and skills from Navantia to the UK shipbuilding industry that the Fleet Solid Support ship programme will facilitate, includes provision for a team of Spanish shipbuilding experts to be resident within Harland & Wolff (H&W) to upskill local staff to deliver the construction in the UK and ensure build productivity and quality levels are met. A 'Train the Trainer' methodology will be used, which will allow for skills transfer across a number of shipbuilding trades.

Through the contract, Navantia will share its expertise in build processes and the use of modern technology, which will be shared with UK partners. This includes investments in software complementing the recapitalisation investment in facilities, plant and machinery. This will result in significant productivity improvements, and the upskilling of H&W's UK workforce.

Mr Kevan Jones: [95799]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 24 November 2022 to Question 89758 on Fleet Solid Support Ships: Contracts, whether mechanisms exist to hold the prime contractor to account for delivery of UK content.

Alex Chalk:

The prime contractor will hold the Fleet Solid Support ship manufacture contract on behalf of Team Resolute. As with any Government contract, mechanisms exist to hold the contractor to account for delivery of all their contractual obligations.

France: Armed Forces

Mr Kevan Jones: [90760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which units from all branches of the Armed Forces will participate in France's Exercise Hermex-Orion in 2023.

James Heappey:

The 2 Royal Gurkha Rifles, 12th Armoured Brigade Combat Team and 3 Rifles will be participating in Ex Hermex-Orion in 2023.

The Royal Navy will accompany with a Type 45 Destroyer for the first phase of the Exercise.

There are no current plans for the RAF to participate, however planning for the exercise is ongoing.

Julian Assange

Kenny MacAskill: [89039]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether anyone employed by his Department were involved in Operation Pelican.

James Heappey:

No individuals employed by the Ministry of Defence were involved in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) funded effort to remove Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

Military Aircraft

John Healey: [90736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total tonnage flown by a) C-130-J b) C17 and c) A400M fleets was in each of the last five years.

John Healey: [90737]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many passengers were flown by a) C-130-J b) C17 and c) A400M fleets in each of the last five years.

Alex Chalk:

There is no requirement to record annual totals of passengers or freight carried by these fleets on global and intra-theatre air mobility missions and they are not held centrally. We do hold some annual statistics for the proportion of freight and passengers handled through the RAF Brize Norton Passenger terminal and air cargo handling facility. This is shown in the following tables.

RAF Brize Norton cargo handling facility 1 November 2021-21 November 2022

		FREIGHT IN -	
	BAGS IN - 97,410KG	796,400KG OUT –	MAIL IN – 11,480KG
ATLAS A400M	OUT – 123,220KG	1,146,590KG	OUT – 23,470KG
C-17A	Bags IN – 83,000KG OUT – 85,360KG	Freight IN – 2,047,490KG OUT – 4,214,700KG	Mail IN – 6,100KG OUT – 25,880KG
Voyager	Bags IN – 1,702,050KG OUT – 2,006,340KG	Freight IN – 743,840KG OUT – 1,072,490KG	Mail IN – 71,520KG OUT – 139,680KG
C-130J Hercules	Bags IN – 14,420KG	Freight IN –	Mail IN – 45KG OUT –

		FREIGHT IN –	
	BAGS IN - 97,410KG	796,400KG OUT –	Mail IN – 11,480KG
ATLAS A400M	OUT – 123,220KG	1,146,590KG	OUT – 23,470KG
	OUT – 11,890KG	161,700KG OUT – 227,210KG	440KG

RAF Brize Norton Passenger Terminal – All aircraft types

YEAR	PASSENGERS OUT	PASSENGERS IN
2019	61,048	57,457
2020	40,396	41,239
2021	38,641	30,797

Military Aircraft: Military Exercises and Training

John Healey: [90735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many hours for a) training and b) operations and exercises have been flown by I) C130-J II) C17 and III) A400m aircraft in each of the last five years.

James Heappey:

The hours flown by each fleet on operations and all other Defence Support and Training tasks is contained in the table below.

Annual Hours flown

						FY2022/23	
		FY2018/19 FY2019/20 FY2020/21 FY2021/22 *					_
	A400M	Ops	1,582	1,363	2,580	2,867	1,811
Def Suppor and Tro		3,571	5,180	3,506	3,038		
Total	5,476	4,934	7,760	6,373	4,849		
	C130J	Ops	2,679	2,108	2,003	2,532	1,261
Def Suppor and Tro		3,552	3,739	3,242	2,163		
Total	7,462	5,660	5,742	5,774	3,424		

		FY2018/1	9 FY2019/2	0 FY2020/2	1 FY2021/2	FY2022/23 2*	_
	C17	Ops	4,342	3,505	3,517	2,585	1,049
Def Suppo and Tr		2,118	1,962	3,248	1,852		
Total	6,375	5,623	5,479	5,833	2,901		

^{*}Up to October 2022

■ Ministry of Defence: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry: [95811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his Department's monthly publications of spending over £500 on items other than travel and stationery using a government procurement card, what the reason is for the gap between the total costs of £63,688.81 incurred in the month of November 2021 and the average costs of £4,646,585.89 incurred in the other 11 months of that year.

Alex Chalk:

Following an internal review, the Ministry of Defence can confirm that the reason for the low Government Procurement Card (GPC) expenditure contained within the November 2021 transparency report (excluding travel and stationery) was due to a reporting discrepancy. The information submitted by the Department was correct, however it appears the data became corrupt on upload to the Government Transparency website. The specific date and reason for this file corruption is unknown at this time, but will be investigated.

I would like to thank the right hon. Member for questioning the low expenditure and therefore highlighting this error. The correct data has been arranged to be uploaded as a matter of priority. The Department can confirm the correct figure for November 2021 (over £500 GPC spend) was £6,533,116.49 spread across 3,006 transactions.

Ministry of Defence: Plastics

Dr Matthew Offord: [92162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to eliminate its use of single-use plastics.

Alex Chalk:

The MOD is working with Industry Partners to deliver the Greening Government Commitment 2021 to 2025 which is focused on removing consumer single use plastic (CSUP) from our elements of the central government office estate. In addition, Ministry of Defence Facility Management Contracts include clauses which require

Industry Partners to minimise the supply and use of CSUP and to work towards their elimination on the wider defence estate.

Russia: Iran

John Healey: [92098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of Iranian supplied Shahed-136 loitering munitions that have been used by Russia in Ukraine.

James Heappey:

We estimate the number of Iranian supplied Shahed-136 loitering munitions that have been used by Russia in Ukraine to be in the low hundreds.

Ukraine: Armed Conflict

John Healey: [93457]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 November to Question 63111 on Ukraine: Armed Conflict, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Russian (a) main battle tanks, (b) armoured fighting vehicles, (c) fixed wing aircrafts, (d) helicopters, (e) unmanned aerial vehicles, (f) ships, (g) artillery systems, (h) multiple-launch rocket systems and (i) other capabilities, destroyed in Ukraine since 1 February 2022.

John Healey: [93458]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 October to Question 63110 on Ukraine: Armed Conflict, what recent estimate he has made of the number of Russian personnel in Ukraine (a) killed in action, (b) wounded and (c) deserted from their posts, since 24 February 2022.

James Heappey:

The destruction levels of Russia's military equipment remain high. We estimate that over 4,500 armoured vehicles, including main battle tanks, 63 fixed wing aircraft, 70 helicopters, 150 unmanned aerial vehicles, 12 naval vessels of all classes, and over 600 artillery systems of all types have been destroyed. We estimate over 25,000 of its military personnel have been killed, and many tens of thousands wounded. Thousands more personnel have probably deserted.

Ukraine: Guided Weapons

John Healey: [93459]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to his announcement on 9 November of the supply of approximately 1,000 additional surface-to-air missiles to Ukraine, if he will specify what type of surface-to-air missiles these are.

James Heappey:

Further details of specific munitions and weapons systems provided by the UK to Ukraine cannot be disclosed publicly at this time due to operational security.

We continue to work closely with Ukraine to source a range of equipment which they can deploy rapidly and effectively in their battle against Russian aggression. This includes both NATO and non-NATO standard equipment and munitions.

Ukraine: Military Aid

John Healey: [89727]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of the air mobility fleet has been engaged in the movement of equipment and supplies to Ukraine since Russia's invasion.

James Heappey:

Between Feb-Nov 22, Defence Supply Chain Operations & Movements (DSCOM) has recorded the following utilisation of the air mobility fleet engaged in support of Op SCORPIUS:

C17 GLOBEMASTER - 12.3%

148 Task Lines used from an overall availability 1200 task lines.

A400M ATLAS – 2.93%

44 Task Lines used from an overall availability of 1500 task lines.

C130J – 0.78%

14 Task Lines used from an availability of 1800 task lines.

KC 30 Voyager

Nil utilisation for the movement of equipment and supplies.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rachel Maclean: [92335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government plans to take steps to turn back small boats in the English Channel.

James Heappey:

On 24 April 2022, the Home Secretary confirmed that the previously extant policy and procedures relating to the turnaround tactic had been withdrawn. Accordingly Border Force will not implement turnaround tactics under Defence primacy. The Royal Navy position remains that they will not implement or assist in the implementation of turnaround tactics under Defence primacy. Defence has no plans to review this policy.

■ Veterans Welfare Service: Cost of Living

John Healey: [90744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how the Veterans Welfare Service helps veterans with the cost of living crisis.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides bespoke advice and assistance following a holistic assessment of need which is tailored to each individual's specific circumstances. An individual maybe referred to the VWS for one issue and financial pressures become evident during the holistic assessment. Where financial assistance is required by Veterans the VWS can assist with benefits checks, completion of application forms and signposting. The VWS is part of Veterans UK which processes the Disability Cost of Living payment for eligible veterans whose only Government-paid income is from a War Disablement Pension.

■ Veterans Welfare Service: Universal Credit

John Healey: [90745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many calls on applying for universal credit the Veterans Welfare Service received in the last 12 months.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The number of calls that led to assistance with applying for Universal Credit is not centrally held centrally and could only be determined by interrogating each individual case file at disproportionate cost.

Veterans: Identity Cards

John Healey: [90746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how the Veterans ID cards help veterans with the cost of living crisis.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Veterans Recognition Card provides a memento of Service and maintains a tangible link to the Armed Forces. It is also one of the ways that veterans can verify their service to help access public and charitable sector services and support, but possession of a card is not a prerequisite to do so.

Veterans are civilians and are entitled to the same cost of living support offered by the National, Local, and Devolved Governments wherever they reside, in common with the general population. This includes the Energy Price Guarantee, Cost of Living payments, and Council Tax rebate as applicable to their location and personal circumstances. Veterans may also receive financial support targeted at them as a distinct group from their Regimental Associations or Service Benevolent Funds, and additional support is also available from the wider Armed Forces charitable sector.

In terms of support provided by the Ministry of Defence, Veterans UK has processed Disability Cost of Living payments for eligible veterans whose only government-paid income is from a War Disablement Pension. It also provides, through its Veterans' Welfare Service, one-to-one welfare support and advice to veterans or anyone supporting a veteran, their families and dependants:

https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk. Any veteran struggling

with their finances should contact Veterans UK in the first instance, who can then advise on appropriate avenues of support.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Arts: Regional Planning and Development

Rachael Maskell: [92270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment she has made of the contribution of the arts, music, film and the creative sectors to the Government's levelling up agenda; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of contributing to such projects through the levelling up fund.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government knows that the arts, music, film and the creative sectors can play a significant role in levelling up, as well as enriching people's lives in so many other ways. The Levelling Up White Paper highlighted the crucial role the cultural and creative sectors play in rejuvenating and transforming our communities across the country, creating jobs and boosting pride in place.

To this end, DCMS and Arts Council England jointly identified 109 Levelling Up for Culture Places – areas which historically have had lower investment in arts and culture – which will be targeted for additional public investment via the Arts Council, ensuring that everywhere in the country can enjoy the benefits of a vibrant cultural and creative sector. In Arts Council England's 2023–26 Investment Programme, the number of funded organisations in these 109 areas will increase by 79% (from 107 to 192 organisations) and investment will increase by 95%, or £21.2 million per annum.

One of these Levelling Up for Culture Places, Torbay, has received £4.3 million from the Cultural Development Fund to renovate the landmark Paignton Picture House, creating a cultural hub for film and community engagement – while another, Bradford, has received £4 million from the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund to redevelop the Bradford Odeon into a 7,000-seat music venue.

The £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund is investing significantly in local cultural, heritage, and creative industries capital projects across the country. 'Culture and heritage' is one of the three key investment priorities of the Fund and applications are assessed against this. Recipients from the Fund's first round include £2.9 million for a film production studio in Belfast and £17.9 million to renovate the town hall in Kidderminister as a venue for music, arts and theatre. The second round of the Levelling Up Fund includes, for the first time, provision to support up to two bids which boost local pride in place for up to £50 million under the Fund's culture and heritage investment theme.

Broadband: Rural Areas

Sir Greg Knight: [94696]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she plans to further support remote rural businesses by increasing the roll-out speed of broadband in rural areas; and what discussions she has had with mobile phone networks on improving their coverage in rural areas.

Julia Lopez:

The Government is investing £5 billion through Project Gigabit to deliver lightning-fast, reliable broadband in areas across the UK. We have already launched procurements with a value of over £700 million to bring gigabit connections to rural and hard-to-reach homes and businesses, and we recently signed our first contracts in North Dorset, Teesdale and North Northumberland.

As part of Project Gigabit the government is investing up to £210 million in the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to support rural businesses and homes with the cost of installing new gigabit-capable connections. To date, we have issued over 106,000 vouchers to homes and businesses through the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme and previous iterations. Further information is available on the gigabit voucher website including eligibility criteria and how to apply for the scheme.

We also understand the impact of poor mobile coverage on rural areas which is why we agreed a £1 billion deal with the mobile operators to deliver the Shared Rural Network. The programme will deliver 4G coverage to 95% of the UK, enabling rural businesses and communities to thrive.

Business: Investment

Rachael Maskell: [93579]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on opportunities for investment in businesses in the cultural and arts sectors.

Stuart Andrew:

Ministers and officials regularly meet their counterparts across His Majesty's Government to discuss shared priorities, including support for the arts and cultural sectors. There have been no recent discussions between the Secretaries of State on this issue specifically, but DCMS officials engage with BEIS officials on a range of topics, and are currently providing input from the cultural and arts sector into the review by BEIS of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Care Homes and Supported Housing: Television Licences

Jamie Stone: [93608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will make an estimate of (a) the number of care homes and supported living accommodation sites which have shared facilities but have no common and exclusive boundary, and (b) the

number of pensioners who by reason of residence in such locations are unable to claim a concessionary TV licence.

Julia Lopez:

Some residents in sheltered or residential care accommodation may be eligible for the Accommodation for Residential Care (ARC) television licence fee concession. If eligible, residents are required to pay a reduced rate of £7.50 for a TV licence.

While licence fee concessions are set in legislation, it is the BBC, not the government, that administers these schemes. The BBC is responsible for the collection and enforcement of the licence fee and all of its concessions, including maintaining existing ARC concessionary licences and making decisions on requests for new ARC concessionary licences.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport does not hold the information requested. More information on this concession, including eligibility information and details on how to apply, can be found on the TV Licensing website.

■ Commonwealth Games 2022: Hotels

Andrew Gwynne: [95805]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether it was her Department's policy to allow Birmingham Council to apply a hotel tax during the Commonwealth Games.

Stuart Andrew:

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games were delivered on time and within budget, creating huge benefits for Birmingham, the West Midlands and the UK. It was not Government's policy for a hotel tax to be applied during the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and so, as such, legislation to provide for such a levy was not brought forward as part of the preparations for the Games.

■ Concert Halls: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [92271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if she will take steps to provide additional funding for the establishment of new concert halls.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government supports concert and music venues across the country through public funding via Arts Council England. Since 2017/18, Arts Council England has provided over £530 million of support through funding programmes such as Project Grants and its National Portfolio Organisation investment. This includes almost £75 million towards the development of Factory International, a major new cultural space currently under construction in Manchester which will include state-of-the-art concert facilities.

Cultural Heritage: Conservation

Dr Matthew Offord: [92171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of funding and sponsorship opportunities for the private sector to enable works to be undertaken to properties on Historic England's Heritage at Risk list; and if she will make a statement.

Stuart Andrew:

The Heritage at Risk programme helps the Government to understand the overall state of England's historic sites by identifying places which are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

There are several organisations which offer funding to private and commercial owners of sites on the Heritage at Risk Register, including Natural England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Historic England is also able to fund Heritage at Risk projects, including to fund private owners, where a project meets the eligibility and assessment criteria of its grant schemes.

Historically, approximately 7–10% of Historic England's grants for Heritage at Risk have been given to private owners, helping with emergency repairs to historic buildings and protecting the livelihoods of skilled craft workers.

Electronic Commerce: EU Law

Stella Creasy: [95838]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the e-Commerce Directive and the Retained EU Law Bill, what assessment she has made of the potential increase of litigation against online services if the e-Commerce Directive were to cease to apply in the UK.

Paul Scully:

The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill is part of the government's commitment to taking the necessary steps to put the UK statute book on a sustainable footing, following our exit from the EU. The Bill will make it easier to amend, repeal or replace REUL, in the best interests of the UK.

Assessments of the impact of amending, repealing or replacing areas of Retained EU Law are currently in progress.

Entain: Advertising

Lee Anderson: [93643]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Gambling Commission has made an assessment of Entain UK's compliance with online gambling advertising rules.

Paul Scully:

I am unable to comment on specific cases of regulatory action taken by the Gambling Commission. However, I have provided some overarching information on online advertising rules contained in the Commission's Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP).

Licensed operators are required to ensure that advertising of gambling products and services is undertaken in a socially responsible manner and complies with the UK Advertising Codes issued by the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP) and administered by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). As part of its investigation into Entain Group's regulatory failures, the Gambling Commission made an assessment of its general compliance with the LCCP, which identified anti-money laundering and social responsibility failures, as reflected in the published press statement. Further detail can be found on the Commission's website.

Internet: Children

Jim Shannon: [93538]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to protect children online.

Matt Vickers: [94913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to protect children online.

Paul Scully:

Protecting children online is a priority for the government. The strongest protections in the Online Safety Bill are for children.

All companies in scope will need to take robust steps to protect children from illegal content and activity on their services. This includes proactively identifying and minimising the uploading and sharing of priority illegal content such as child sexual exploitation and abuse. Companies will also need to have effective systems and processes to quickly take down other illegal content or behaviour once it has been reported or they become aware of its presence.

Companies in scope will also need to assess whether their service is likely to be accessed by children and if so, deliver additional protections for children from harmful content or activity. If they fail to do so, they will be subject to tough enforcement action by Ofcom, the regulator.

Music: Young People

Rachael Maskell: [92276]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will take steps to maintain funding levels for the provision of (a) youth orchestras and (b) other local music activities for young people in the 2023-24 financial year.

Stuart Andrew:

The Government is committed to ensuring all children and young people have access to music provision. As set out in The Power of Music to Change Lives: A National Plan for Music Education, the Government's vision is to ensure that music education is fully inclusive and that there are teaching and learning opportunities aligned to young people's areas of interest and specialism, both nationally and locally.

Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) investment round for 2023–26, announced on 7 November, will deliver more for the creative lives of children and young people than ever before. 79% of NPOs will deliver activities for children and young people: a 20% increase from the previous funding round. Across all music organisations included in the new NPO round, 85% of the new music portfolio will support programmes for children and young people – an increase from 79% in the previous round.

The Department for Education also committed £79 million per year for the Music Hubs programme over three years up to and including 2024/25. Part of this funding also supports provision for local orchestras, ensembles and music activity in and out of school.

Musicians: Austria

Ms Harriet Harman: [93410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what bilateral arrangements are in place for UK musicians seeking to tour in Austria.

Ms Harriet Harman: [93411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Austrian Government to agree bespoke bilateral arrangements for UK musicians seeking to tour in Austria without restrictions.

Ms Harriet Harman: [93412]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what bilateral arrangements are in place for UK musicians seeking to tour in Belgium.

Ms Harriet Harman: [93413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, hat recent discussions she has had with the Belgian Government to agree bespoke bilateral arrangements for UK musicians seeking to tour in Belgium without restrictions.

Julia Lopez:

This Government is committed to supporting the UK's creative industries, including musicians, to adapt to new arrangements with the EU.

We have worked extensively with the sector and directly with EU Member States, including Austria and Belgium, to clarify arrangements on the movement of people, goods and haulage. We have worked across government and with industry to

develop guidance including '<u>landing pages</u>' on GOV.UK specifically for touring musicians and other creative sectors.

Visa and work permit requirements vary from Member State to Member State, and travellers should always check what requirements they need to fulfil with the EU Member State they are travelling to. That is why we have worked with Member States to ensure their guidance is clear and accessible, and why we have published general <u>business traveller summaries</u> for each Member State on GOV.UK.

More broadly, we have confirmed that:

- Nearly all Member States offer visa and work permit free routes for musicians and creative performers.
- Portable musical instruments, carried or in a vehicle, can be transported cost-free and should not require ATA Carnets; and
- Small 'splitter vans' are not subject to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement limits around haulage for the creative sectors and 'cross trade'. In addition, the Government has introduced dual registration to support specialist hauliers, meaning they can benefit from more generous market access arrangements in Great Britain and the EU.

■ Sports: Internet

Matt Vickers: [94910]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that fans can watch major sporting events online.

Julia Lopez:

The Government believes that certain sporting events of national interest should be shown on free-to-air television so that they can be enjoyed by as wide an audience as possible.

We want to ensure that as viewing habits change and technology evolves the regulatory framework remains fit for purpose.

Our Broadcasting White Paper confirmed our intention to undertake a review to look at whether the scope of the listed events regime should be extended to include digital rights. The Government is speaking to stakeholders to look at whether in the face of technological change, the objectives of the existing regime are still being met and whether digital rights should be included in the regime. The review will need to balance the ability for audiences to watch national sporting events at no additional cost with the ability for sporting organisations to generate revenues from sports rights to re-invest in their sports at all levels.

The Terms of Reference for the review can be found <a href="https://example.com/here

EDUCATION

Amira Abase

Mr David Davis: [92090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has undertaken an investigation into the adequacy of the safeguarding of Amira Abase.

Mr David Davis: [92091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has undertaken an investigation into the adequacy of the safeguarding of Kadiza Sultana.

Claire Coutinho:

Following reports of pupils from Bethnal Green Academy travelling to Syria, the department provided support to the school through the Regional Director (previously Regional Schools Commissioners), in addition to the support being provided by the local authority and police.

The department is clear in its statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018), that it is for local authorities to assess and consider safeguarding concerns of individual cases working with their statutory partners (police and health) where necessary. This includes considering risks outside the home such as exploitation by organised crime groups, including county lines, trafficking and influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

Through their regulatory powers, Ofsted inspects local authority children's social care services to check that the department's minimum standards are being met and takes proportionate enforcement action to ensure children are safe and well looked after.

When a serious incident becomes known to safeguarding partners, they must consider whether the case meets the criteria for a local review. Meeting the criteria does not mean that safeguarding partners must automatically carry out a local child safeguarding practice review. It is for them to determine whether a review is appropriate, taking into account that the overall purpose of a review is to identify improvements to practice. This was also the case in 2015 when previous local children's safeguarding boards were in operation.

Apprentices: Taxation

Sarah Olney: [94830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of the Apprenticeship Levy has been spent in each of the last five years.

Sarah Olney: [94831]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what were the total funds raised through the Apprenticeship Levy that was reinvested in apprentice training in each of the last five years.

Robert Halfon:

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of the government's reforms to create a high-quality, employer-led apprenticeships system, and it supports employers of all sizes to invest in high-quality apprenticeship training

The apprenticeships budget is used to fund training and assessment for new apprenticeship starts in levy and non-levy paying employers, and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training and any additional payments made to employers and providers. The annual apprenticeship budget is set by HM Treasury (HMT) and although closely linked, it is distinct from the total levy income collected. The table below shows the Department for Education's ring-fence apprenticeships budget against the ring-fenced apprenticeships spend (set by HMT) for the last five years.

	FY 17/18	FY 18/19	FY 19/20	FY 20/21	FY 21/22
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
DfE Ring-fence Apprenticeships Budget	•	2,231	2,469	2,467	2,466
Total Ring-fence Apprenticeships Spend	•	1,738	1,919	1,863	2,455

The department does not anticipate that all employers who pay the levy will need or want to use all the funds available to them, but they are able to if they wish. As is usual practice, any underspends in overall departmental budgets by the end of the financial year are first returned to HMT as per the Consolidated Budgeting Guidance.

Childcare

lan Mearns: [95821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to expand the 30 hours of funded childcare for working parents to include income earned through PhD studies as a qualifying income.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is not currently planning to extend the 30 hours of free childcare to include income earned through PhD studies. We recognise the value of parents continuing in education and provide a range of support for students in further or higher education to support them with childcare.

Students starting a doctoral degree on or after 1 August 2018 are eligible to receive a postgraduate doctoral loan to help with course fees and living costs, including childcare, which can be up to £27,892 for students starting their courses in the current academic year, 2022/23.

In addition to the above childcare support for doctoral students, all parents are eligible for the universal 15 hours of free early education which is available to every three and four-year-old, regardless of family circumstances.

Working parents of three and four-year-olds may also be eligible for an additional 15 hours of free childcare if they earn the equivalent of 16 hours a week at national minimum or living wage and earn under £100,000 per year. Students who participate in paid work in addition to their studies and who meet the income requirements will be eligible for the additional hours.

Parents who meet these income criteria may also be able to receive support from Tax-Free Childcare, which can be worth up to £2,000 per year for children aged 0-11, or up to £4,000 per year for some disabled children aged 0-16.

Further information on the childcare offers available to parents can be found at: https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/.

The department remains committed to improving the cost, choice, and availability of childcare. We continue to look at ways to make childcare more affordable and to encourage families to use government-funded support they are entitled to.

Dyslexia: West Midlands

Steve McCabe: [93445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps her Department taken to help West Midlands secondary schools provide extra support to dyslexic students.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is acting to improve early identification and intervention for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), such as dyslexia, through the reforms outlined in the Schools White Paper and the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper. These build on measures already in place to identify pupils who are facing challenges, including with literacy and reading, to help teachers understand how best to support them.

The department has introduced a new National Professional Qualification for Leading Literacy to drive up standards of literacy teaching and improve literacy and language outcomes for every child, including those who are struggling.

Next year, the department will publish the Reading framework Part 2, which will provide evidence based non-statutory guidance on teaching reading for later key stages, and supporting children who are struggling to read, including those with special educational needs.

This builds on the excellent support already available to primary school pupils in the West Midlands via two English Hubs, St John Bosco Catholic Primary School in Sandwell, and Little Sutton Primary School in Birmingham. English Hubs offer targeted support to local schools, academies and free schools to improve the teaching of phonics, early language and reading in Reception and Year 1.

Education: Denton and Reddish

Andrew Gwynne: [92144]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of the cost of living crisis on the attainment of children in Denton and Reddish constituency.

Nick Gibb:

The Government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and affected pupils and their families, including those in the Denton and Reddish constituency. The Department is working hard to manage the current pressures facing schools and continues to monitor the financial health of schools closely.

The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional net increase in the core schools budget of £2 billion in the 2023/24 financial year and a further £2 billion in the 2024/25 financial year, over and above totals announced at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021. This brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in the 2024/25 financial year. This additional funding will enable head teachers to continue to concentrate funding in areas the Department knows has a positive effect on educational attainment, including high quality teaching and targeted support to the children who need it most.

Alongside this, from October 2022 to 31 March 2023, schools will benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, protecting them from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

Denton and Reddish is part of the Tameside Education Investment Area (EIA), meaning substantial support is available to drive improvement. This includes priority for trust capacity funding to help trusts grow and improve underperforming schools in the area, which the Department is making up to £86 million available nationally. In EIAs the Department will also provide support for schools' digital connectivity through £150 million investment in the Connect the Classroom programme. Tameside is also one of 24 Priority Education Investment Areas (PEIAs), and therefore is in receipt of further investment in addition to the significant support available to all EIAs.

Tameside has also benefited from over £160,000 of funding through the Opportunity Areas programme between 2017 and July 2022 helping to drive the attainment of all children across the area.

English Language: Education

Steve McCabe: [93439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of ESOL for adult learners seeking to improve their levels of English to help them gain employment.

Steve McCabe: [93440]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to help ensure that ESOL courses are continually funded in England.

Steve McCabe: [93441]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance her Department provides to (a) local and (b) devolved authorities on the (i) continuation, (ii) funding and (ii) provision of ESOL courses.

Robert Halfon:

The department recognises that English language skills are essential to help people integrate into life in the UK, as well as to break down barriers to work and career progression. That is why we want to support people in the UK to secure the English language skills they need.

The department funds English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision for eligible adults aged 19 and over through the Adult Education Budget (AEB).

Currently, approximately 60% of the AEB is devolved to nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and delegated to the Mayor of London acting through the Greater London Authority. These authorities are responsible for the provision of adult education and allocation of the AEB in their local areas.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas, where colleges and training providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their AEB to meet the needs of their communities. Guidance for these providers is set out in the ESFA Adult Education Budget Funding Rules 2022/23, which can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-

In addition, the department continues to improve the ESOL offer for learners. The department is also ensuring the continued quality of ESOL qualifications through the Qualifications Review. We have also acted quickly to make new arrivals from Afghanistan and Ukraine under designated schemes immediately eligible for fully or co-funded ESOL through the Adult Education Budget.

■ Free School Meals: Inflation

rules-2022-to-2023.

Fleur Anderson: [93672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to increase the free school meals income eligibility in line with inflation.

Nick Gibb:

The Department continues to monitor the consequences of the rising cost of living and is working with other Government Departments to provide support. The Department will continue to keep free school meal (FSM) eligibility under review to ensure that these meals are supporting those who most need them. In setting a threshold, the Government believes that the current level, which enables children to

benefit from FSM, while remaining affordable and deliverable for schools, is the right one.

The latest published statistics show that around 1.9 million pupils are claiming benefits-related FSM. This equates to 22.5% of all pupils, up from 20.8% in 2021. Together with a further 1.25 million infants supported through the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy, 37.5% of school children are now provided with FSM.

Music: Education

Rachael Maskell: [92275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that all children are able to learn any instrument of any cost.

Nick Gibb:

The Department remains committed to continued support for music education.

The Department published the National Plan for Music Education in June 2022, which sets out the vision for 'all children and young people to learn to sing, play an instrument and create music together, and have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talents, including professionally'.

The new plan sets out clear actions to improve music education through to 2030, as part of the Department's long-term vision for schools set out in the Schools White Paper published in March 2022. At the heart of the National Plan is the Model Music Curriculum published in March 2021, setting out how pupils can progress in music from Key Stages 1 to 3. It also includes guidance on instrument teaching.

The Department recognises the vital importance of every child accessing instruments and equipment they need to make progress with music, including technology and adaptive instruments. The Department announced £25 million of new funding for musical instruments alongside the National Plan.

The Department committed £79 million per year for the Music Hubs programme over three years, up to and including 2024/25, which was confirmed with the publication of the National Plan. Music Hubs work together to create joined-up music education provision and provide specialist music education services to around 90% of state funded schools. This includes whole class and group ensemble teaching, and individual instrument tuition.

Hubs also ensure that progression routes are clear and affordable, and some Hubs provide instrument loans to children and young people to achieve this.

Pupils: Dyslexia

Steve McCabe: [93444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps her Department has taken to improve the (a) identification and(b) diagnosis of dyslexic school pupils at the earliest stage possible.

Claire Coutinho:

I refer the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak to the answer given on 28 November 2022 to Question 92078.

Religion: Teachers

Mr Kevan Jones: [92125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has plans to reintroduce the bursary for religious education teachers.

Nick Gibb:

The bursaries the Department provides for initial teacher training (ITT) are intended to incentivise applications to ITT courses. The Department reviews the bursaries available each year to take account of factors including historic recruitment, forecast economic conditions, and teacher supply need in each subject. This provides flexibility to respond to the need to attract new teachers, and means the Department is spending money where it is needed most.

In the 2020/21 academic year, the Department exceeded the postgraduate ITT target for RE (129%), whilst in the 2021/22 academic year, the equivalent target was narrowly missed (99%). The Department will review the need for bursaries across all subjects before announcing what will be available for the 2024/25 academic year.

Research: EU Countries

Richard Thomson: [902447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the UK's participation in (a) Horizon Europe and (b) other European research projects.

Robert Halfon:

The department has regular discussions with colleagues on a range of topics, and fully support colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on their work in this area. Our preference remains association to Horizon Europe, with international collaboration in science, research and development being a key priority.

Rural Areas: Vocational Education

Daniel Kawczynski: [<u>902445</u>]

What steps her Department is taking to promote rural vocational educational courses.

Robert Halfon:

The department wants all students to have access to high-quality vocational and technical learning wherever they are based. That is why the department is reforming technical education to ensure that all post-16 students have access to high-quality technical options that support progression and meet employer needs.

This includes the introduction of T Levels which are substantial, rigorous, and focused on high quality learning and include a substantial industry placement element of around 9 weeks. They will provide the knowledge and experience needed for skilled employment, further study (including higher education) or a higher apprenticeship.

We will have 23 T Levels available from 2023 and the major providers of vocational education, many of whom operate in very rural areas, are already fully engaged with T Level planning and delivery, with over 200 schools also either planning or already offering T Levels.

We are also working closely with employers and employer groups nationally to build their awareness about T Levels and the importance of vocational education and to encourage them to offer industry placements as we know that this will be one of the big challenges in rural areas.

Apprenticeships are a core part of the government's skills agenda, helping to drive economic growth by improving the skills pipeline. They give employees high-quality, hands-on training to start and progress in work and give employers the skills they need to grow, helping them fill their vacancies and train their workforces to address industry skills gaps. They offer a high-quality route into more than 650 occupations, from entry-level to expert roles, spanning Levels 2 to 7. To support more employers across the country to access apprenticeships, including in rural areas, we are increasing funding for apprenticeships in England to £2.7 billion by 2024/25 financial year.

The department has introduced Skills Bootcamps which offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and the offer of a job interview with an employer. They are currently available across the country and deliver training in key areas such as digital, technical (including engineering and manufacturing), construction, logistics and green skills. Bootcamps are available both in rural areas and delivering skills for rural economies

The free Courses for Jobs offer allows eligible adults to access over 400 Level 3 qualifications (A level equivalent) for free in a wide range of sector subject areas that can support the rural economy, including Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care. Free Courses for Jobs are delivered through colleges and training providers across the country, including those that serve learners in rural areas.

We fund and support land-based colleges in rural locations and which specialise in education and training in the skills needed for rural economies. There are 12 designated land based colleges across the country. In addition, land-based provision is delivered by a number of and providers with land-based status across the country.

Further education providers, including those in rural areas, are able to deliver provision to 16-19 year old learners by combining both time in the classroom with remote delivery, having regard to funding regulations for 16-19 provision. For Adult learners, providers decide upon the mode of delivery for Adult Education Budget funded courses, to best meet learners' needs and this can include on-line delivery.

The department recognises that the cost and availability of transport can be difficult for some students in rural areas. It is the responsibility of local authorities to put in place transport arrangements to help young people aged 16 to 18 to access education or training.

Many young people in rural areas have access to a discount or concession on local bus or train travel, either from their local authority or local transport providers. The government also supports local bus travel, including in rural areas, through the Bus Service Operators Grant.

School Leaving: Training

Lia Nici: [902449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to improve vocational skills among school and college leavers.

Robert Halfon:

The department wants all students to have access to high quality vocational and technical learning. That is why the department is reforming technical education to ensure that all post-16 students have access to high quality technical options that support progression and meet employer needs.

This includes the introduction of T Levels which are substantial, rigorous and focused on high quality learning, and include a substantial industry placement element of around nine weeks. They will provide the knowledge and experience needed for skilled employment, further study (including higher education) or a higher apprenticeship.

We will have 23 T Levels available from 2023 and the major providers of vocational education are already fully engaged with T Level planning and delivery, with over 200 schools also either planning or already offering T Levels.

We are also working closely with employers and employer groups nationally to build their awareness about T Levels and the importance of vocational education and to encourage them to offer industry placements.

Apprenticeships are a core part of the government's skills agenda, helping to drive economic growth by improving the skills pipeline. They give employees high-quality, hands-on training to start and progress in work and give employers the skills they need to grow, helping them fill their vacancies and train their workforces to address industry skills gaps. They offer a high-quality route into more than 650 occupations, from entry-level to expert roles, spanning Levels 2 to 7. To support more employers across the country to access apprenticeships we are increasing funding for apprenticeships in England to £2.7 billion by 2024/25 financial year.

We have introduced Skills Bootcamps which offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks, giving people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and the offer of a job interview with an employer. They are currently available across the country and

deliver training in key areas such as digital, technical (including engineering and manufacturing), construction, logistics and green skills.

The free Courses for Jobs offer allows eligible adults to access over 400 Level 3 qualifications (A level equivalent) for free, in subject areas including engineering, construction, health and social care and accounting, which can support them to gain higher wages or a better job.

Schools: Defibrillators

Jim Shannon: [93539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to increase the number of automatic external defibrillators in schools; and what steps she is taking to ensure the success of the rollout of those defibrillators in schools.

Nick Gibb:

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

On 17 July 2022, the Department announced that it will be providing automated external defibrillators to schools in England. The programme will ensure that all schools that need a defibrillator will be provided with at least one, or more for larger schools. More information on the announcement is available here: https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/07/17/how-we-are-ensuring-all-schools-have-lifesaving-defibrillators/.

In September 2022, the Department sent a survey to all state-funded schools in England to identify which schools already have defibrillators. The responses from the survey have been used to establish how many devices are needed.

The outcome of the procurement, including the model of defibrillator that will be supplied to schools, will be published in December 2022. The rollout of devices is expected to start shortly and is planned to be completed by the end of the 2022/23 academic year.

Schools: Disability and Special Educational Needs

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[95913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of support provided to schools to meet the needs of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Claire Coutinho:

The department commissioned the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Review in March 2022 to understand how improvements can be made to the SEND system, recognising that reforms to the system from 2014 have been unable to achieve the intended outcomes. The review aims to determine what changes can be made in order to establish a system that constantly delivers for children and young people with SEND. Combined with the Schools White Paper and wider reforms, we

are seeking to create a coherent education, health and care system, which aims to support all children and young people in England to realise their potential.

In March 2022, the department shared High Needs Provision Capital Allocations, announcing new investment of over £1.4 billion. This funding is to support local authorities to deliver new places for academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25, and to improve existing provision for children and young people with SEND or who require alternative provision (AP).

This investment is alongside the increase in high needs revenue funding, which is rising by £1 billion in 2022/23 (compared to 2021/22), and follows an increase of more than £1.5 billion over the previous two years. This brings the total high needs budget to £9.1 billion.

The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for high needs schools, of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting to take account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published at the 2021 Spending Review.

The department will continue to support the system in the immediate term to deliver change, and continue to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND and those who need AP. We intend to publish a full response to the SEND and AP green paper to make sure that every child gets the support they deserve.

Schools: Electronic Cigarettes

Anthony Mangnall: [93647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to work alongside (a) headteachers and (b) other school leaders to help reduce vaping in schools.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy that sets out what is expected of all pupils. This should include listing items that are banned from school premises, the sanctions that will be imposed for misbehaviour, and rewards for good behaviour. This should be communicated to all pupils, parents, and school staff. Schools have the autonomy to decide which items should be banned from their premises, and these can include vapes and e-cigarettes. Items banned by the school can be searched for, as outlined in the Department's 'Searching, screening and confiscation at school' guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation.

The relationships, sex and health education statutory guidance states that, in both primary and secondary school, pupils should be taught the facts regarding legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, alcohol use, and taking drugs.

To support schools to deliver this content effectively, the Department published a suite of teacher training modules, including one on drugs, alcohol and tobacco, which makes specific reference to vapes and e-cigarettes.

The Department believes that this will help head teachers to manage vaping on school premises and to inform young people of the risks, with a view to reducing the numbers of young people who are currently vaping, or who might be tempted to try it in the future.

■ Schools: Finance

Darren Jones: [92312]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022 of additional funding for schools in the next two years, what assessment she has made of the proportion of that extra funding that will be required by schools to cover (a) increased energy bills and (b) increased staffing costs.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is prioritising further funding for schools. The 2022 Autumn Statement has provided an additional increase in the core schools' budget of £2.3 billion for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. This brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25. Funding for schools is already £4 billion higher this year than last year, and this additional funding means it will rise by another £3.5 billion, next year. Taken together, that means a 15% increase in funding in two years.

This additional funding will be used to support both mainstream schools and local authorities' high needs budgets and will support schools in meeting the costs of their increased energy bills and staffing costs. The Department will set out the specific plans for the allocation of this additional funding in due course.

James Wild: [93658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much the average funding per pupil in mainstream schools was in (a) North West Norfolk constituency, (b) Norfolk and (c) England in each of the last three years.

Nick Gibb:

The table below shows the average funding per pupil allocated through the National Funding Formula for North West Norfolk, Norfolk, and England over the past three years. Per pupil funding excludes growth funding and individual schools' actual allocations are based on local authorities' local funding formulae.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
North West Norfolk (Constituency)	£4,703	£5,077	£5,235
Norfolk (Local	£4,726	£5,097	£5,419

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	
Authority)				
England	£4,828	£5,212	£5,534	

Seema Malhotra: [95842]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much schools funding was spent per pupil in (a) England and (b) Hounslow.

Nick Gibb:

The schools National Funding Formula (NFF) calculates an allocation for every school, based on their individual pupil and school characteristics. Schools' NFF allocations for 2022/23 can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-tables-for-schools-and-high-needs-2022-to-2023.

In 2022/23 mainstream school pupils in England received £5,534 per pupil on average, excluding growth funding, through the dedicated schools grant (DSG) allocations and supplementary funding. This represents a 5.8% increase in funding per pupil from 2021/22.

In 2022/23, mainstream school pupils in Hounslow received £5,828 per pupil on average, excluding growth funding, through the DSG allocations and supplementary funding. This represents a 5.5% increase in funding per pupil from 2021/22.

The 2022 Autumn Statement has also provided an additional increase in the core schools budget, including funding for mainstream and high needs schools, of £2.3 billion in both 2023/24 and 2024/25. After adjusting to take account for the removal of the compensation for employer costs of the Health and Social Care Levy, this brings the core schools budget to a total of £58.8 billion in 2024/25, £2 billion greater than published in the 2021 Spending Review.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[<u>95911</u>]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the adequacy of the support provided to schools to help with rising utility costs.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[95912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made a recent assessment of the adequacy of funding provided to schools to meet educational provision in the context of the increase in inflation.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is in regular communication with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on all matters related to schools. The Chancellor announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement that core schools funding will increase by net £2 billion in 2023/24 and 2024/25. This increase in funding, on top of the funding awards previously

announced at the Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021, means total schools funding will increase by 15% between 2021/22 and 2023/24 from £49.8 billion to £57.3 billion, nationally. These increases will deliver additional support to schools, helping to deliver on the Government's commitment to levelling up education across the country.

Schools are also being supporting with energy costs over the winter months. From October 2022 to 31 March 2023, schools will benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. This will provide a price reduction to protect them from high energy bills over the winter period.

Schools: Music

Duncan Baker: [902443]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding for music lessons in state schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Government remains committed to continued support for music education. The Government published the National Plan for Music Education in June 2022 which sets out the vision for 'all children and young people to learn to sing, play an instrument and create music together, and have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talents, including professionally'. At the heart of the new plan is the Model Music Curriculum published in March 2021, which sets out how schools can deliver an excellent music education.

The Government recognises the vital importance of every child accessing instruments and equipment they need to make progress with music, including technology and adaptive instruments where needed for pupils with SEND. We therefore also announced £25 million of new funding for musical instruments alongside the Plan. This funding will increase the existing stock available to all children and young people. We will work with schools, hubs, Arts Council England and the wider sector to focus on best practice in managing access to instruments and equipment. We will publish further details in due course.

The Department committed £79 million per year for the Music Hubs programme over three years up to and including 2024-25, which was confirmed with the publication of the Plan. Music Hubs are groups of organisations, such as local authorities, schools, art organisations, community, or voluntary organisations, that work together to create joined-up music education provision and provide specialist music education services to around 90% of state-funded schools. This includes whole class and group ensemble teaching, and individual instrument tuition.

Hubs also ensure that progression routes are clear and affordable, and some hubs provide instrument loans to children and young people to achieve this.

Schools: Sports

Paul Howell: [902450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether funding for the PE and sport premium will continue at current levels for the 2023-24 school year.

Nick Gibb:

Improving school sport and physical education (PE) is a key priority. The Department recognises the important role the PE and sport premium plays in helping schools ensure that children and young people play sport and keep fit.

We are considering arrangements for the Primary PE and sport premium for the 2023/24 academic year and beyond and will confirm the position as early as possible.

■ Skilled Workers: Carbon Emissions

Alexander Stafford: [92387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment for the implications for her policies of the UK100's Skills for Local Net Zero Delivery briefing.

Alexander Stafford: [92388]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to increase longterm funding for courses to develop local skills for Net Zero delivery.

Alexander Stafford: [92389]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is providing support to further education colleges to help increase courses to improve local net zero delivery.

Robert Halfon:

The UK100 'Skills for Local Net Zero Delivery' briefing (October 2021) sets out recommendations on net zero delivery. This includes a recommendation to create several cross-government fora. The department is already engaging across government and industry on net zero skills.

The Green Jobs Delivery Group was set up in response to the Green Jobs Taskforce report. It is the key vehicle for industry and government department collaboration. We work together to understand workforce challenges including skills gaps. By listening to experts, we can meet the challenges of supporting green sectors.

In the 2021 Autumn Budget and Spending Review, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor announced a £1.6 billion investment in the National Skills Fund from 2022 to 2025, including a £550 million investment to expand Skills Bootcamps. Separate grant funding up to £70 million is available to local areas, to deliver Skills Bootcamps in local skills priorities.

Apprenticeships have been made easier for small to medium enterprises to benefit from levy transfers, with a new pledge and online transfer service. As at March 2022, over 145 employers have pledged to transfer £8.9 million to support apprenticeships in businesses of all sizes. Apprenticeships are available in a range of green skills,

such as Arboriculturist (level 4) and Nuclear Reactor Desk Engineer (level 6). The Green Apprenticeships and Technical Education Advisory Panel is reviewing occupational standards to see which incorporate green skills and where that can be improved.

£268 million of capital funding has been provided for T-Level courses starting in 2020 - 2022. Since May 2019, staff in further education (FE) have participated in the T Level Professional Development offer. The department has invested over £23 million until March 2021 and has committed over £15 million in 2021/22 to continue the offer. We have provided over £200 million in capacity and delivery funding to providers, to help FE staff to establish the infrastructure and resources needed to deliver industry placements since 2018/19. The 2022 pass rate for Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction, which prepares students for occupations including Civil Engineering Technician and Building Control Officer, was 93.7%.

The Strategic Development Fund (SDF) provides capital and programme funding to enable FE providers to work together locally to update teaching, training facilities, and provision to meet the needs of employers, as set out in Local Skills Improvement Plans. Funding can be used to upgrade facilities to better meet the needs of their local economy, enable a more coordinated local further education offer, support ongoing provider quality improvement, and stimulate employer demand for and investment in skills. SDF was piloted in 2021 with £65 million and rolled out nationally in 2022 with £92 million.

Institutes of Technology (IoTs) are employer-led institutions delivering provision tailored to local employers. They specialise in technical skills in STEM sectors, including advanced digital, manufacturing, engineering, and green skills. We plan to invest up to £120 million of capital funding in a further nine IoTs. Students can study courses such as Construction and the Built Environment and Electrical Engineering.

Special Educational Needs

Jane Hunt: [93710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to implement the recommendations in the report by the Children's Commissioner entitled Beyond the Labels: A SEND system which works for every child, every time, published on 14 November 2022.

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. This includes improving the education, health and care (EHC) plan process and the support that is available for through 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 improved outcomes, experiences and financial sustainability. The

department will publish a SEND and AP Improvement Plan that will set out the consultation feedback and our next steps in due course.

Zarah Sultana: [94877]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Independent Provider of Special Education Advice's submissions to the SEND review: right support, right place, right time, if he will publish a response to that organisation's questions and recommendations on the SEND Green Paper.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is aware of the submission from the Independent Provider of Special Education Advice (IPSEA) and the recommendations it sets out for the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) system, including strengthening accountability measures to ensure that every child and young person has access to support that meets their needs.

The SEND and alternative provision (AP) green paper set out our proposals for how the department will improve the SEND system, so that it delivers better outcomes, improved experiences, and financial sustainability.

The department received extensive feedback on these proposals during the consultation period and we will publish a SEND and AP Improvement Plan that will set out the consultation feedback and our next steps.

STEM Subjects

Mr Toby Perkins: [94733]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a STEM education strategy.

Robert Halfon:

Several government strategies are already in place to support our STEM ambitions, including the 2021 UK Innovation Strategy, the 2021 National AI Strategy, and the 2022 UK Digital Strategy. They set out how the department will strengthen its reserves of talent and skills in order to drive success.

The department is focused on delivery. We are encouraging more students to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects across all key stages, from primary school to further and higher education, ensuring a strong pipeline of qualified students for STEM careers. By developing employer-centred skills programmes such as apprenticeships, T Levels, and Higher Technical Qualifications, the department is empowering industry to shape our training offers to meet their needs and create more routes into skilled STEM roles.

We are investing in programmes that support science, technology, and digital skills, such as programmes that support teachers to improve the quality of science teaching. From autumn 2022, early careers teachers can claim a levelling up premium of £3,000 tax free per year for up to three years, to teach mathematics,

physics, chemistry, or computing in state funded secondary schools that have been identified as having a high need for teachers.

Alongside this, the department is investing in Institutes of Technology, which are leaders in the provision of high quality, higher level technical education and training across a range of STEM occupations and industries.

Additionally, the department is investing in STEM in higher education, delivering a 12% increase in grant funding for strategically important, high-cost subjects such as medicine, engineering, and computing.

The government cannot achieve its ambition to be a science and technology superpower alone, and so efforts to work closely with businesses, including through the new Digital Skills Council, are being made to drive forward industry led action to address current and future demand for digital skills.

Students: Finance

Sir Stephen Timms:

[902446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to launch Alternative Student Finance for Muslim students.

Robert Halfon:

The department understands the concerns held by some Muslim students and their families about student finance. We want all learners with the potential to benefit from higher education to be able to do so. The department remains committed to delivering an alternative student finance (ASF) product for Muslim students.

Going forward, the department is introducing a Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) that will significantly change the ways students can access learning and financial support.

The department's consultation on the detail and scope of the LLE closed in May 2022. In this consultation, the department sought views on what barriers learners with protected characteristics might face in accessing or drawing on their LLE, noting that answers to this question could include consideration of an ASF product for students whose faith has resulted in concerns about traditional loans. We are currently considering if and how ASF can be delivered as part of the LLE.

We will provide a further update on ASF as part of the government response to the LLE consultation.

■ Teachers: Hampshire

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

90850

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the impact of the rising cost of living on teachers in north Hampshire; and whether he plans for the Education and Skills Funding Agency to conduct a review of the areas classed as London fringe.

Nick Gibb:

Schools will benefit from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme. This will reduce how much schools need to spend on their energy, and give schools greater certainty over their budgets through the winter months. The Department knows that every school's circumstances are different, and where schools are in serious financial difficulty, they should contact their Local Authority or the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The 2022/23 pay awards should be viewed in parallel with the Government's £37 billion package of support for the Cost of Living, which is targeted to those most in need. The Government has also taken action to limit energy bills for households through the Energy Price Guarantee. The typical household, which had been facing forecast bills of £6,000, can now expect to pay £2,500 per year for average usage.

Decisions on pay ranges are based on recommendations by the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB), the independent body that advises on teachers' pay and conditions.

The geographical areas covered by the different ranges were defined some years ago to reflect a practical approach to compensate teachers working in London, and the STRB has not recommended any changes since then, although the Department will consider these issues in the future.

Pay awards must strike a careful balance, recognising the vital importance of teachers and other public sector workers, whilst delivering value for the taxpayer. The Department has implemented the STRB's recommendation of an 8.9% uplift to starting salaries outside London in the 2022/23 academic year, keeping the Department on track for delivering its manifesto commitment of a £30,000 starting salary. The Department has implemented the STRB's recommendation of a 5% pay uplift for experienced teachers and leaders in the 2022/23 academic year. This award constituted the highest pay award for experienced teachers in 30 years.

■ Teachers: Recruitment

Sir David Evennett: [93468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she has taken to (a) recruit and (b) retain more male primary school teachers.

Nick Gibb:

The Department wants to attract and retain diverse, talented teachers from all backgrounds, including male teachers.

In 2021, the Department's new application service for initial teacher training (ITT) in England, 'Apply for teacher training', was rolled out nationally. It has been designed to be as user friendly as possible and has been extensively tested with a diverse range of potential applicants to ensure it helps remove barriers to great teachers applying for ITT courses.

The Department's recruitment campaigns are targeted at audiences of students, recent graduates, and potential career changers, regardless of their identity

or background. The Department takes every effort to ensure that advertising is fully reflective of this across the full range of marketing materials used.

The reforms outlined in the Government's response to the ITT market review will help meet the commitment made in the teacher recruitment and retention strategy to create a world class teacher development system by transforming the training and support teachers receive at every stage of their career.

To ensure that all children and young people get the best education, it is essential that the Department has a workforce of well trained and well supported teachers, with the expertise needed to deliver great teaching every day.

■ Teachers: Workplace Pensions

Barry Gardiner: [93408]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) independent and (b) state schools have left the Teachers' Pension Scheme in the last five years.

Barry Gardiner: [93409]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) independent and (b) state schools have joined the Teachers' Pension Scheme in the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

324 independent schools have left the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) between August 2019, when this information started to be compiled, and November 2022. 22 independent schools have joined the Scheme between January 2018 and November 2022.

State schools and academies cannot choose to leave the TPS. The records show that 1,008 academies have ceased to be registered as scheme employers and 4,383 new academy employers have been registered in the TPS between January 2018 and November 2022. This is a result of state schools converting to academies and some single academy trusts joining multi-academy trusts.

■ T-levels: Small Businesses

Mr Toby Perkins: [94730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has her Department made of the potential impact of the £1,000 financial incentive per T-Level industry placement for small and medium enterprises on placement numbers; and whether she plans to reintroduce this incentive.

Robert Halfon:

As part of the department's response to the impact of the pandemic, in May 2021 the department launched a short-term employer incentive fund to support employers to deliver T Level industry placements where they received £1,000 for every placement delivered. The majority of incentive funds were paid to small and medium size enterprises and impacted their ability to offer a number of high-quality industry placements.

The incentive fund ended on the 31 July 2022, and there is currently no intention to implement a further employer incentive fund, as it was always designed to be short-term. The department recognises that some employers may continue to incur costs when providing placement opportunities, and is considering what further support might need to be put in place to support the delivery of high-quality industry placements as we continue to rollout T Levels.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agricultural Products: Northern Ireland

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[<u>92114</u>]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total cost to the public purse has been of establishing and administering the Scheme for Temporary Agri-Food Movements to Northern Ireland (STAMNI) as of 21 November 2022.

Mark Spencer:

The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

Big Nature Impact Fund: Saltmarshes

Siobhan Baillie: [89918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the seed finance made available through the Big Nature Impact Fund will be used to fund saltmarshes.

Trudy Harrison:

The Big Nature Impact Fund (BNIF) will be a private sector vehicle and could invest in projects involving saltmarsh habitats that meet its criteria for investment.

Environment Protection

Alex Sobel: [95921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of the delayed Environment Act targets due on 31st October 2022, on the revised Environmental Improvement Plan, due on 31 January 2023.

Trudy Harrison:

We will publish the Environmental Improvement Plan before 31 January.

Food: Animal Welfare

Ruth Jones: [89018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if the Welfare at Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 are applicable for animals killed for food in private homes.

Mark Spencer:

The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing (England) Regulations 2015 implement and enforce retained Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing. There are specific legislative protections in these regulations concerning the killing of animals, including invertebrates, bred or kept for the production of food, wool, skin, fur, or other products when killed by their owner for the owner's private domestic consumption. It is an offence to cause or permit such an animal to sustain any avoidable pain, distress or suffering in their restraint, stunning, and killing. Anyone restraining, stunning, or killing such an animal must have the knowledge and skill to do so humanely.

Litter Innovation Fund

Dr Matthew Offord: [92164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has provided guidance to local authorities in England following the establishment of the Litter Innovation Fund.

Rebecca Pow:

Reports and outputs from projects funded through the Litter Innovation Fund have been published on the Waste and Resources Action Programme's website.

Guidance has been provided to local authorities on other matters, including on the provision of litter bins. In support of this guidance, we have provided nearly £1 million across 44 councils to help them purchase new bins.

We have also published improved guidance to councils and others on the use of their fixed penalty powers for littering and related offences. Our position was further laid out in June this year when a letter was sent from a Defra minister to councils regarding the use of enforcement powers to tackle litter.

■ Peat Bogs: Conservation

Kerry McCarthy: [95802]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer to Question 92134 on the 24 November 2022, how many of the 100,000 hectares of rewetted peatland were in (a) England, (b) Scotland, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland; and in what period of time was that restoration conducted.

Trudy Harrison:

This information is available in the <u>UK Greenhouse Gas Inventory 1990-2020:</u> Annexes (defra.gov.uk) Table A.3.4.24.

Plastics: Pollution Control

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[90868]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact on the environment of introducing mandatory corporate reporting on plastic reduction.

Rebecca Pow:

No formal assessment has been made of the potential merits of implementing a mandatory corporate reporting on plastic reduction to assist in working towards eliminating single-use plastics.

However, members of the UK Plastics Pact (UKPP), run by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) and supported by HM Government, have already voluntarily committed to reducing plastic waste, which the UKPP reports on annually. UKPP members are responsible for the majority of plastic packaging sold through UK supermarkets and approximately two thirds of all plastic packaging placed on the UK market. This reporting includes UKPP member progress towards eliminating a number of single-use plastic applications. Their most recent progress report can be found here: https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/uk-plastics-pact-annual-report-2020-21

Under packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR), packaging producers will also be required to report the weight of materials they have supplied each year, which will include how much plastic they have used in their packaging. This will form part of the evidence trail used to determine each producer's recycling obligation and help track the weight of materials, including plastic, used and recycled each year. pEPR will place fees on packaging producers based on the amount and type of packaging they produce each year, thereby discouraging them from using excessive packaging and benefiting those who use reusable packaging.

■ Plastics: Waste

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[<u>90869</u>]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she plans to introduce a target on the reduction of single-use plastic usage.

Rebecca Pow:

There are no current plans to set a target on the reduction of single-use plastic. We consulted earlier this year on a target for reducing all residual waste excluding major mineral waste and will publish the response to this consultation soon.

■ Poultry: Avian Influenza

Cat Smith: [92250]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure that the compensation protocol and payment scheme for poultry farms

found to be affected by avian influenza provides sufficient economic support to those farmers.

Mark Spencer:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Upper Bann, on 18 November 2022, <u>PQ UIN 78897</u>.

Restaurants: Labelling

Gareth Thomas: [92071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of requiring restaurants to provide a full list of ingredients contained in their dishes; and if he will make a statement.

Mark Spencer:

The Government is committed to optimising the information that is available to consumers, and the Government Food Strategy sets out work that we will be taking forward on consumer information and transparency. In the UK we maintain high standards on the food information that is provided to consumers, but for practical reasons there are fewer mandatory labelling rules when food is sold loose, such as in a restaurant.

All food businesses are under a legal obligation to provide information on the presence of the 14 major allergens in food, including in the out of home environment, so that allergic consumers are able to make safe food choices. The FSA, who has policy responsibility for food safety, is currently considering how to improve the provision of information for people with allergies, and researching different approaches for the provision of written and oral information in the non-prepacked food sector.

■ River Tame: Plastics

Andrew Gwynne: [92143]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate she has made of the levels of microplastic pollution in the River Tame.

Rebecca Pow:

Manchester University led research is currently ongoing to investigate the microplastic load taken on by fish in the River Tame. The Environment Agency issued a permit to a PhD student in October 2022 to take samples of minnow, which will be analysed alongside sediment, water and macroinvertebrates, to better understand the mechanisms of uptake.

Under the Natural Course Project, the Environment Agency, United Utilities and Greater Manchester Combined Authority are jointly funding a study to further understand loading of microplastics in a variety of flow conditions.

Sewers: Waste Disposal

Alan Brown: [89857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of a developer's right to connect to sewers on the volume of sewer overflow discharges.

Rebecca Pow:

In August 2021 the Government announced a review of the implementation of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. If implemented, this schedule makes connection to public sewers conditional of approval that the drainage system meets the national standards. These standards will ensure the most effective drainage system is delivered that will help to alleviate pressures on the sewer network, reduce flood risk, as well as improve water quality, amenity, biodiversity, and harvest rainwater. We have been working on this review and will confirm the outcomes in due course.

This would apply to England only.

■ Veterinary Services: Recruitment and Training

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[92115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total cost to the public purse has been of recruiting and training veterinarians to fulfil the requirements of the Northern Ireland Protocol since 1 January 2020.

Sir Jeffrey M Donaldson:

[<u>92116</u>]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Affairs, what the total cost to the public purse was of developing points of entry for agri-food goods in Northern Ireland (a) between 1 January 2020 and 1 January 2021 and (b) between 1 January 2021 and 21 November 2022.

Mark Spencer:

DAERA reported in August 2022 that a total of £15.3 million capital, £16.4 million resource and £1.7 million depreciation has been expended on the provision of the infrastructure, IT systems and personnel for the work necessary to carry out the required SPS checks at Northern Ireland's Points of Entry as a result of the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

Preet Kaur Gill: [95899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team of experts were deployed as of 24 November 2022; and where were those experts based.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

As of 25 November 2022, there are currently five members of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Team of Experts under contract for PSVI commissioned tasks. These deployments are supporting the delivery of the PSVI's strategic objectives and include: work to support the investigation and prosecution of war crimes including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Ukraine; development of the Platform for Action to support children born of CRSV; scoping of options to promote CRSV accountability; collaboration with survivors on programme development and survivor engagement at the PSVI International Conference (28-29 November); and psychosocial support for survivors at the PSVI conference itself. None of the above consultants are currently deployed overseas. The Team of Experts has deployed over 90 times to countries such as Ukraine, Bangladesh, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Armenia and Azerbaijan: Peace Negotiations

Fleur Anderson: [93664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to work with the international community and the Azerbaijani and Armenian Governments to bring about a sustainable peace settlement which addresses the underlying causes of the conflict between those nations.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government continues to engage with the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and with international partners, to support negotiations to secure a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The UK Government has been clear that the outstanding matters between the parties, including those that are drivers of conflict, can only be settled by peaceful negotiation. I [Minister for Europe] reinforced this position with the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 15 and 17 September respectively. UK officials in Baku, Yerevan and across our network of diplomatic missions also continue to encourage progress towards a negotiated settlement.

Bahrain: Elections

Kenny MacAskill: [92356]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of whether parliamentary elections that took place in Bahrain on 12 November 2022 were free, fair and democratic.

David Rutley:

The parliamentary elections which took place in Bahrain on 12 and 19 November were well organised and peaceful and were monitored by local NGOs and civil society groups. Bahrainis turned out in significant numbers to elect members of the next parliament from a cross-section of the community, including 8 women. The election of Nuwab members is an important democratic element of Bahrain's political system.

Kenny MacAskill: [92360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of findings published by the Bahrain Institute of Rights and Democracy in its November 2022 report on the 2022 Parliamentary Elections in Bahrain; and if he will make a statement.

David Rutley:

The Government has taken note of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy report published on 16 November 2022. The UK draws on a number of sources of information when determining its approach in Bahrain and elsewhere.

Bahrain: Human Rights

Kenny MacAskill: [92358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report on Bahrain published by Human Rights Watch on 31 October 2022, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the human rights situation in Bahrain.

David Rutley:

The Government has taken note of the Human Rights Watch report published on 31 October 2022. The UK draws on a number of sources of information when determining its approach in Bahrain and elsewhere.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

Kenny MacAskill: [92357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his counterparts in Bahrain to press for the immediate and unconditional release of imprisoned opposition leaders and human rights activists Hassan Mushaima, Abduljalil al-Singace, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Abdulwahab Husain and Sheikh Mohammed Habib al-Muqdad.

David Rutley:

Officials and ministers have regular discussions with Bahraini counterparts on human rights issues, most recently the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Bahrain's Foreign Minister Dr Abdullatif Al Zayani this month in Bahrain. We continue to follow developments on all matters that relate to human rights within Bahrain and discuss individual cases both with the Bahraini Government as well as with the independent oversight bodies when necessary.

Brazil: Forests

Fabian Hamilton: [95787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what financial assistance his Department is providing to Brazil to help with tackling deforestation of the Amazon rainforest.

David Rutley:

The UK is extremely concerned about deforestation in the Amazon, which has a detrimental impact on global climate and environmental conservation goals. Deforestation, which has been happening at a worrying rate for many years, also affects livelihoods, biodiversity and carbon sequestration. The UK welcomes the commitment made by President-elect Lula during COP27 to strengthen Brazil's domestic action on climate change, including achieving zero deforestation by 2030, in line with the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests. At COP26, the UK committed £300 million to help protect the rainforest throughout the Amazonian biome through the International Climate Finance (ICF) Programme.

Christianity: Oppression

Julian Sturdy: [90790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to help support persecuted Christians across the world.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

On 23 November the FCDO marked Red Wednesday by lighting up our UK buildings in solidarity with Christians around the world who are persecuted for their beliefs. The Government is committed to promoting and defending the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for everyone, everywhere. This includes ensuring that progress made in implementing the Bishop of Truro's recommendations for an enhanced response to the plight of persecuted Christians, and people persecuted for holding other religions, beliefs, or no religious belief, is embedded and that FoRB is central to our wider human rights work.

Colombia: Peace Negotiations

Fabian Hamilton: [93465]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has taken recent steps to provide assistance to the Colombian government for the implementation of its Total Peace policy.

David Rutley:

To date, the UK has spent over £69 million through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreement in Colombia and improve stability and security. Most recently, I [Minister Rutley] visited Colombia this week and met with Álvaro Leyva, Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss the UK's ongoing support for the Colombian peace process and other security and social challenges. Our funding supports the Colombian Government's rural development and reintegration programmes, transitional justice mechanisms, and strengthening the security and participation of communities in conflict-affected areas.

Colombia: Rainforests

Fabian Hamilton: [95788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what financial assistance his Department is providing to Colombia to help tackle the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest and transition to renewable energy.

David Rutley:

At COP27 the UK and Colombia renewed our bilateral 'Partnership for Sustainable Growth' to further deepen cooperation on fighting climate change, including through efforts to protect nature and halt deforestation in the Amazon. Colombia has ambitious national decarbonisation plans and has committed to achieve zero net deforestation by 2030. Our Partnership for Sustainable Growth will support the delivery of these targets, including through the UK's flagship £64 million 'Sustainable Forest Territories' Programme ('TEFOS'), which supports the protection of forests in high-deforestation, conflict affected areas.

■ Commonwealth: National Income

Andrew Rosindell: [92128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will make an estimate of the change in GDP for each country in the Commonwealth of Nations in the (a) 2022-23 financial year and (b) next ten years.

David Rutley:

The FCDO closely monitors global economic trends, including in Commonwealth countries. For short and long run GDP estimates, the FCDO draws on reporting by International Financial Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other reputable economic forecasters.

Cuba: Russia

Fabian Hamilton: [93466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made for the implications of his polices of reports that Cuban President, Miguel Diaz-Canel, met with Dmitry Medvedev, the Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, on 21 November 2022 in Moscow to discuss ways to strengthen economic relations and expand political dialogue.

David Rutley:

UK policies towards Cuba and Russia are not affected by the meeting between the Cuban President and the Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council. The Cuban and Russian Governments have a longstanding Intergovernmental Commission which meets annually to expand political dialogue and strengthen economic relations and investment opportunities. The 2022 meeting of the Commission took place over the last week in Moscow and was the 19th meeting of the Commission. The meetings were attended by members of the Russian and Cuban Governments, including

President Diaz-Canel and Vice-President Cabrisas. President Diaz-Canel also met Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Development Aid

Patrick Grady: [92247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance spending was disbursed in (a) lower-income countries, (b) middle-income countries and (c) the UK in (i) each of the last five financial years and (ii) the 2022-23 financial year.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The official source of UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) data is Statistics on International Development (SID) which is published on a calendar year basis. 2021 is the latest year for which data is available.

Table 1 shows the volume of UK region/country specific bilateral ODA disbursed for the *benefit* of low- and middle-income countries. Table 2 shows the volume of 'indonor' ODA expenditure. There may be overlap between the figures in Tables 1 and 2 in cases where in-donor expenditure has been made for the benefit of low and middle income countries.

Table 1: UK region/country-specific Bilateral ODA by recipient/beneficiary Income Group, 2017-2021

£ THOUSANDS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lower Income Countries	2,825,620	2,483,537	2,810,333	2,392,750	1,429,993
Middle Income Countries	1,941,247	2,015,102	2,179,761	1,841,208	1,385,238

Table 2: UK 'In-donor' ODA expenditure, 2017-2021

£ THOUSANDS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
In-donor expenditure*	1,078,530	1,205,614	1,384,763	1,518,344	1,895,677

^{*} In-donor expenditure includes part of the ODA-eligible running costs of FCDO and other ODA-spending departments, support to refugees/asylum seekers living in a donor country, development awareness, costs for UK experts and UK scholarships. By definition, it could include a small amount of spend in other donor countries.

Source: Statistics on International Development

Preet Kaur Gill: [93607]

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

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Conflict prevention, resolution, and addressing the drivers of conflict is a whole of government effort, combining the UK's diplomatic, development and defence capabilities. FCDO does not disaggregate Official Development Assistance (ODA) "conflict prevention and resolution" spend. Statistics on HMG's ODA spend are published annually on https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-final-uk-aid-spend-2021.

Ending violence against women and girls remains a top priority for the Government. The table outlines UK ODA spend on tackling violence against women and girls.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Bilateral	£14.3 million	£32.6 million	£47.1 million	£35.6 million	£27.6 million
Imputed multilateral share	£2.6 million	£16.7 million	£21.8 million	£19.2 million	ТВА

Preet Kaur Gill: [95902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he made an impact assessment to inform the spending decisions set out in his written ministerial statement entitled FCDO Update, published on 22 November 2022, HCWS379.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Spending decisions on Official Development Assistance (ODA) were informed by assessments of impact. Impact assessments are ongoing as specific spending decisions continue to be made.

Development Aid: International Organisations

John Redwood: [92049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what unrestricted aid funding the Government provides to international organisations.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

In 2021 £4,277 million of UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) was delivered through core contributions to multilateral organisations. This was 37.4 per cent of the total UK ODA budget.

Multilateral organisations, including the United Nations, global health and education funds, the international financial institutions and the Commonwealth are essential partners in achieving the UK's goals. The UK uses its voice on multilateral boards to ensure decisions align with UK priorities, including how and where their funds are spent.

John Redwood: [92050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government takes to assess the suitability and value for money of (a) projects organised by and (b) grants from international organisations.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The suitability and value for money of international organisations receiving Official Development Assistance (ODA), including the projects they organise and grants they provide, is continually assessed through FCDO annual reviews and business cases, as set out in the Department's Programme Operating Framework.

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) independently scrutinises UK ODA to international organisations to assess value for money and impact, including recent ICAI reviews of tackling fraud in multilateral organisations and of the UK's work with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The UK is also a member of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), which carries out regular assessments of multilateral organisations.

Development Aid: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [95900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to page 17 of Statistics on International Development, Final UK Aid Spend 2021, published in November 2022, what the rationale was for using the price per dose as of August 2022 for calculating the value of excess vaccine doses which were donated to developing countries.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

In 2021 the UK donated 30.8 million doses of Astra Zeneca Covid-19 vaccines to countries in need. We have reported ODA expenditure in line with 2021 OECD-DAC guidance. The UK contract with Astra Zeneca is no profit no loss so the final dose price will only be settled once all relevant expenditures have been taken into account. The August 2022 estimate was the best available at the time the statistics on vaccine donations were compiled. Should there be further changes to the price per dose, we will review these in line with the revisions policy

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1021440/FCDO-Revisions-Policy.pdf.

Diplomatic Service: Resignations

Mr David Lammy: [88793]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many Diplomatic Service Officers ended their employment within two years of being appointed in each of the last five years.

David Rutley:

	NUMBER OF DIPLOMATIC SERVICE DEPARTMENTAL LEAVERS WITH LESS THAN TWO			
FINANCIAL YEAR	YEARS' SERVICE			
2017-18	10-19			
2018-19	10-19			
2019-20	10-19			
2020-21	Data not available			
2021-22	Data not available			

Dominic Raab

Mr David Lammy: [88787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department holds any records of a formal complaint being made about the conduct of the Rt. Hon. Member for Esher and Walton.

David Rutley:

The FCDO treats all complaints of this kind confidentially, including correspondence with the Propriety and Ethics Team.

Information regarding an investigation into formal complaints about the conduct of the Rt Hon. Member for Esher and Walton is set out in the investigation Terms of Reference, available here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terms-of-reference-investigation-into-formal-complaints/terms-of-reference-for-the-investigation-into-formal-complaints-about-the-conduct-of-the-deputy-prime-minister-html

The FCDO holds records of two complaints, dated 15 November and 22 November.

Mr David Lammy: [88788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his department holds any record of concerns being conveyed to the Propriety and Ethics Team at the Cabinet Office in relation to a former Foreign Secretary.

David Rutley:

The FCDO treats all complaints of this kind confidentially, including correspondence with the Propriety and Ethics Team.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Bullying and Harassment Mr David Lammy: [88789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether any complaints of (a) bullying, (b) harassment, (c) discrimination and (d) other inappropriate workplace behaviour were received in relation to (i) ministers and (ii) special advisors in each of the last ten years.

David Rutley:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answers given today to Questions 88787 and 88788. The FCDO is fully committed to ensuring a safe and inclusive work environment for all colleagues, taking proactive steps on prevention and taking seriously complaints of inappropriate behaviour. Complaints are handled confidentially.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff

Angela Rayner: [92236]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many staff worked for his Department in September 2021.

David Rutley:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office headcount on 30 September 2021 was 7242.

Haiti: Organised Crime

Fabian Hamilton: [95789]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what bilateral financial assistance his Department is providing to Haiti to help with tackling criminal gangs in that country.

David Rutley:

The UK Government continues to support efforts to tackle criminal activities in Haiti through our contributions to the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). Our platform in country and at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) supports BINUH in their ongoing diplomatic engagement with Haitian authorities, including the Haitian National Police, and their management of a fund supporting and enhancing the security Sector. FCDO officials are engaged in UN Security Council discussions responding to the Haitian Government's request for international security assistance. We continue to work with international partners to ensure a coordinated and coherent response.

■ Israel: LGBTQ+ People

Sir Robert Buckland: [87836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the trends in the levels of LGBTQ rights in Israel following the recent election results.

David Rutley:

Israel is an open democracy with a vibrant civil society. Each year, Tel Aviv hosts the largest Pride parade in the Middle East - the British Embassy in Tel Aviv will continue to use this platform to project the importance of open and tolerant societies that champion equality and diversity. We encourage all Israeli parties to demonstrate tolerance and respect for minority groups. The UK is committed to championing LGBT+ rights internationally and supporting those who defend them. Ministers and our overseas missions work closely with partners across Israel to advance LGBT+ equality and promote the implementation of new laws and policies that better protect LGBT+ people from violence and discrimination. This year, Israel took the decision to ban medical professionals engaging in so-called 'conversion therapy' for LGBT+ people. Since 2018, the UK has committed over £13.5 million in programmes to support the promotion and protection of LGBT+ people's rights around the world.

Julian Assange

Kenny MacAskill: [92362]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 89032 on Julian Assange, what aspects of the Julian Assange case were discussed with whom; and when.

David Rutley:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Kashmir: Armed Conflict

Afzal Khan: [95929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact of conflict in Kashmir on people in that region.

Leo Docherty:

India and Pakistan are long-standing, important friends of UK and we encourage both to engage in dialogue and find lasting, diplomatic solutions to maintain regional stability. We recognise that there are human rights concerns in both India-administered Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. The UK Government encourages all states to ensure their domestic laws are in line with international standards. It is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of Kashmiri people. We continue to encourage both to engage in dialogue and find lasting, diplomatic solutions to maintain regional stability.

Myanmar: Fuels

Catherine West: [95889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and (b) the maritime insurance sector on the insurance of third nation vessels shipping aviation fuel to Myanmar.

David Rutley:

The UK has been clear that we oppose the provision of jet fuel, arms, military equipment, and dual use items to Myanmar and that UK businesses should not facilitate such activity. We also expect British insurers to conduct due diligence to ensure they are not facilitating the provision of goods that enable serious human rights violations. On 28 February, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office worked with the Department for International Trade to update the UK's Overseas Business Risk Guidance to make it clear that UK businesses should conduct thorough supply chain due diligence to ensure that commodities, such as aviation fuel, do not reach the Myanmar military.

■ Pacific Islands: Climate Change

Catherine West: [95888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what bilateral financial assistance his Department is providing to Pacific Island nations to help with mitigating the risk of climate change.

David Rutley:

Pacific Island Countries (PICs), as Small Island Developing States (SIDs), are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. At COP27 the UK reaffirmed commitment to the Glasgow Climate Pact, and will continue to work closely with Pacific Island Countries to reform the international architecture to improve SIDs access to finance. In November 2021, we announced the 'Small Island Developing States Adaptation and Resilience' Programme, which will help SIDs draw down climate and wider concessional finding.

In November, the Minister for Indo-Pacific attended the 12th Pacific Community Ministerial conference, and expressed support for the Pacific Island Forum's recently launched 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent.

Somaliland: Elections

Ms Lyn Brown: [92149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to support peaceful and inclusive compromise on a timetable and processes for elections in Somaliland.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK has led the international community's engagement on elections in Somaliland and supported a joint statement with partners on 8 November urging Somaliland's political actors to agree on an electoral roadmap. Following the political demonstrations across Somaliland on 11 August, we raised this with the President and Minister of Foreign Affairs and issued a statement calling for all sides to behave peacefully and uphold the rights to assembly and association. It is important that agreement is reached between Somaliland stakeholders on a roadmap for elections. We continue to monitor the situation and to raise this issue with the Somaliland Government.

South Africa: Ukraine

Jessica Morden: [94721]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in South African on support for Ukraine following Russia's invasion.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The Foreign Secretary has spoken with his South African counterpart three times since being appointed in September 2022, most recently during the State Visit on 22-23 November. On each occasion they discussed a range of issues, including the situation in Ukraine. I [Minister Mitchell] welcome President Ramaphosa's calls for urgent diplomacy to bring an end to the conflict. But an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops and ceasefire are required to create the conditions for dialogue.

Sudan: Democracy

Harriett Baldwin: [92198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to set out a (a) strategy and (b) timetable to work with (i) Sudan and (ii) the wider international community to help Sudan transition to democracy.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

Working with international partners, including the Troika (UK, US and Norway), we are supporting Sudanese efforts to resolve the current political crisis through the establishment of a civilian-led government. We continue to urge Sudanese actors to swiftly reach an agreement on this. This message was delivered by the UK Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan, and the UK Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea during a visit to Khartoum in September, as well as by the British Ambassador to Sudan. However, the UK's strategy and possible timeframes on working with Sudan and the international community must be guided by the wishes of the Sudanese people, it is essential that Sudan's journey to a democratic transition is Sudanese-led.

■ Sudan: UN Human Rights Council

Ms Lyn Brown: [92148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the impact on the credibility of the UN Human Rights Council of the election of Sudan to that body on 11 October 2022; and what recent discussions he has had with the African Union on consistency between nominations to the UN Human Rights Council, African Union policy on the suspension of Sudan from its membership and African Union policies on human rights, impunity and elected civilian governance.

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

The UK condemns the human rights violations that have taken place in Sudan since the coup and have consistently called for Sudanese authorities to end violence against protestors and to fulfil their obligation to protect civilians. We hope that Sudan uses its re-election to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on 11 October as an opportunity to demonstrate to the international community its commitment to international human rights law and to bringing those responsible for human rights violations to justice. The UK continues to support the HRC in its work to promote and protect human rights across the globe.

Syria: Development Aid

Preet Kaur Gill: [90856]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his international counterparts on taking steps to renew the UN resolution on cross-border aid delivery into Syria.

David Rutley:

The UK continues to press for continued aid access into Syria, including using our position at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). When the UNSC most recently discussed the humanitarian situation in Syria on 25 October and 21 November, the UK urged Council Members to unite and renew the existing resolution on cross-border aid. Officials and ministers make similar representations in their bilateral engagements with UN Member States. The UK remains the third largest bilateral donor to the Syrian crisis, having committed over £3.8 billion in aid since 2012.

Thailand: British Nationals Abroad

Dave Doogan: [93641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK nationals have died in Thailand in each of the last (a) five and (b) ten years; how many of those deaths were due to (i) murder, (ii) manslaughter, (iii) accidental death, (iv) unknown or suspicious circumstances and (v) no recorded reason; and how many of those deaths were while a person was in police custody.

David Rutley:

New death cases for Thailand:

THAILAND: NEW DEATH CASES	TOTAL (ROUNDED)
2022 (up to 22/11)	500
2021	480
2020	460
2019	490
2018	490
2017	460
2016	450
2015	360
2014	340
2013	400
2012	360

New death cases by category for Thailand:

THAILAN D: NEW DEATH CASES BY CATEGO RY	DEATH >		DEATH > MURDER OR MANSLAUGHT ER	> Hospit	DEATH > NATUR AL DEATH	DEAT H > SUICID		DEATH > INFECTIO US DISEASE	DROWNI
2022 (up to 22/11)	135	7		239	112	6		10	
2021	121	12	0	218	114		6	8	0
2020	112	6		239	84	9	6		
2019	144	13		221	94	12			
2018	159	13		179	122		6		
2017	159	22		120	132	11		0	9
2016	195	12		69	152	11	8	0	
2015	103	13		0	213	10	15	0	0

THAIL AN

D: NEW				D	D		D		
CASES			DEATH >	DEATH >	>			DEATH >	
CATEGO			MURDER OR MANSLAUGHT ER		AL	SUICID	ACCIDE NT		DROWNI
2014	102	14		0	200	11	15	0	0
2013	87	25		0	261	13	7	0	0
2012	96	34		0	222	7	0	0	0

Death in Custody:

Between 2012 and 2015, there were no new death in custody cases recorded for Thailand. Between 2016 and 2022 so far, there have been fewer than 5 new death in custody cases each year for Thailand.

Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid

Charlotte Nichols: [92377]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he is taking steps to allocate funds generated from the sale of Chelsea Football Club to humanitarian causes in Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The proceeds from the sale are currently frozen in a UK bank account, and they cannot be moved or used without a licence from the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI). An independent foundation is being established by humanitarian experts outside the Government to manage and distribute the funds for humanitarian purposes in Ukraine. A licence application will need to be made to move the funds to the foundation once established. The Government will closely scrutinise the details of any proposal to maintain the integrity of the sanctions regime.

Vicky Bowman

Fleur Anderson: [95951]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether she has had discussions with representatives of the (a) State Administrative Council or (b) Armed Forces in Myanmar on the position of the former British Ambassador, Vicky Bowman.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

During Ms Bowman's detention, officials at the British Embassy in Yangon were in contact with the local authorities to maintain consular access and to check on her

welfare. We welcome her and others' release from jail in Myanmar on 17 November. All those unjustly imprisoned in Myanmar should be released.

Wang Shunping

Andrew Rosindell: [92130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Chinese counterparts on the detainment of Christian preacher Wang Shauping in the Nujiang Lisu Autonomous Prefecture.

David Rutley:

We are aware of reports that Minister Wang Shanping is detained and facing charges of organising and sponsoring illegal gatherings. Minister Wang Shanping's case further highlights the severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief in China. We regularly raise the human rights situation in China directly with the Chinese authorities at the highest levels. Most recently, the Foreign Secretary did so in a meeting with his Chinese counterpart on 20 September.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Ambulance Services: Standards

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[95909]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of ambulance crews being unable to hand over patients to hospital staff within 15 minutes of arrival on patient safety.

Will Quince:

Patient handovers at accident and emergency (A&E) must take place within agreed timeframes. NHS England is providing targeted support to some hospitals facing delays in the transfer of patients from ambulances to identify interventions. This is in addition to a national Winter Improvement Collaborative programme to assist trusts to identify the causes of delays and implement best practice.

The National Health Service will increase bed capacity by the equivalent of at least 7,000 general and acute beds, alongside a £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to improve patient flow through hospitals and reduce waiting times in transferring ambulance patients to A&E. In 2020/21, we invested £450 million to upgrade A&E facilities in more than 120 NHS trusts to increase physical capacity and reduce overcrowding.

Arthritis: Medical Treatments

Vicky Foxcroft: [94815]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 22 November to Question 87913, for what reason that data is not collected.

Helen Whately:

While this information is not collected in the format requested, data is collected on relevant medicines. While 'Secondary Care Medicines Data' provides information on medicines prescribed, it does not record whether a prescription is for a stated condition or diagnosis, such as rheumatoid arthritis. This information is available at the following link:

https://opendata.nhsbsa.net/dataset/secondary-care-medicines-data

'NICE Technology Appraisals in the NHS in England (Innovation Scorecard), To June 2022' includes data by region for National Institute for Health and Care Excellence-approved technology appraisals published in the last five years. While it contains data for specific conditions, this does not include rheumatoid arthritis. This information is available at the following link:

https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nice-technology-appraisals-in-the-nhs-in-england-innovation-scorecard/to-june-2022/2.-estimates-report

Asthma: Medical Treatments

Yvonne Fovargue: [93515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of severe asthma patients have been prescribed a biologic in the last 12 months.

Yvonne Fovarque: [93516]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many severe asthma patients were refused biologic treatment in the last 12 months.

Helen Whately:

The information on the proportion of severe asthma patients prescribed a biologic is not held in the format requested. However, 3,396 patients commenced a new biologic therapy for severe asthma in the last year. All those patients considered to benefit from a biologic treatment by a specialist severe asthma team will have received the treatment.

Autism: Assistance Animals

James Grundy: [90899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to support a funded pilot project aimed to create a national blueprint for the provision of Autism Assistance Dogs.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department of Health and Social Care has no current plans to fund a pilot project aimed to create a national blueprint for the provision of Autism Assistance Dogs.

It is for local commissioners to ensure that the appropriate provision is available to meet the health and care needs of the local population, including considering whether they provide Autism Assistance Dogs as part of their provision. NHS England is developing a framework of best practice to assist commissioners to improve outcomes for autistic people.

Integrated care boards and National Health Service trusts should have due regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines 'Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: support and management' and 'Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management'. These evidenced guidelines set out how health and social care professionals can provide support for autistic people.

■ Blood: Contamination

Christopher Pincher:

[93526]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of children affected by the infected blood scandal; and if he expand the scope of compensation related to that scandal to the children of those affected.

Maria Caulfield:

The Department does not currently hold the information requested. The Infected Blood Inquiry is reviewing the support provided to those infected and affected. It is expected to report in 2023 and we will consider its recommendations.

■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Paula Barker: [94900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to Sir Mike Richards report of the independent review of adult screening programmes in England, whether he is taking steps to deliver a new IT system in the Breast Screening Programme.

Helen Whately:

NHS England have launched the Digital transformation of screening programme in response to the report's recommendations. Discovery work on a new breast screening IT system has recently been completed.

Cancer: Medical Treatments

Feryal Clark: [93709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department will ensure that the delegation of specialised commissioning functions does not distort access to innovative cancer treatments.

Helen Whately:

NHS England is currently reviewing which specialised services could be delegated to direct management by integrated care boards (ICBs), which will be subject to local system and service readiness. By April 2023, we expect that some ICBs will have delegated commissioning responsibility for a portion of specialised services. NHS England retains overall accountability for specialised services delegated to ICBs.

Cancer: Radiotherapy

Feryal Clark: [93706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's 10-Year Cancer Plan will include measures to improve regional access to (a) radioligand therapy and (b) other targeted molecular radiotherapies.

Helen Whately:

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

Care Homes: Visits

Dr Rupa Huq: [93596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislation to guarantee care home residents' access to in-person support from at least one designated person important to them such as a (a) relative or (b) friend.

Helen Whately:

The Government's guidance states that every resident should be able to receive at least one visitor in all circumstances. We are considering options to ensure this guidance is followed by all care homes.

Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Coronavirus

Sir Mark Hendrick: [93467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of reduced access to community mental health services during the COVID-19 pandemic on the numbers of people detained under the Mental Health Act.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2020/21, the number of detentions under the Mental Health Act 1983 increased by an estimated 4.5% compared to the previous year. While in 'Monitoring the Mental Health Act 2020/21', the Care Quality Commission suggested that reduced access to community mental health services may have caused this increase, the extent has not been confirmed. It is estimated that there were 5.7% fewer detentions under the Act in 2021/22.

Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope:

<u>93438</u>

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he will respond to the invitation from the Hon. Member from Christchurch, dated 2 November 2022, in his capacity as chair of the APPG on covid-19 vaccine damage to meet representatives of victims of vaccine damage.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: We will respond to the hon. Member in due course.

Dementia: Rural Areas

Alicia Kearns: [92380]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve dementia care in rural areas.

Helen Whately:

Integrated care boards (ICBs) are responsible for the provision of dementia care services. NHS England expects ICBs to commission services based on local population needs.

Dental Services: Feltham and Heston

Seema Malhotra: [93547]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in Feltham and Heston constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: NHS England asked dental practices to return to full delivery of contracted activity from July 2022, including in Feltham and Heston. In September, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to dental care, including in Feltham and Heston.

The plan includes improvements to ensure dentists are renumerated fairly for more complex work, allowing greater flexibility to reallocate resources and to utilise dentists with greater capacity to deliver National Health Service treatment, whilst enabling full use of the dental team. The plan also includes streamlining processes for overseas dentists and holding the local NHS to account for dentistry provision. In addition, Health Education England is also reforming dental education to improve the recruitment and retention of dental professionals.

Dental Services: Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle

Emma Hardy: [93609]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve NHS dentistry provision in Hull West and Hessle constituency.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England asked dental practices to return to full delivery of contracted activity from July 2022, including in Hull West and Hessle. In September, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to dental care, including in Hull West and Hessle.

The plan includes improvements to ensure dentists are renumerated fairly for more complex work, allowing greater flexibility to reallocate resources and to utilise dentists with greater capacity to deliver National Health Service treatment, whilst enabling full use of the dental team. The plan also includes streamlining processes for overseas dentists and holding the local NHS to account for dentistry provision. In addition, Health Education England is also reforming dental education to improve the recruitment and retention of dental professionals.

■ Dental Services: Liverpool

Dan Carden: [92322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to NHS dentistry in Liverpool.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England asked dental practices to return to full delivery of contracted activity from July 2022, including in Liverpool. In September, we announced 'Our plan for patients', which outlines how we will meet oral health needs and increase access to dental care, including in Liverpool.

The plan includes improvements to ensure dentists are renumerated fairly for more complex work, allowing greater flexibility to reallocate resources and to utilise dentists with greater capacity to deliver National Health Service treatment, whilst enabling full use of the dental team. The plan also includes streamlining processes for overseas dentists and holding the local NHS to account for dentistry provision. In addition, Health Education England is also reforming dental education to improve the recruitment and retention of dental professionals.

Dentistry: Misconduct

Mr Virendra Sharma: [94723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many General Dental Council investigations into potential malpractice have not been completed within (a) three, (b) five and (c) seven years of that council becoming aware of an original concern; and what assessment she has made of the implications for patient safety of dentists under investigation.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not held centrally. The General Dental Council is the independent regulator of dentists and dental care professionals in the United Kingdom and is responsible for investigating concerns about treatment or the conduct of its registrants.

Domestic Abuse

Apsana Begum: [93685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the impact of (a) domestic abuse and (b) coercive control on the health of people affected.

Neil O'Brien:

No recent assessment has made. However, the Department is working with the Office for National Statistics to explore how insights from health data can improve the understanding of violence against women and girls. The information generated will be used to improve services and women and girls' experiences and inform interventions on violence against women and girls.

Gender Recognition: Health Services

Philip Davies: [83573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS England has spent on gender identification services in each of the last five years.

Maria Caulfield:

The following table outlines the total NHS England expenditure on gender identity services in each of the last five years. It provides a break down by services provided to children and adolescents versus services provided to adults.

YEAR	GENDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE FOR CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS (£M)	GENDER IDENTITY SERVICES FOR ADULTS (£M)	TOTAL (£M)
2021/22	n/a	n/a	n/a
2020/21	n/a	n/a	n/a
2019/20	8.0	26.4	34.4
2018/19	6.1	25.5	31.6
2017/18	6.8	21.6	28.4

The total expenditure for 2020/21 or 2021/22 is not held due to the financial arrangements that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

General Practitioners

Seema Malhotra: [93549]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs there were in October 2022 in (a) Feltham and Heston constituency, (b) Hounslow and (c) England.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: The information requested is not held in the format requested for Feltham and Heston and Hounslow. In October 2022, there were 27,469 fully qualified full time equivalent general practitioners in England.

General Practitioners: North East Hampshire

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

94818

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with Integrated Care Boards on the ability of patients to access (a) GP appointments and (b) follow up care in North East Hampshire; and what steps his Department is taking to make this process quicker.

Neil O'Brien:

There have been no recent discussions. The Department supports NHS England to ensure that the efficiency of elective pathways in each National Health Service trust is regularly assessed. Where necessary, NHS England will engage with the relevant integrated care board or trust.

We are investing at least £1.5 billion to create an additional 50 million general practice appointments by 2024 by increasing and diversifying the workforce. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity.

General Practitioners: Standards

Seema Malhotra: [93548]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the average time people in (a) England (b) Greater London, and (c) Feltham and Heston constituency waited for a GP appointment in the last 12 months.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: No specific estimate has been made.

Hammersmith Bridge: Closures

Fleur Anderson: [92369]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the potential health impacts of the closure of Hammersmith Bridge to vehicles on Putney residents.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

Health Services

Wes Streeting: [93595]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to resume publication of the paused (a) Critical Care Bed Capacity and Urgent Operations Cancelled and (b) Delayed Transfers of Care data set.

Will Quince:

Information on critical care bed numbers and occupancy has been published by NHS England from Thursday 24 November as part of a weekly summary of the Urgent and Emergency Care Daily Situation Reports.

The Critical Care Bed Capacity and Urgent Operations Cancelled data collection was paused, along with other official statistics, due to the coronavirus pandemic and the need to release capacity across the National Health Service to support the response. NHS England will keep the paused collections under review to establish at which point further collections should be reinstated and update published information when the status of any of the collections change.

The quarterly Cancelled Elective Operations official statistics publication has resumed, and data for Q2 2022-23 last published on 10 th November.

Data on hospital discharges is now collected through the acute daily discharge sitrep and is published monthly. These reports can be found at the following link:

https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/

■ Health Services: Females

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [93649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle waiting times for menstrual health care; and if he will make a statement.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years, including gynaecological services. We have allocated more than £8 billion from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in addition to the £2 billion Elective Recovery Fund and £700 million Targeted Investment Fund already made available in 2021/2022 to increase elective activity, including services which address menstrual health.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [93651]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Women's Health Hubs (a) address access to services and (b) reduce health inequalities for women's health conditions.

Maria Caulfield:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: The Women's Health Strategy encourages local commissioners and providers to consider adopting women's health hubs to ensure equitable access to and experience of services and reduce disparities in outcomes. To support this expansion, we have commissioned the National Institute for Health and Care Research-funded Birmingham, RAND Europe and Cambridge Rapid Evaluation Centre to undertake scoping work for an evaluation of existing women's health hubs. This is expected to conclude in early 2023.

Health: Disadvantaged

Peter Dowd: [93565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities has made of the adequacy of existing measures to mitigate health inequalities for night shift workers.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: No specific assessment has been made.

■ Healthy Start Scheme: Ethnic Groups and Greater London

Sir Stephen Timms: [93419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish updated data on the levels of uptake of the Healthy Start Scheme in (a) London boroughs and (b) different ethnicity groups.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 25 November 2022]: We continue to work with the NHS Business Services Authority and the Department for Work and Pensions to obtain data on the uptake of the Healthy Start scheme. We aim to have the data available by the end of the year. However, data on the ethnicity of Healthy Start beneficiaries is not collected.

Hospital Beds

Sir Mark Hendrick: [94690]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients who are fit for discharge are promptly released from hospital.

Helen Whately:

The Government is providing £500 million to reduce delays in discharges from hospital to social care, which will be distributed to local authorities and integrated care boards. The allocations were published on 16 November 2022 and are available at the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-social-care-discharge-fund-local-authority-and-integrated-care-board-icb-allocations

Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination

Martyn Day: [89867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department will take to increase the level uptake of the HPV vaccination in boys.

Neil O'Brien:

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is offered to all school-aged children predominantly by school-based providers, with alternative sites available for those not in mainstream education. NHS England provides catch-up opportunities for anyone who may have missed their vaccination offer and NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency deliver annual communication campaigns to promote the HPV vaccine via general practitioners and universities. A HPV awareness campaign is planned for 2023 and will include a focus on the protective benefits of the HPV vaccine for boys.

Liver Cancer

Andrew Rosindell: [86417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve outcomes for patients with liver cancer.

Helen Whately:

The 'Help Us, Help You' campaign seeks to address the reasons which may deter patients from seeking advice from the National Health Service (NHS) for potential cancer symptoms. The current campaign focuses on abdominal and urological symptoms and addresses symptoms of liver cancer.

The NHS is implementing non-specific symptom pathways for patients who present with vague and non-site specific symptoms which do not clearly align to a tumour type. There are currently 96 pathways in England, which will support the NHS to meet the new Faster Diagnosis Standard to ensure that all patients who are referred for the investigation of suspected cancer receive an outcome within 28 days.

A number of effective new medicines for liver cancer have been made available to NHS patients in recent years, including through the Government's Cancer Drugs Fund, and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently appraising several new medicines for the treatment of liver cancer.

■ Liver Cancer: Screening

Peter Gibson: [92341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recall systems are in place to ensure regular liver cancer surveillance among adults with cirrhosis.

Helen Whately:

NHS England is working with providers to identify how liver surveillance can be more systematic and ensuring that those at high risk will be offered scans, as recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

NHS England is offering mobile fibroscans and other diagnostic activity to people at high risk of liver cancer. In addition, the National Cancer Programme fund Community Liver Health Checks in 12 areas in England to provide earlier identification of patients with liver disease and ensure that those at high risk of hepatocellular carcinoma are referred for six-monthly liver surveillance by ultrasound.

Liver Diseases

Peter Gibson: [92342]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of liver disease outcomes across Integrated Care Systems in England.

Neil O'Brien:

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities publishes liver disease profiles which compare local areas in England. Liver disease mortality and hospital admissions data for integrated care boards (ICBs) were added to the profiles in October 2022, which is available at the following link:

https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/liver-disease

Neurology

Rachael Maskell: [73865]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will establish a taskforce to look at the (a) research, (b) workforce and (c) clinical needs of people who have a neurological condition.

Helen Whately:

We have no plans to establish a taskforce to address the research, workforce and clinical needs of people with a neurological condition. The Department is committed to supporting those living with a neurological condition and the provision of services is a whole system responsibility across primary, secondary and specialist care in the National Health Service and social care. Specialised elements of neurology care are provided through the 25 specialised neurological treatment centres in England to ensure that those with more complex health needs receive the best possible care.

NHS England's neuroscience transformation programme has worked with stakeholders, including patients and expert working groups to identify consensus on best practice, including principles on access to appropriate timely services for people with the range of neurological services. The transformation programme continues to work with patient groups and stakeholders to develop a new model for neurology services.

The transformation programme will provide integrated care systems with the tools, information and resources such as the neurology data required to improve services, as systems assume joint or delegated responsibility for commissioning specialised neurology services from April 2023. In NHS England, patient and public voice partners are represented throughout the governance structure to ensure that the views of patients, carers and the public are addressed.

Stephen Morgan: [92324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Neurological Alliance's 2021-22 My Neuro Survey, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Departments policies of that survey's finding that 55 per cent of adults living with a neurological condition, experienced delays to routine appointments with specialists in the last year; and what steps he is taking to improve neurology services.

Will Quince:

The 'Delivery plan for tackling the COVID-19 backlog of elective care' sets out how the National Health Service will recover and expand elective services over the next three years, including neurology services. NHS England is supporting providers and systems to accelerate new and existing initiatives to improve services and address waiting times for outpatients, including neurology.

NHS England's neuroscience transformation programme has worked with stakeholders, including patients and expert working groups to identify good practice and access to appropriate services for people with neurological conditions. The programme will use these insights to provide integrated care systems with the tools, information and resources to transform neurology services from April 2023.

■ Neurology: Recruitment

Rachael Maskell: [95880]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has taken recent steps to increase the number of (a) diagnostic and (b) interventionist neuro radiologists in the NHS.

Will Quince:

As of August 2022, there were 5,193 full-time equivalent (FTE) doctors working in the National Health Service in England in the sub-specialism of clinical radiology. This is an increase of 5.5% since July 2021 and 57.5% since August 2010 and includes doctors in training grades, specialists and doctors on other contracts. The consultant clinical radiologist workforce has increased by 3.8% since August 2021 and 53.9% since August 2010.

While interventional radiology is officially recognised as a sub-specialty of clinical radiology, all radiologists will undertake some form of diagnostic activity. There has been an increase of 63% in entry points in clinical radiology specialty training places from 2016 to 2021. In addition, there has been an increase in funding for year 6 Specialty Training for interventional radiologists for 20 places in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Health Education England is implementing the priorities identified in the cancer workforce plan phase 1 and is investing an additional £50 million in 2022/23 to expand the cancer and diagnostics workforce, including postgraduate medical training of cancer-related medical professions, such as diagnostic and interventional neuro radiologists.

■ NHS

Helen Morgan: [95987]

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

Will Quince:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 November 2022 to Question 92396.

NHS: Migrant Workers

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [95801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much NHS employers paid in Immigration Skills Charge (a) in 2017-18, (b) in 2018-19, (c) in 2019-20, (d) in 2020-21, (e) in 2021-22 and (f) to date in 2022-23.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not held centrally.

Ophthalmic Services: Special Educational Needs

Sir Robert Neill: [92153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions his Department has had with NHS England on its plans for the NHS Special Schools Eye Care Service.

Sir Robert Neill: [92154]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many eye care professionals are delivering the NHS Special School Eye Care Service under Primary Ophthalmic Service contracts.

Neil O'Brien:

As of November 2022, there are 40 optometrists and 33 dispensing opticians contributing to the delivery of the NHS Special Schools Eye Care Service, under Primary Ophthalmic Services contracts. However, the number providing the service in schools will vary from month to month.

The Department regularly discusses eyecare services with NHS England, which has commissioned an independent evaluation of the special schools' proof-of-concept pilot programme to inform future National Health Service commissioning decisions. The Department will discuss future plans for the service with NHS England once the evaluation has concluded early in 2023.

Oral Tobacco: Regulation

Mr David Jones: [94718]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to regulate oral nicotine pouches in line with other reduced-risk nicotine products such as ecigarettes.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: The Committee on Toxicity of Food, Consumer Products and the Environment is reviewing the evidence on the use of oral nicotine pouches and assessing the risk to users. On completion of this review, the Department will assess whether the regulatory framework for oral nicotine pouches should be amended.

Pharmacy: Lewisham

Janet Daby: [93636]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of pharmacies in (a) Lewisham East constituency and (b) the London Borough of Lewisham which have closed since 2017.

Neil O'Brien:

[Holding answer 28 November 2022]: Since June 2017, there have been two pharmacy closures in Lewisham East and six closures in the borough of Lewisham. One pharmacy has opened since 2017. These closures do not include changes of ownership or change of premises. Lewisham Borough Council has recently consulted on its statutorily required Pharmaceutical Need Assessment for 2022. The draft conclusions of the assessment state that there is adequate provision in the area.

Social Services: Reform

Daisy Cooper: [63342]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether her proposals for reform of adult social care will be delayed.

Helen Whately:

We have listened to the concerns of local government and taken the difficult decision to delay the planned adult social care charging reforms from October 2023 to October 2025. We are providing additional time for local authorities to prepare for these reforms and additional funding to assist with immediate pressures.

We will implement the planned reforms to the social care system, which involve investing in the workforce, improved data and technology and increasing oversight.

HOME OFFICE

Action Fraud

Mr David Jones: [95804]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) performance and (b) efficacy of Action Fraud.

Tom Tugendhat:

Action Fraud is the national reporting centre for fraud and cyber crime. Reports received by Action Fraud are considered by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB), both of which are operated by the City of London Police as the UK's lead force for fraud.

In light of advances to technology and growing demand on the service and an independent review by Sir Craig Mackey exploring the performance and function of Action Fraud, we are providing over £30 million to City of London Police over the next three years to support the upgrade of the Action Fraud service.

Improvements are already being rolled out on an ongoing basis, with the new service expected to be fully operational by 2024. The upgrades will provide better support services and reporting tools for victims, produce greater intelligence and insight for policing so they can investigate more frauds, and allow for greater prevention and disruption at scale using this intelligence

Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Stuart C McDonald: [92242]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that workers who travel to the UK on the agricultural Seasonal Worker visa are offered work for the duration of their visa; and what estimate she has made of the number of those workers who left the UK after (a) three, (b) four and (c) five months in (i) 2020, (ii) 2021 and (iii) the first half of 2022.

Stuart C McDonald: [92243]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to put checks are in place to ensure that workers who entered the UK on the agricultural Seasonal Worker visa are placed in work before further workers are brought to the UK; and what steps her Department is taking to (a) monitor the numbers of and (b) offer support to workers on the visa who are unable to find work.

Robert Jenrick:

The Seasonal Worker is an 'operator led' immigration route, with four scheme operators selected to manage the placement of workers on UK farms and to ensure their welfare in the UK.

The Seasonal Worker scheme operators are responsible for managing all aspects of the recruitment and placement of workers on UK farms, and ensure workers have sufficient work as part of their sponsorship duties. The Home Office closely monitors

the scheme operators to ensure they are complying with their sponsor duties. Non-compliance with the guidance could result in the revocation of their sponsor license.

The Home Office monitors the number of workers who enter the UK through this route and the number of workers that return to ensure that the route is operating effectively. We do not however routinely publish information about lengths of stay.

Asylum

Kelly Tolhurst: [92281]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress her Department has made in reducing the backlog of asylum seeker cases.

Kelly Tolhurst: [92282]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department will take to increase the rate of processing for asylum seekers.

Robert Jenrick:

The Asylum Transformation programme aims to bring the system back into balance and modernise it. It is focused on increasing productivity by streamlining, simplifying and digitising processes to speed up decision making to increase efficiency and output. This will support us in delivering sustainable changes to decision maker productivity, helping us control the unprecedented volumes of intake to prevent long wait times for customers.

The PACE pilot covers new flow cases (including small boats and those claims which are admitted to the UK asylum process) along with Legacy cases and children casework. The 8-week pilot reduced the time asylum seekers waited for a first interview by 40%. It is being rolled out across the UK at pace to deal with the 100,000 people awaiting a decision on their claim.

We have increased the number of asylum caseworkers by 80%, from 597 staff in 2019/20 to more than 1,000 today. We are on course for a further 500 people by March 2023.

Asylum: Banbury

Mr David Davis: [92081]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Banbury constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92082]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Horsham constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92083]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Esher and Walton constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92084]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Welwyn Hatfield constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92085]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Central Devon constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92086]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Richmond (Yorkshire) constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92087]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Tonbridge and Malling constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92088]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Wyre and Preston North constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

Mr David Davis: [92089]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers are housed in Stratford-on-Avon constituency as of 21 November 2022; and how many were housed in that constituency in (a) 2022, (b) 2021, (c) 2020 and (d) 2019.

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 a reportable format, and to provide the information could only be done at 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.

Asylum: Housing

Kelly Tolhurst: [92283]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment criteria her Department use to find asylum seeker centres.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office selection criteria includes deliverability, size, location, cost, situation and use.

Brandon Lewis: [93510]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with representatives of the OYO hotel group on housing for asylum seekers (a) in Great Yarmouth constituency and (b) nationwide.

Robert Jenrick:

The Minister for Immigration set out in his recent "Dear Colleague" letter we are committed to engaging in advance with Local Authorities when we need to set up a contingency accommodation

Our Providers work with a number of providers of accommodation and discussions in relation to the provision of accommodation, including price, would be commercially sensitive. We would therefore be unable to disclose the details of such discussions.

Asylum: Integrated Care Systems

Anneliese Dodds: [95920]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to publish guidance to Integrated Care Systems about people claiming asylum who are being accommodated in hotels and what funding is being provided to them.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is not able to commission health services for asylum seekers, and we do not fund healthcare.

We work closely with NHS and LA partners to support the health needs of asylum seekers. All asylum seekers have access to NHS services from arrival in the UK. The Home Office and its contractors work closely with the NHS, local authorities and non-governmental organisations to ensure that people can access the health care and support they need.

Asylum: Interpreters

Caroline Nokes: [92178]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many complaints her Department has received in each of the last five years on (a) prejudiced and (b)

discriminatory attitudes of contracted language interpreters towards asylum claimants during asylum interviews; and of those complaints how many have resulted in (i) written warnings, (ii) suspensions of and (iii) the removal of interpreters from her Department's approved list.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office is unable to provide the data requested because this information is not held in a reportable format, not routinely published and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Asylum: Medway

Kelly Tolhurst: [92280]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of asylum seekers in Medway.

Robert Jenrick:

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority area. These statistics can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support. Data is published on a quarterly basis, with the latest information published 25 August 2022.

The next quarterly figures are due to be released later this month.

Asylum: Rwanda

Caroline Nokes: [92177]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many women have been issued with notices of the Government's intention to remove them to Rwanda through the Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership; and how many of these women have disclosed histories of (a) sexual or gender-based violence, (b) human trafficking and (c) modern slavery.

Robert Jenrick:

A breakdown of individuals considered for relocation under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda is not currently available.

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of individuals being managed under inadmissibility rules and can be found online at How many people dowe grant asylum or protection to?-GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Crime Prevention

Kate Kniveton: [92363]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to provide (a) funding and (b) infrastructure support to (i) local and (ii) community projects to tackle (A) knife crime and (B) violence against women and girls.

Chris Philp:

The Government recognises the important role played by local and community projects in efforts to effectively tackle knife crime and violence against women and girls.

The Government has made £130m available this year alone (22/23) to tackle serious violence, including murder and knife crime. This includes £64m for Violence Reduction Units, which bring together key partners locally to address violence. VRUs take a public health approach to reducing violence, which includes as a central tenet working with and for community.

VRUs deliver a range of interventions that support young people at risk of involvement in serious violence, which requires close work with those local communities affected. Interventions commissioned by the VRU are often co-produced between statutory bodies and community organisations, to ensure shared support for those who need it most.

For example, in Greater Manchester, the VRU commissions hyper-local activity in communities across each of their ten local districts. This includes a pilot conducted in Salford, which identified 27 young people deemed to be at high-risk of becoming involved in violence over the summer holidays. Through a series of diversionary activities in the community, 26 of the 27-strong cohort had now become involved in education, employment or training by September 2021.

Additionally, this Government is determined to deliver on the commitments set out in Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and the Domestic Abuse Plan. To achieve this, we have allocated £15.5m this financial year to activity to support victims and better establish what works to prevent VAWG. This will be delivered in part via local and/or community projects. We have also allocated £25m to perpetrator programmes and research, and £12m in response to the Rape Review (£5m to Operation Soteria and £7m to enhance the technical capability of police when dealing with Rape and other Serious Sexual Offences.)

Crime: Rural Areas

Sir Greg Knight: [94698]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce rural crime in (a) East Yorkshire and (b) England.

Chris Philp:

Our manifesto committed us to use police resources to tackle rural crime. As well as recruiting 20,000 additional police officers, we are also taking steps to address issues that we know affect rural communities. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act empowers and equips the police and courts with the powers they need to combat hare coursing. The Government is also providing funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit.

As at 30 September 2022, Humberside Police has recruited 263 additional uplift officers against a total three year allocation of 322 officers. As of the same date,

15,343 additional uplift officers have been recruited in England and Wales through the Police Uplift Programme, 77% of the target of 20,000 additional officers by March 2023. The deployment of these officers is an operational decision for Chief Constables.

Detention Centres: Manston

Grahame Morris: [95820]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 November 2022 to Question 83606 on Detention Centres: Manston, how many (a) adults and (b) children had been held at Manston Immigration Processing Centre for over (i) 24 hours, (ii) 48 hours, (iii) seven days, (iv) 14 days and (v) 21 days as of 15 November 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

Manston is a short-term holding facility where populations fluctuate. For the date in question, the Home Office does not hold the requested data in a reportable format and there are currently no plans to publish this historic data.

Development Aid: Asylum

Gavin Robinson: [95852]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much has been spent on hotel accommodation for asylum seekers in each of the last 24-months.

Gavin Robinson: [95853]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding has been allocated from the Foreign Aid Budget for the accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees in each of the last 24 months.

Gavin Robinson: [95854]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have had their accommodation costs paid for through the foreign aid budget for longer than 12 months as of 24 November 2022; and what the total cost of that accommodation was.

Robert Jenrick:

The United Kingdom has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with accommodation and other support whilst their application for asylum is being considered. Our accommodation costs are considered to be commercially confidential, therefore the Home Office does not publish this information.

Provisional and final UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend data for 2022 will be published as normal in the Spring and Autumn of 2023 respectively. The latest data available is the final data for 2021 UK ODA spend, which was published November 23rd. The stats for international development are published here: Statistics on International Development: final UK aid spend 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The Home Office has not used any ODA funds to pay for the accommodation costs of any asylum seekers for longer than 12 months. This is as no costs from after 12 months of an asylum seeker arriving in the UK are deemed ODA eligible.

Domestic Abuse

Apsana Begum: [92373]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of adequacy of the treatment victims of coercive control and domestic abuse by the criminal justice system.

Apsana Begum: [92374]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that victims of coercive control and domestic abuse are protected from harassment outside of the home including post separation harassment.

Chris Philp:

Our landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is bolstering our response to domestic abuse on every level, strengthening protections for victims whilst also ensuring perpetrators feel the full force of the law. On 30 March this year, we went even further and published the cross-Government Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. The Plan seeks to transform the whole of society's response to prevent offending, support victims, pursue perpetrators, and strengthen the systems and processes in place to deliver these goals.

Controlling or coercive behaviour can persist and often increase post-separation – which is why the Domestic Abuse Act amended the offence. This means that it will soon apply to intimate partners, ex-partners or family members, regardless of whether the victim and perpetrator live together. To further assist frontline agencies in identifying, investigating and evidencing such abuse , we are updating the Controlling or Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance.

In the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the Government also legislated for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order, to be piloted from Spring 2024, which will go even further in protecting victims from all forms of domestic abuse. This includes making the order available in all courts and making breach a criminal offence. The order will have no minimum or maximum duration and will be able to impose electronic monitoring requirements.

The criminal justice system's response to domestic abuse continues to improve, and this is reflected in the number of controlling or coercive behaviour offences that have reached a first hearing at a magistrates' court having increased year on year. From 2016/17– the first year in which controlling or coercive behaviour cases reached this stage of the criminal justice system – to 2017/18, for instance, numbers increased threefold from 309 to 960. The number has since increased to 1,403 in 2020/21.

It is vital that police are able to effectively respond to domestic abuse, which is why controlling or coercive behaviour is covered extensively in the Domestic Abuse Matters training for police, with a 2020 evaluation of the programme showing a 41% increase in arrests for the offence. To strengthen the police response to domestic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour, in the 2021 Domestic Abuse Plan, we committed up to £3.3m until 2025 to support the further rollout of this training.

Driving: Mobile Phones

Charlotte Nichols: [92376]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many motorists have been fined for using their mobile phones whilst driving in the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office collects and publishes information annually on the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued and other outcomes for motoring offences, including 'use of hand-held mobile phone while driving' offences. This information is published as part of the Home Office's annual 'Other PACE Powers' bulletin and can be found in Table FPN_03 of the Fixed Penalty Notices data tables.

The latest data covers the 2021 calendar year. During those 12 months, there were 9,679 fines paid for using a mobile phone whilst driving.

■ Firearms: Seized Articles

Emily Thornberry: [95810]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Table 8 of the Border Force transparency data, published on 24 November 2022, how many seizures categorised as parts of guns are included in the total of 254 seizures of non-lethal firearms recorded in Quarter 3 of 2022.

Chris Philp:

There have been 254 units of non-lethal firearms seized, of which none were under the category of Parts of Guns.

Hampshire Constabulary: Recruitment

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[92286]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of the additional 20,000 police officers announced by the Government (a) have been and (b) will be recruited to Hampshire Constabulary.

Chris Philp:

As part of the Police Officer Uplift Programme, the Home Office publishes a quarterly update on the number of officers in England and Wales, broken down by Police Force Area since recruitment began in October 2019, the latest of which is available here: Police officer uplift, quarterly update to September 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Table U2 of the <u>data tables</u> accompanying this quarterly publication provides a breakdown of these additional officers recruited from funding for the Police Uplift Programme by month since October 2019.

As at 30 September 2022, police forces in England and Wales have recruited 15,343 additional police officers attributable to the Police Uplift Programme. Of these, 481 (3.1%) have been recruited by Hampshire Constabulary.

Table B1 of the <u>data tables</u> accompanying the quarterly publication shows how many of the 20,000 additional police officers announced have been allocated to each Police Force Area for the three years of the programme.

Hampshire Constabulary have been allocated a total of 518 additional police officers by March 2023, 2.6% of the national allocation of 20,000.

■ Immigration: Applications

Stephen Morgan: [92323]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of enquires from Members of Parliament submitted to UK Visas & Immigration through her Department's enquiry line have resulted in direct action being taken on an outstanding immigration application in the last 12 months.

Robert Jenrick:

The information requested is not held.

■ Immigration: Detainees

Layla Moran: [94848]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many judicial reviews were launched against her Department for potentially illegal detention of individuals detained at Campsfield House in each year from 2010 to 2017.

Robert Jenrick:

The information sought is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Immigration: Ilford North

Wes Streeting: [92292]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many residents in Ilford North constituency are on leave that has been extended by section 3C of the Immigration Act.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not hold data on how many people have had their leave extended by section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971. Once a valid, in time application has been made to the Home Office for permission to stay (leave to remain) or settlement (indefinite leave to remain) and their permission expires, section 3C will automatically extend their permission, including any conditions, until the application is decided or withdrawn and during any time that an appeal or administrative review may be brought or is pending.

The Home Office cannot provide the data without disproportionate cost. However, the transparency data, which is published quarterly, provides outstanding applications by specific route and can be found here: Migration transparency data - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Data on appeals is published by the Ministry of Justice and their latest quarterly figures are here: Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: April to June 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Data on administrative reviews is not currently published.

Independent Office for Police Conduct

Kim Leadbeater: [95986]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to make a decision on the pay reward for staff of the Independent Office for Police Conduct.

Chris Philp:

Discussions with the Independent Office for Police Conduct are ongoing and a decision on their 2022/23 pay remit will be made in due course.

Internet: Fraud

Patrick Grady: [95874]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect people from online scams.

Tom Tugendhat:

Online fraud is a pernicious crime that can cause devastating financial and emotional harm to victims. The Government has been working with partners in the public and private sectors to keep the public safe and bring these fraudsters to justice.

The National Cyber Security Centre are leading the way combatting online scams through their Suspicious Email Reporting Service which allows members of the public to forward any suspicious emails and potential phishing scams more effectively and easily to law enforcement. Since its inception in April 2020, it has already led to over 15 million reports and the removal of over 105,000 scams across 192,000 URLs (as of October 2022).

We have also introduced the Online Safety Bill, an ambitious and forward-looking piece of legislation that will tackle online harms including fraud and fraudulent advertising. DCMS is leading further work on an Online Advertising Programme. This will consider further regulation of online advertising, including for fraud. In March 2022, DCMS published their consultation which has now closed, and the Government will publish its response in due course.

We have been working with industry on a voluntary basis. On 21 st October 2021, the newly relaunched Joint Fraud Taskforce published three voluntary charters to combat fraud in the accountancy, retail banking and telecommunications sectors. We have seen progress with one UK mobile operator reporting a 97% decline in scam texts over a nine-month period.

We continue to encourage the public to report fraud to Action fraud and to forward any suspicious emails to report@phishing.gov.uk and suspicious texts to 7726, free of charge.

Knife Crime Prevention Orders

Andrew Rosindell: [92129]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Knife Crime Prevention Orders have been issued in (a) Romford, (b) Havering and (c) nationally in the last five years.

Chris Philp:

On 5 July 2021, we introduced the pilot for Knife Crime Prevention Orders (KCPOs) across the Metropolitan Police area.

The pilot is still ongoing and is due to finish at the end of March 2023.

There will be an evaluation of the pilot and it will allow us to judge the effectiveness of the orders before any decision is taken about whether to roll out the orders nationally. A report following the pilot must also be laid before Parliament before Knife Crime Prevention Orders can be introduced across England and Wales. The report will include the numbers of KCPOs granted during the course of the pilot.

Migrant Workers: Fees and Charges

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [95800]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the revenue was for the Immigration Skills Charge from NHS employers in (a) each financial year since 2017-18 and (b) the 2022-23 financial year as of 24 November 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office reports total Immigration Skills Charge revenue in the Annual Report and Accounts. Whilst some employment data is captured, it is not captured or recorded in a way that allows for the specific categorisation of NHS employers.

Total Immigration Skills Charges is found in the links and pages referenced below:

2021-22 pages 208 and 216

Home_Office_ARA_21-22_Final_-_Gov.uk.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

2020-21 pages 191and 199

HO annual report and accounts 2020-21 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

2019-20 pages 187 and 195-196

Home Office annual report and accounts 2019 - 2020 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

2018-19 pages 168 and 175

Home Office Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Data relating to the current financial year will be made available on publication of the 2022-23 Home Office Annual Report and Accounts following closure of the financial year.

■ Migrants: Low Pay

John Redwood: [92051]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the average cost to the public purse of providing (a) housing, (b) benefits and (c) public service capacity for a new migrant who takes a job below the average wage in their first year in the UK.

John Redwood: [92052]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the average capital cost of providing (a) housing, (b) school places, (c) health services and (d) transport capacity for a new migrant family.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office does not hold this information.

■ Police Custody: Children

Janet Daby: [93637]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statistics published by her Department entitled Police powers and procedures, published on 17 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the proportion of children detained overnight in police custody in (a) London region and (b) England and Wales.

Janet Daby: [93638]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statistics published by her Department entitled Police powers and procedures, published on 17 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the frequency with which an Appropriate Adult was called for a child detained overnight in police custody in (a) London region and (b) England and Wales.

Janet Daby: [93639]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statistics published by her Department entitled Police powers and procedures, published on 17 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the proportion of vulnerable adults detained in police custody for whom an appropriate adult was called in (a) London region and (b) England and Wales.

Chris Philp:

The collection and publication of this data will bring additional transparency and accountability to police custody in England and Wales and help us better understand how and why police powers and procedures are used within the custody process.

The Home Office only received data from a subset of forces so the findings should be interpreted with caution as it is partial and not representative of the national picture. We will work with police forces and the NPCC to improve data quality in the future and use the data published on 17 November to inform conversations with the police and other stakeholders to promote wider policy development.

Children who are charged and denied bail must be transferred to local authority accommodation unless it is impracticable to do so. We expect forces and local authorities to work together to facilitate this in line with the provisions of the Concordat on Children in Custody.

We are pleased to note that in 99% of cases an appropriate adult was called for a child detained in police custody but concerns remain that only in 41% cases was an appropriate adult called for a vulnerable adult. We acknowledge that appropriate adult provision for vulnerable adults needs to improve and will look towards both the police and local authorities to work together to improve in this area.

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for the provision of appropriate adults for children who must be provided an appropriate adult when detained in police custody.

Adults identified as vulnerable must be supported in custody by an Appropriate Adult. The 2018 PCC-Local Authority Partnership was introduced to improve the planning and delivery of appropriate adult services.

Police Custody: Ethnic Groups

Janet Daby:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the statistics published by her Department entitled Police Powers and Procedures, published on 17 November 2022, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her Department's policies of the proportion of (a) black and black British adults, (b) Asian and Asian British adults and (c) adults of other ethnic backgrounds classed as vulnerable who were detained in police custody.

Janet Daby: [94856]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Policing Data Requirement Group on making the collection of data on police custody mandatory.

Chris Philp:

The collection and publication of data on police custody will bring additional transparency and accountability to custody in England and Wales and help us better understand how and why police powers and procedures are used within the custody process. The Home Office only received data from a subset of forces so the findings should be interpreted with caution as it is partial and not representative of the national picture. We will work with police forces and the NPCC to improve data quality in the

future and use the data published on 17 November to inform conversations with the police and other stakeholders to promote wider policy development.

The police custody data collection became mandatory for 2022/23. From April 2023, Home Office will request data from forces and then assess the quality of the data which will help inform future decisions made by the Policing Data Requirement Group (PDRG) as to whether the collection remains mandatory. All data collections are reviewed each year by the PDRG to ensure that data requested from the police is proportionate to the need for the data and that forces have the technical capabilities to provide the data requested.

There is a formal definition of vulnerability which police officers are expected to use to determine vulnerability of adults in police custody. It is set out in paragraph 1.13 (d) of Code C to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). Custody officers should therefore carry out vulnerability assessments of everyone in custody in line with this definition.

Section 3.15 of PACE Code C requires the custody officer to secure an appropriate adult for any vulnerable adult detained in police custody.

Strip search is an important policing tool that can help the police recover concealed drugs, weapons or other items which may cause harm to themselves or the person being searched. Strip search is one of the most intrusive powers available to the police and its use must be fair, respectful and without unlawful discrimination. No one should be strip searched based on any protected characteristics including race, sex, and age. Any use of strip search should be carried out in accordance with the law and with full regard for the welfare and dignity of the individual being searched, particularly if that individual is a child.

Refugees: Afghanistan

Caroline Nokes: [92179]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan refugees were temporarily accommodated in hotels in the latest period for which data are available; and how many of those refugees were (a) men, (b) women and (c) children.

Caroline Nokes: [92180]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan refugees have been accommodated in permanent homes through the Afghanistan housing portal as of 21 November 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

We have been working as fast as possible to support Afghan families into homes of their own, so that they can settle into their local communities and rebuild their lives in the UK.

At 4 November 2022, 9,242 individuals are in bridging accommodation and 7,572 individuals have moved in to settled accommodation, with a further 729 individuals matched to a property and waiting to move in.

■ Refugees: Temporary Accommodation

Rachael Maskell: [90844]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taken to identify long-term solutions for the provision of accommodation for refugees, in the context of increasing use of hotel accommodation.

Robert Jenrick:

The Government is working with local authorities across the UK to meet the demand for housing.

We have been working as fast as possible to support Afghan families into homes of their own, so that they can settle into their local communities and independent and rebuild their lives in the UK

Local Authorities who support people through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) will receive £20,520 per person, over 3 years, for resettlement and integration costs. They have the flexibility to use this funding to contribute towards renting accommodation, including deposit, letting fees and necessary furnishings.

Once an asylum seeker has received refugee status, they are eligible to work, receive mainstream benefits and accommodation which should be provided by the local authority.

For other resettlement schemes the first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs are funded by central government.

Undocumented Migrants

Rachel Maclean: [92332]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the Government plans to seek a derogation to its legal obligations to help tackle the number of people entering the UK in breach of immigration laws from safe countries.

Robert Jenrick:

This Government is committed to ensuring that the UK has control of its own borders. This means continuing to tackle the people smugglers who put the lives of men, women and children in danger by facilitating their illegal entry into the UK by perilous and potentially fatal means.

As my Rt Hon. friend the Home Secretary has previously set out, in developing any necessary new legislation or other measures to address this issue we will always work within the bounds of international law

Undocumented Migrants: Albania

Rachel Maclean: [92333]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of her migrant return agreement with the Albanian Government on

the number of migrants from that country seeking to cross the English Channel in small boats.

Robert Jenrick:

Since the UK-Albania readmission agreement was signed in July 2021 we have seen over 1,000 Albanian foreign national offenders and immigration offenders removed from the UK, including some who crossed the channel illegally to come to the UK.

The UK and Albania pledged to fast track the removal of Albanians with no right to be in the UK wherever possible, and to send senior Albanian law enforcement to the UK to speed up processing and share information with our authorities. In co-operation with the Government of Albania, we are taking every opportunity to intercept the activities of organised criminal gangs and people smugglers, and speed up the removal of Albanians and other nationals with no right to be in the UK.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rachel Maclean: [90884]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the potential number of migrants that will be prevented from entering the UK through small boats in the English Channel as a result of her intelligence sharing and policing agreement with France.

Robert Jenrick:

The department does not publish modelling of small boats controls.

This year our joint work with the French authorities has prevented more than 30,000 crossing attempts

The new arrangements builds on this by embedding UK officers within French operations for the first time.

Rachel Maclean: [92334]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has received legal advice on the operation of a push-back policy for boats carrying migrants in the English Channel.

Robert Jenrick:

We do not routinely comment on the provision of legal advice.

Visas: Iran

Steve McCabe: [93443]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what restrictions apply to Iranian citizens applying for tourists' visas to visit the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

There is no current policy of restricting applications from Iranian citizens looking to visit the UK on a tourist visa.

The rules applying to visitors can be found on GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor and apply to both Visa Nationals including citizens of Iran (who must apply for a visa in advance of travel) and Non-Visa Nationals (who seek leave to enter at the UK border).

Wind Power: Migrant Workers

Kenny MacAskill: [95942]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer by the Minister for Immigration to the Question from the hon. Member for East Lothian of 16 November 2022, Official Report, column 669, for what reason the Offshore wind workers Immigration Rules concession 2017 was extended in the period between 15 June 2017 and 1 July 2022.

Robert Jenrick:

We are clear that all employers should first seek to recruit from the resident labour market before using immigration to provide a work force.

The concession will expire on 30 April 2023 at which point it will be reviewed.

JUSTICE

Bill of Rights: Northern Ireland

Peter Kyle: [94820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many meetings he has had with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the Bill of Rights bill.

Mike Freer:

The Secretary of State has written to Alyson Kilpatrick, the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, about the Bill of Rights twice in the last year, in addition to which my predecessor Lord Wolfson met representatives of the Commission in March this year in the context of the Government's consultation. Departmental officials have also met representatives of the Commission on a number of occasions in the past year to discuss work on the Bill of Rights.

We will continue to work closely with key stakeholders in Northern Ireland on the Bill of Rights, including the Human Rights Commission, to ensure that any reforms will work in, and for the benefit of, the whole of the UK

Civil Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

Afzal Khan: [95927]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many civil legal aid offices have a civil legal aid contract that is inactive and are not able taken on an active case, broken down by each local authority and area of law, for the years 2020-21; 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Mike Freer:

The requested information can be found in the attachment.

Data in the tables reflects the position as 1 November each year. Please note that a single office may have a Contract to deliver services in more than one area of law.

A civil legal aid provider would only be unable to take on a case where there is a sanction in place prohibiting them from taking on a new matter or case. Sanctions are applied only in limited circumstances, for example, where there has been a material breach of the contract. The full range of circumstances in which a sanction may be applied are set out at Clause 24 of the 2018 Standard Civil Contract Standard Terms.

Attachments:

1. Table [2022-11-29 95927 Table.xlsx]

Compensation: Court Orders

Priti Patel: [92189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the number of compensation orders that have been issued by the courts in each year since 2015 by offence type.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on the number of compensation orders, on a principal and all-disposal basis, by offence type, in England and Wales. For figures for year ending December 2015 up to year ending December 2017 the information is available in Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2020 (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 6.04 MB) and for figures between year ending June 2018 up to year ending June 2022 the information is available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool: June 2022 (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 83.2 MB). For number of compensation orders issued, on a principal disposal basis (most severe disposal offender received) see the 'Sentencing Outcomes' worksheet and for an all-disposal basis see the 'Compensation' worksheet.

Courts may impose a compensation order on an offender requiring them to make financial reparation to the victim for any personal injury, loss or damage resulting from the offence. Compensation may be ordered for such amount as the court considers appropriate having regard to any evidence including any representations made by the offender or prosecutor. There is no limit on the value of a single compensation order handed down to an adult offender. However, in determining whether to make a compensation order, and the amount to be paid under such an order, the court must take into account the financial circumstances of the offender.

Priti Patel: [92190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the (a) total value of compensation orders issued by the courts and (b) average compensation order issued by each offence type was in each year since 2015; and what the ten largest compensation orders issued by the courts were in that period.

Edward Argar:

The Ministry of Justice has published information on total compensation and amount paid, including Scotland and Northern Ireland, which can be found in Table A2 in Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly: June 2022 publication.

Information on the average value of compensation orders, on an all-disposal basis, by offence type, in England and Wales, for year ending December 2015 up to year ending December 2017 is available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool: December 2020 (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 6.04 MB)

and for year ending June 2018 up to year ending June 2022 is available in the Outcomes by Offence data tool: June 2022 (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 83.2 MB).

The ten largest compensation orders issued by the courts between 2015 and June 2022 are listed in the attached spreadsheet.

Courts may impose a compensation order on an offender requiring them to make financial reparation to the victim for any personal injury, loss or damage resulting from the offence. Compensation may be ordered for such amount as the court considers appropriate having regard to any evidence including any representations made by the offender or prosecutor. There is no limit on the value of a single compensation order handed down to an adult offender. However, in determining whether to make a compensation order, and the amount to be paid under such an order, the court must take into account the financial circumstances of the offender.

Attachments:

1. Table [2022-11-29 92190 Table - final.xlsx]

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Priti Patel: [<u>921</u>88]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

Edward Argar:

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. It provides an important avenue of redress for such victims and is part of the wider package of general and specialist support available to victims of crime.

In our Victims Strategy published in September 2018, we announced a review of the Scheme. The review examined whether the Scheme remains fit for purpose, reflects the changing nature of violent crime and effectively support victims in their recovery. In 2020, we held a public consultation on proposals to make claiming compensation simpler and more accessible for victims of violent crime. This was followed by a supplementary consultation in summer 2022 on whether the unspent convictions eligibility rule should be revised. Our conclusions will be shared in due course.

Domestic Abuse

Apsana Begum: [92372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to stop perpetrators of domestic abuse misusing the court system to maintain control over former or current partners.

Edward Argar:

Protecting victims of domestic abuse remains a priority for this Government. A range of protective orders can already be made in the family court, including nonmolestation and occupation orders.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 strengthened the law on section 91(14) orders ('barring orders') making it clearer that these orders are available to the family court to protect parents and children where further proceedings would risk causing them harm, particularly where further proceedings could be a form of continuing domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also prohibits alleged perpetrators of abuse from directly cross-examining their victims in person in family and civil courts in England and Wales. The Act further provides that victims of domestic abuse will be automatically eligible for special measures in all courts.

Family Proceedings: Legal Aid Scheme

Daisy Cooper: [94869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he plans to increase the level of fees for Family Legal Aid lawyers for Special Children Act proceedings.

Mike Freer:

The government takes seriously its commitment to provide access to justice for all which also means supporting the sustainability of legal aid providers. In the latest financial year, the Government spent £1.6 billion on legal aid, £812 million of which was spent on civil legal aid. Fees for family legal aid lawyers are considered within the context of the wider civil legal aid system and the recently announced civil legal aid sustainability review will explore solutions which will support all providers in the long-term.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service: Complaints

Daisy Cooper: [94870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 86612, if he will make it his policy to publish the (a) number and (b) proportion of complaints which meet the target of having received a reply within 10 working days.

Daisy Cooper: 94871

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November to Question 86612, what is the (a) shortest, (b) mean average and (c) longest period of time that an actionable piece of correspondence received by the Probate Office in the last twelve months has taken to receive a reply.

Mike Freer:

In September 2022, 32% (108) of Probate complaints were closed within target of 10 days. HMCTS is investing additional resource to improve both the speed of its complaint handling but also probate waiting times.

The average mean time for HMCTS to issue a grant of probate after receiving an actionable piece of correspondence is 33 days. Some grants of probate will be issued significantly quicker than this (5% on the same day) whilst others will take longer (over 2 years is the longest with less than 1% over a year). This is usually when the application is more complicated and further evidence would be required, the removal of a caveat is needed, or a Will is contested.

■ Ministry of Justice: Bullying and Discrimination

Steve Reed: [94767]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to tackle (a) bullying and (b) discrimination within his Department.

Steve Reed: [94768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, through what mechanism a civil servant in his Department can raise a complaint of (a) bullying, (b) sexual harassment and (c) other misconduct against a minister during any time the post of Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interest is unfilled.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice has a zero tolerance policy for bullying and any complaints are investigated and acted upon.

The Ministry of Justice has clear policies on conduct and behaviour which is set out in the Department's Conduct Policy and puts in place training for all civil servants on bullying and harassment and regularly reviews its policies on the matter.

Where a Civil Servant or employee of an Arm's-Length Body has a concern, they may raise this using normal departmental procedures. Civil Service guidance on raising a grievance, and a concern can be found at Raise a grievance at work: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and Whistleblower - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Ministry of Justice: Complaints

Steve Reed: [94771]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the complaints process within his Department without an independent ethics advisor.

Mike Freer:

The Ministry of Justice has both a Grievance Policy and Raising a Concern Policy. Both policies and processes are reviewed routinely in line with normal practices.

Where a Civil Servant, or employee of an Arm's-Length Body, has a concern they may raise this using normal departmental procedures. Civil Service guidance on raising a grievance, and a concern can be found at Raise a grievance at work:
Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and <a href="Whistleblowing for employees: What is a whistleblower - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

■ Ministry of Justice: Plastics

Dr Matthew Offord: [92163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to eliminate its use of single-use plastics.

Mike Freer:

Our single-use plastics policy, published in January 2019, set out our plans for ensuring that single-use plastics are not used wherever possible. We continue to remove single-use plastics from our office and operational estates where alternatives are available, in line with the Greening Government Commitments. Specific examples include working with our catering supplier on our office estate to swap to plastic-free alternatives such as plastic free teabags and compostable wrappers; and in our prisons reusable cutlery and crockery are used which are manufactured and recycled in prison workshops.

Ministry of Justice: Public Expenditure

Steve Reed: [94774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment has he of the implications for his Department of the budget set for his Department by the Autumn Statement 2022.

Mike Freer:

MoJ is engaging with the Treasury as part of the Efficiency and Savings Review announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 17 November and will announce more details in due course.

Ministry of Justice: Termination of Employment

Steve Reed: [94763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many staff left his Department by mutual consent in the period between (a) September 2019 and September 2020, (b) September 2020 and September 2021 and (c) September 2021 and September 2022.

Mike Freer:

We do not hold the information requested.

Prisons

Steve Reed: [94760]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an estimate of what the capacity of the prison estate will be for (a) male prisoners, (b) female prisoners and (c) young offenders in each of the next five years.

Damian Hinds:

Over the next ten years, additional capacity will begin to come in to use through new build prison accommodation, existing accommodation returning to use following the completion of refurbishments, essential maintenance or places coming into use following a change in function.

We are delivering 20,000 additional, modern prison places, the biggest prison build programme in a century, ensuring the right conditions are in place to rehabilitate prisoners, helping to cut crime and protect the public. These places include the completed HMP Five Wells, the completion of our ongoing prison build HMP Fosse Way at Glen Parva, the construction of 4 new prisons, the expansion and refurbishment of the existing estate as well as temporary accommodation, of which we have already delivered around 3,100 additional prison places.

■ Treatment of, and Outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System Independent Review

Afzal Khan: [95928]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, to date, how many recommendations of the Lammy Review have been implemented in full and without qualification.

Mike Freer:

The Government published its response to the Lammy Review in 2017. Of the 35 recommendations in the Lammy Review, 33 recommendations were accepted, with only the two that related to the independent judiciary which were rejected. Our commitment was to undertake actions against each of these accepted recommendations.

Of those actions we committed to in 2017, almost all have been completed, with work done against each of the accepted 33 recommendations. The remaining 4 actions are underway, for example, long-term recruitment targets to develop a more representative workforce within HM Prisons and Probation Service.

A detailed update on progress against all the recommendations of the Lammy Review was published in 2018, and again in 2020.

Undocumented Migrants: English Channel

Rachel Maclean: [90883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether the Government plans to introduce provisions in the Bill of Rights to help (a) control the UK's borders and (b) deter people entering the county in breach of immigration laws though Channel crossings.

Mike Freer:

The Home Office and Ministry of Justice are working together to deliver the Government's strategy to tackle illegal migration by deterring illegal entry into the UK whilst breaking the business model of people smugglers, and removing more easily those with no right to be in the UK.

The Bill of Rights will support the Government's work on illegal migration. The Bill will empower UK courts to apply human rights in a UK context, affirming the Supreme Court's independence from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. It will make explicit that the UK Supreme Court is the ultimate judicial arbiter of the meaning and effect of rights in domestic law. The Bill will also affirm that interim measures of the European Court of Human Rights do not have any domestic legal effect, and will prevent UK courts from having any regard to an interim measure indicated by the Strasbourg Court when deciding whether to grant relief.

Unpaid Fines: Arrest Warrants

Sir Christopher Chope:

<u>94678</u>

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many arrest warrants for non-payment of fines have been issued by the courts in England in the last year for which information is available.

Mike Freer:

The department does not hold verifiable centralised records on the number of arrest warrants issued for non-payment of fines, and it would incur disproportionate costs to answer this question using local records.

■ Victims' Commissioner: Public Appointments

Priti Patel: [92186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when the next Victims Commissioner will be appointed; and for what reasons the recruitment process for that role has been delayed.

Priti Patel: [92187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what interim arrangements her Department has put in place to support victims in the absence of a Victims Commissioner.

Edward Argar:

The campaign to appoint a Victims' Commissioner concluded in July without an appointment being made. A new campaign is currently underway and we expect to identify a new Victims' Commissioner in early 2023.

Both officials and ministers meet regularly with the sector (for example, via the Victim and Witness Sector Engagement Group) to ensure that the voices of victims and witnesses continue to be heard.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Buildings: Insulation

Stephen Hammond:

[90900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in the context of the ongoing Grenfell Tower Inquiry, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward further legislative proposals to (a) hold to account and (b) ensure compensation for victims from those responsible for the installation of defective building materials.

Lee Rowley:

The Government brought forward extensive protections for leaseholders through the Building Safety Act 2022, enabling those responsible for historical safety defects to be pursued and held to account. It also provides for leaseholders and other interested persons to seek to recover costs already paid in relation to the remediation of historical safety defects via a remediation contribution order. The department will continue to monitor compliance with the Act's provisions and allow the new regime to bed in before deciding whether further legislation should be brought forward.

Credit Rating: Private Rented Housing

Aaron Bell: [90896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether his Department has taken recent steps to help support people with poor credit ratings to apply for private rental properties.

Felicity Buchan:

The Government encourages private rented sector landlords and agents to assess the suitability of potential and existing tenants on an individual basis.

Private renters who need help towards their rental payments may be eligible for a range of support through the welfare system. Local Housing Allowance rates have been maintained at their increased levels in 2022-23, following investment of nearly £1 billion in April 2020. For those most in need, support is available through Discretionary Housing Payments to help meet a shortfall in housing costs.

Local authorities may offer rent deposit, bond and guarantee schemes to help people on low incomes or at risk of homelessness. These schemes may give money to help with rent in advance and a deposit or act as a guarantor service and cover unpaid rent or damage up to a certain amount.

European Social Fund: Northern Ireland

Alex Norris: [95919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he will publish an impact assessment of the end of the European Social Fund in Northern Ireland.

Dehenna Davison:

Officials have been working with partners and stakeholders to determine interventions and delivery routes for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in Northern Ireland. We have been guided by a UKSPF Partnership Group, which has included engagement with over 150 representatives of the voluntary and community sector, as well as business organisations and local councils across Northern Ireland.

We expect to conclude the Northern Ireland Investment Plan and will publish further information on delivery in Northern Ireland in due course.

■ First Time Buyers

Charlotte Nichols: [90890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what percentage of first-time buyers purchase a property for more than £300,000.

Lucy Frazer:

This data is owned by UK Finance and is not able to be shared.

Homelessness

Paula Barker: [94899]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact on workforce recruitment and retention in the homelessness support sector of not uprating commissioned contracts in that sector in line with inflation.

Felicity Buchan:

This Department is aware of the increasing concerns people are facing as a result of inflation and continues to monitor its effects. Local authorities have received £316 million through the Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2022/23. This is part of the £2 billion of funding committed to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over the next three years.

■ Homelessness: Government Assistance

Munira Wilson: [90888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to offer additional funding to organisations supporting the homeless, in the context of the rising cost of living.

Felicity Buchan:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN <u>84910</u>, on 21 November 2022.

■ Homes for Ukraine Scheme: Homelessness

Steve McCabe: [87736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what estimate he has made of the number of refugees housed as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme who are now homeless.

Felicity Buchan:

Homelessness management information pertaining to Ukrainian nationals in England is updated on gov.uk every 4 weeks. The most recent update includes data up to 21 October 2022. A total of 2,175 Ukrainian households have been owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty, based on a response rate of 73% of local authorities. Of this figure, 845 households arrived under the Ukraine Family Scheme and 1,170 households via the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme. Further information can be accessed via the following link.

Housing First: Mental Health Services

Paula Barker: [90895]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what traumarelated mental health support is available to clients on the three Housing First pilots in England.

Felicity Buchan:

Each client on the Housing First pilots has access to wrap-around support as appropriate, including mental health, and drugs and alcohol misuse support.

Housing Supply

Gareth Bacon: [89049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what his policy is housing formulas and 5-year housing supply; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government is actively reviewing the approach to housing formulas and 5-year housing supply. As the Secretary of State set out at the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee on 21 November, there is an ongoing debate on how housing need is assessed and we want to make sure we deliver the right approach, including making sure that a greater proportion of housing is delivered in urban areas and on brownfield sites.

On 5-year housing supply, the Government announced in May that it is our intention to abolish the requirement for authorities to have a rolling five-year land supply, where their plan is up to date. We want a system where, if a local authority has a plan in place and keeps it up to date, the local area can feel confident that they will not see unwanted development based on 'speculative development' and 'planning by appeal.'

We will publish a consultation shortly on the future direction of national planning policy, including on the approach to housing formulas and 5-year housing supply.

Housing: Repairs and Maintenance

Rachael Maskell: [90847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will commit to a target date for all children and adults to live in damp free homes in (a) Council Housing, (b) residential social landlord housing and (c) privately rented housing.

Felicity Buchan:

The Secretary of State has recently written to all local authority Chief Executives and providers of social housing regarding the issue of damp and mould. Those letters are available on GOV.UK.

Housing: Standards

Rachael Maskell: [90848]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to ensure that all living accommodation is (a) no longer damp, (b) meets the category C energy efficiency standard and (c) is retrofitted to meet all current housing standards.

Felicity Buchan:

The Levelling Up White Paper introduced the Government's Housing Quality Mission, which set a clear target of reducing non-decency by 50% in all rented homes by 2030, with the biggest improvements in the worst performing areas.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities recently wrote to all local authorities regarding poor housing conditions and damp and mould in particular. The letter is available here.

Levelling Up Fund: Birmingham

Preet Kaur Gill: [90855]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he plans to allocate grants from the second round of the Levelling Up Fund this calendar year; and if he will support all five of Birmingham's Levelling Up Fund bids, in the context of the city recently hosting the Commonwealth Games.

Dehenna Davison:

It was a great honour to have the City of Birmingham host the fantastic 2022 Commonwealth Games which showcased some of the best athletic talent in the world and the fantastic city of Birmingham.

All bids submitted to the second round of the Levelling Up Fund, including the bids submitted by Birmingham, have been assessed in line with the published assessment framework. I cannot discuss individual bids during this period of competition, but we will announce the results of round two this year.

Listed Buildings

Helen Morgan: [95988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will take steps to reform the listed building consent system.

Lucy Frazer:

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill includes a package of measures including a new power to issue temporary stop notices for listed buildings, improved powers to issue urgent works notices and the removal of compensation in relation to building preservation notices.

Local Government Finance

Rachael Maskell: [92272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) adequacy and (b) future resilience of local authority funding.

Rachael Maskell: [92273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the York Cost of Living Summit, held on 31 October 2022, and in the context of the City of York Council's estimate that Council will have a £15 million budget deficit for the 2022-23 financial year, if he will make an assessment of the capability of the City of York Council to meet its statutory duties.

Lee Rowley:

At Autumn Statement, Government announced approximately £6.5 billion of taxpayer support for local government in addition to what was agreed at Spending Review 2021.

Further information will follow in due course for local authorities.

Out of Town Shopping Centres: Planning Permission

Andrew Lewer: [92329]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if his Department will take steps to develop a National Development Management Policy to strengthen town centre first planning principles.

Andrew Lewer: [92330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether it is his Department's policy that Planning Use Class E enables out-of-town retail developments to proceed without full planning permission.

Andrew Lewer: [92331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of lowering the minimum square footage threshold for retail impact assessments on out-of-town development.

Lucy Frazer:

The Government has made clear that in the first instance, main town centre uses such as retail, should be located in town centres. When assessing planning applications for town centre uses in out of town locations that have not been identified in a local plan, a sequential test should be applied to help ensure development that would have an unacceptable impact on existing centres is not permitted. The National Development Management Policies are intended to cover generic planning considerations that apply regularly in decision-making, of the sort already found in national planning policy, such as the town centre first principles.

The Class E Commercial, Business and Service use class includes a mix of uses such as retail and leisure uses that attract people to local areas. To help support existing businesses to adapt and diversify more quickly to meet changing circumstances, businesses in the same use class are able to change use of their premises to other uses within the use class without the need for a planning application.

Supported Housing: Standards

Matthew Pennycook:

[90853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which local authorities have been granted funds from the Supported Housing Improvement Programme in November.

Felicity Buchan:

Details of funding awarded to local authorities through the Programme are available here.

TRANSPORT

Air Force: Alternative Fuels

Sir Greg Knight: [94694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the capacity of the UK to produce (a) sustainable and (b) synthetic fuel to power RAF flights.

Jesse Norman:

Sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) is a key technology to achieve Jet Zero, being supported by three key policy pillars: the SAF mandate; the capital grant programmes; and considerations on support for longer-term commercialisation. The MoD is proactively engaged in the Jet Zero Strategy and the proposed UK SAF Mandate strategy.

The MoD will use increasingly greater aviation fuel SAF blends (which are currently limited to 50% blends) as they become more commercially available and cost effective, are supplied in the aviation fuel supply chain via SAF mandates, equal or enhance operational output and tasks, and support wider government requirements. DfT, MoD and UK civil aviation stakeholders are developing options to increase UK SAF production capacity.

Aviation: Carbon Emissions

Andrew Selous: [92133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to help support UK businesses working on net zero aviation.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is supporting UK businesses working on net zero aviation through a variety of programmes and policies which are set out in our Jet Zero Strategy, published in July 2022.

We have also committed to introducing a SAF mandate requiring at least 10% of fuel to be made from sustainable sources by 2030. Over the next three years we are also providing £180 million of funding to accelerate the commercialisation of SAF plants and fuel testing, including £165 million for the Advanced Fuels Fund. We are looking carefully at how to create the long-term conditions for investable projects in the UK and have said we will set out a preferred position by the end of the year.

To support the development of new and zero-carbon emission aircraft technology still further, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is providing £685 million of funding to the Aerospace Technology Institute Programme over the next three years, an increase of £235 million over the previous three years.

We continue to work with businesses through the Jet Zero Council and other forums to consider how to develop and industrialise clean aviation and aerospace technologies, establish UK production facilities for SAF and develop a co-ordinated approach to the policy and regulatory framework needed to deliver net zero aviation.

Driving Licences: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft: [94809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many and what proportion of disabled people currently hold a driving licence.

Mr Richard Holden:

Data from the National Travel Survey show that in 2020, 60% of disabled people aged 17 and over in England held a full car driving licence, compared with 83% of those with no disability. Data are not available on the number of disabled people who hold a driving licence, as the proportions above are derived from a sample and are therefore estimates rather than precise figures.

Updated figures will follow in the next release of the disability statistics publication.

Ferries: Crew

Mike Kane: [R] [92224]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 November 2022 to Question 80719 on Ferries: Crew, how many meetings officials in his Department have had with representatives of the ferry industry at which roster patterns were discussed since 1 March 2022.

Mike Kane: [92225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 14 November 2022 to Question 80719, on Ferries: Crew, how many meetings officials in his Department have had since 1 March 2022 with representatives of (a) the International Labour Organisation and (b) the International Maritime Organisation at which (i) roster patterns and (ii) minimum crewing levels in the short sea shipping industry were discussed.

Mr Richard Holden:

Officials meet with representatives from the maritime industry on a regular basis to discuss progress with the seafarer protections nine-point plan, including on matters such as roster patterns and the Seafarers' Wages Bill.

In parallel to this engagement, officials have also met with relevant multilateral institutions, including the International Labour Organization, to ensure seafarer protections remains on the global agenda.

■ P&O Ferries: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Angela Rayner: [92231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 1 November 2022 to Question 73004 on P&O Ferries: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whether his Department has had any discussions with representatives of P&O Ferries about the return of furlough funding since 25 October 2022.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Department has not had recent discussions with P&O Ferries' representatives on the repayment of furlough funding. As per the response of 4 July 2022, the government has repeatedly called for P&O Ferries to repay its furlough funding, and we have emphasised this at every opportunity.

Railways

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[94819]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if his Department will issue guidance to train companies stating that they should always seek to run trains as long-form not short-form, including when operating strike day timetables.

Huw Merriman:

The Department's contracts with train operators include obligations upon operators to plan services that provide sufficient capacity to meet the expected level of passenger

demand and within the constraints of the infrastructure and the available resources. Operators are also required to act with reasonable endeavours to mitigate the impact of any disruption to their planned services, including during strike action.

Railways: Concessions

Emma Hardy: [94846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the eligibility criteria for a Disabled Persons Railcard to include neurodiverse people who do not claim benefits.

Huw Merriman:

As per our Inclusive Transport Strategy commitment, the Department alongside the Rail Delivery Group and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee is currently undertaking a review of the Disabled Persons Railcard. The review is considering the eligibility criteria and also the options to verify entitlement.

Railways: Midlands

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[**95906**]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of constructing the Midlands Rail Hub on the national economy.

Huw Merriman:

The Department for Transport received the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Midlands Rail Hub on 14th November. We will need to assess the contribution of the scheme to the Government's objectives, affordability, value for taxpayer money, and its impact on the national economy. We will make announcements on how to proceed with the project in due course.

Roads: Belper

Mrs Pauline Latham: [94737]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government provides financial support for the maintenance of the roads surrounding the Cluster Houses World Heritage Site in Belper.

Mr Richard Holden:

During the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 the Government is providing over £23.6 million to Derbyshire County Council towards the maintenance of the local public road network in their area including Belper. It is up to Derbyshire how best to spend this funding to fulfil their statutory duty under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980. The Department encourages good practice in highway maintenance through channels such as the Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice produced by the UK Roads Leadership Group (UKRLG).

Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[95796]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to publish a refresh of the Clean Maritime Plan in 2023.

Mr Richard Holden:

As set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan published in 2021, we have committed to update the Clean Maritime Plan. We plan to publish an updated version in 2023.

■ TransPennine Express: Conditions of Employment

Alec Shelbrooke: [93507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has had recent discussions with TransPennine Express on making a rest day working agreement with ASLEF.

Huw Merriman:

The Secretary of State met the Managing Director of First Rail on 23 November to discuss the operator's delivery issues. More generally, the Department through its Rail North Partnership with Transport for the North continues to have regular ongoing discussions with TPE, particularly on managing services in the face of prolonged national and local industrial action, including prospects for reinstating rest day working.

TREASURY

Affordable Housing and Social Rented Housing: Finance

Rachael Maskell: [94803]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had recent discussions with the Secretary of State at Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on funding the greater supply of (a) affordable and (b) social housing.

John Glen:

The Chancellor has regular conversations with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The government is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing, including through the £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme which is the largest cash investment in affordable housing in a decade.

Business: Hampshire

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[94816]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) current and (b) potential volume of international trade undertaken by businesses in Hampshire.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the collection and publication of data on imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC releases this information monthly as a National Statistic called the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics (OTS), which is available via their dedicated website (www.uktradeinfo.com).

On this website, HMRC also publishes annual statistics titled Regional trade in goods statistics disaggregated by smaller geographical areas. This includes statistics for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Further information and the latest release for 2021 can be found via this link: Regional trade in goods statistics disaggregated by smaller geographical areas: 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). Statistics for 2022 will be published in November 2023.

HMRC does not estimate potential volume of trade.

■ Electric Vehicles: Excise Duties

Amy Callaghan: [92354]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the feasibility of establishing a new lower band for electric cars under the Expensive Car Supplement.

James Cartlidge:

The Expensive Car Supplement applies to all cars with a list price of more than £40,000 – which captures approximately the 20% most expensive cars.

The Expensive Car Supplement exemption for EVs is due to end in 2025. New zero emission cars registered on or after 1 April 2025 will therefore be liable to pay the supplement where eligible. However, there will remain reduced rates for EVs for their first year of registration.

Like all taxes, the Chancellor keeps the Expensive Car Supplement under review.

Energy: Conservation

Darren Jones: [R] [92310]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to para 5.6 of the Autumn Statement, CP 751, published on 17 November, how much of the existing £6.6bn funding for energy efficiency is allocated to which programmes.

James Cartlidge:

£6.6 billion has been made available for BEIS capital departmental expenditure limits on energy efficiency and clean heat in this Parliament. The funding has been ringfenced in the follow way:

o £300 million for the Green Homes Grant.

o £2.8 billion for low-income household energy efficiency, through the Sustainable Warmth Competition, Home Upgrade Grant and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

- o £450 million through the Boiler Upgrade Scheme.
- o £2.5 billion to decarbonise and improve the efficiency of the public sector estate.
- o £500 million to grow low-carbon, more efficient heat networks.

■ Energy: Taxation

Rachael Maskell: [90840]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reason he decided not to introduce a higher windfall tax levy on oil and gas companies as part of the Autumn Statement 2022.

James Cartlidge:

At Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that the rate of the Energy Profits Levy will increase by ten percentage points, taking it from 25% to 35%, effective from 1 January 2023. This is on top of the 40% tax rate under the permanent regime bringing the combined headline tax rate for the sector to 75%. In addition, the levy has been extended until 31 March 2028.

The government has always sought to balance delivering a fair return for the UK from the use of its resources while providing the right conditions to attract investment in the North Sea that is key to support domestic jobs and the nation's energy security.

The Office for Budget Responsibility's most recent published forecast, provided for Autumn Statement 2022, estimates revenues from the levy are expected to be £41.6 billion between 2022-23 and 2027-28.

Energy: VAT

Kenny MacAskill: [95944]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of what the tax revenue will be from VAT levied on domestic heating bills in the 2022-23 financial year.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC publishes estimates of the Exchequer cost of tax reliefs, see https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/main-tax-expenditures-and-structural-reliefs. The estimated cost of non-structural tax reliefs (December 2021) VAT table shows that the cost estimate for the Reduced Rate of VAT on supplies of domestic fuel and power in 2021-22 was £5,200 million. This represents the cost of the 5 per cent Reduced Rate compared to the Standard Rate of 20 per cent, a relief of 15 per cent. The revenue received at the Reduced Rate may be estimated at 5/15ths of the figure of £5,200 million, or £1,700m (rounded).

This estimate does not reflect most of the recent rise in domestic energy prices. The next update of HMRC's tax relief cost estimates is scheduled for publication on 12 January 2023, and will provide estimates for the 2022-23 financial year.

The rise in household energy costs in 2022-23 has reduced overall VAT receipts. This is because higher spending on energy bills, which are taxed at a lower rate of 5 per cent, shifts consumption away from other goods and services that are on average taxed at higher VAT rates. For further explanation, see paragraph 3.38 of the Office for Budget Responsibility's March 2022 Economic and Fiscal Review: <u>Economic and fiscal outlook - March 2022 (obr.uk)</u>

Equal Pay

Apsana Begum: [93681]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of public sector pay on the gender pay gap in the next three years.

Apsana Begum: [93682]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of public sector pay on the ethnicity pay gap in the next three years.

Apsana Begum: [93683]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the level of public sector pay on (a) child, (b) fuel, (c) food and (d) other forms of poverty in the next three years.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that public sector workers play a vital role in the running of our economy, and in delivering our world-class public services.

Pay for most frontline workforces – including nurses, teachers, armed forces, and police officers – is set through an independent Pay Review Body process. The Pay Review Bodies consider a range of standard evidence and other special considerations when forming their recommendations.

The Government has accepted the pay recommendations of the independent Pay Review Bodies for the NHS, teachers, police, and the armed forces for 2022/23. These are the highest uplifts in nearly twenty years, reflecting the vital contributions public sector workers make to our country and the cost-of-living pressures facing households. For 23/24 the government has decided to let the process run as normal and will be seeking recommendations from PRB's. The government will carefully consider these recommendations and in due course public sector workers will see fair and affordable pay rises across the next financial year (2023-24).

Pay awards strike a careful balance between recognising the vital importance of public sector workers, whilst delivering value for the taxpayer and not increasing the country's debt further. The government will continue to ensure all pay awards are fair and non-discriminatory.

Excise Duties: Fuels

John Redwood: [92047]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the potential impact of changes in the number of people driving electric, rather than petrol or diesel, vehicles on the amount of fuel duty income that will be received by 2025-26.

James Cartlidge:

The Office for Budget Responsibility's latest update of its forecast was published on 17 November 2022. It forecast that fuel duty revenues would amount to £29.5 billion in 2025-26. The forecast can be viewed in full at the following link: https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-november-2022/

Fuels: Excise Duties

Greg Smith: [92365]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility's report entitled Economic and fiscal outlook, published in November 2022, what assessment he has made of the impact of a potential increase in fuel duty on the classic car sector.

Greg Smith: [92366]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility's report entitled Economic and fiscal outlook, published in November 2022, what assessment he has made of the impact of a potential increase in fuel duty in March 2023 on the road haulage sector.

Greg Smith: [92367]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Office for Budget Responsibility's report entitled Economic and fiscal outlook, published in November 2022, whether it is Government policy to introduce a 23 per cent. increase in fuel duty in late-March 2023.

James Cartlidge:

No changes to fuel duty were made in November's Autumn Statement.

The Government will confirm policy on fuel duty in the Budget in the Spring, as has been the case in previous years. The impact of any policy change is carefully considered.

Until then, the OBR's forecast is prepared on the Government's longstanding assumption that fuel duty will rise in line with inflation.

Mortgages: Islam

Sam Tarry: [95971]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will conduct a review of the availability of mortgages which comply with Islamic law.

Andrew Griffith:

There are a broad range of mortgage products available on the market, including products that comply with Islamic law. Those wishing to take out a Sharia-compliant mortgage may wish to shop around and speak to a specialist mortgage broker in order to find the best possible product for them.

It is also worth noting that the UK is the leading western hub for Islamic finance, with more institutions offering Islamic financial services in the UK than anywhere in Europe or North America, including four fully licenced Sharia-compliant banks.

Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Amy Callaghan: [92355]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of the Autumn Statement 2022 on the planned timetable for the transition to zero emission vehicles.

James Cartlidge:

The Chancellor meets regularly with his Cabinet colleagues on a range of issues.

The EV transition continues at pace, with new electric car registrations increasing by 76% in 2021 compared to 2020, and sales of used pure electric cars reaching a record high. The success of this transition in normalising EVs on our roads means that it's right to begin to bring electric vehicles into the motoring tax system, ensuring that all motorists start to pay a fairer tax contribution.

Leveraging VED on EVs is not expected to significantly impact purchasing decisions. The government remains committed to its net zero objectives and will continue to offer a range of incentives to encourage the uptake of EVs.

Public Sector Debt

Mr Gregory Campbell:

95795

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 8 November 2022 to Question 78647, what recent discussions he has had with the Office for Budget Responsibility on the Public Sector Net Debt.

John Glen:

As the Government's official independent forecaster, the Government has a close working relationship with the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). In the lead up to the recent Autumn Statement and accompanying OBR forecast, the OBR were engaged in the normal way. As is set out in the foreword of the OBR's November Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO), the forecast process involved the OBR producing multiple draft iterations of the forecasts which it shared with the Chancellor. These drafts included forecasts for Public Sector Net Debt. The Chancellor Jeremy Hunt also met with the OBR to discuss the forecast on the 17 October and 16 November.

The OBR published an updated forecast for Public Sector Net Debt as part of their November 2022 Economic and Fiscal Outlook. The OBR forecast that Public Sector Net Debt for 2022-23 will be £2,571 billion or 101.9% of GDP.

The Government supports the vital, independent role the OBR plays, which give markets, the public, and the world confidence that our economic plans are credible, and rightly holds us to account for delivering them.

Remote Working

Sir Greg Knight: [94692]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and proportion of people were working from home (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four and (e) five days a week (i) as of 16 November 2022 and (ii) in November 2021; if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of trends in the number of people working from home on the economy; and if he will make a statement.

James Cartlidge:

According to ONS Annual Population Survey and Opinions and Lifestyle Survey data, the pandemic resulted in an increase in the proportion of workers that worked at least partially from home: from an average of 19 per cent of workers across 2019 to a peak of around 50 per cent in June 2020. This proportion fell to 30 per cent in November 2021. The latest data indicates that 38 per cent of workers were working at least partly from home in the period between 26 October and 6 November 2022. The longterm economic impacts of greater remote working are still highly uncertain. The Government is committed to supporting individuals and businesses to work flexibly.

Revenue and Customs: Nottingham

Lilian Greenwood: [95823]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he expects to complete the transfer of HMRC staff to Unity Square building in Nottingham from other HMRC locations.

Lilian Greenwood: [95824]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much his Department spent on (a) providing and (b) maintaining house plants at the Unity Square building in Nottingham.

Victoria Atkins:

- 1 Unity Square, Nottingham opened to HMRC staff on 11 April 2022.
- 1 Unity Square is a Government Hub and is shared with other Government departments and agencies. We expect their migration to be complete later in the financial year.

The design, supply and ongoing maintenance of interior planting in Unity Square is provided as part of HMRC's competitively tendered management contracts.

Self-employed

John Redwood: [92045]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people have ceased to be selfemployed since the introduction of the 2021 IR 35 rules.

Victoria Atkins:

It is an anticipated outcome of the 2021 off-payroll working (IR35) reform that organisations and contractors will consider the best way for contractors to provide their services, while being compliant with tax legislation.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish data on trends in employment. <u>Dataset A02 NSA</u> provides quarterly estimates of the number of self-employed individuals over the age of 16 for the period sought. On 6 September ONS officials gave evidence to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee on changes in the number of individuals self-reporting as self-employed during the relevant period as a part of the committee's UK Labour Supply Inquiry. That evidence stated that some part of the change in individuals self-reporting as self-employed is due to changes in how people classify themselves, without having changed the way they work.

Tax Yields

John Redwood: [92043]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the amount by which the total paid in interest on state debt will change between this year and 2024-5.

John Redwood: [92044]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the potential increase in tax revenue between the 2022-23 and 2027-28 financial years.

John Redwood: [92048]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the amount of extra tax revenue that would be received in financial year 2022-23 if the GDP of the UK were to remain at its present level, by comparison with the amount he expects to receive in that year according to present forecasts.

John Glen:

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is the UK Government's independent official forecaster. The OBR's most recent forecast was published alongside the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022.

The OBR forecast that tax receipts will increase from £1.0 trillion in 2022-23 to £1.2 trillion in 2027-28, an increase of £196 billion. Debt interest spending (net of the Asset Purchase Facility) is expected to reach £120.4bn for the financial year 2022-23 and fall by £37.9bn to £82.4bn in 2024-25.

The OBR does not regularly produce analysis of tax revenue according to varying paths of GDP. Previous OBR analysis from January 2022 suggests that raising real GDP growth to 2-3% a year over three years, from a base growth forecast of 1.6% per year for those three years, could provide a benefit to the public finances of £10-40 billion through a range of effects across tax and spending.

■ Tobacco: Smuggling

Mr Virendra Sharma: [94724]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to include Trading Standards officers in the HMRC with the power to fine retailers for selling illicit tobacco products.

James Cartlidge:

Trading Standards officers are not part of HMRC. They are a separate local government service.

However, HMRC works very closely with TS to tackle illicit tobacco. HMRC introduced legislation for tougher sanctions to tackle illicit tobacco sales in Finance Act 2022 including a new civil penalty of up to £10,000 for serious breaches. The new sanctions will take the innovative approach of HMRC and Trading Standards (TS) both working together to enforce them. Secondary legislation will be introduced next year setting out the detail on how the sanctions will operate.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Disability

Sir Stephen Timms:

95763

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans he has to take forward the National Disability Strategy, following the court defeat suffered by the Government in January 2022.

Tom Pursglove:

We are disappointed by, and strongly disagree with, the High Court's finding in January of this year, that the National Disability Strategy was unlawful, and the Secretary of State has been granted permission to appeal the Court's declaration. In order to ensure compliance with the Court's declaration, we are obliged to pause a limited number of policies which are referred to in the strategy, or are directly connected with it.

We are fully committed to supporting disabled people in the UK through creating more opportunities, protecting their rights and ensuring they fully benefit from, and can contribute to, every aspect of our society.

■ Employment Services: Disability

Vicky Foxcroft: [94811]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many disability employment advisers have been in post in each of the last five years.

Tom Pursglove:

Disability Employment Advisers work alongside Work Coaches in Job Centres to provide specialist support to disabled people. During the pandemic, Universal Credit caseload sizes doubled, leading to all job roles expanding in terms of headcount. Please find below the number of Disability Employment Advisers (full time equivalent) in post in each of the last five years:

DATE	FTE	
Oct-22	810	
Oct-21	870	
Oct-20	490	
Oct-19	560	
Oct-18	450	

Source: Activity Based Model (ABM)

Notes:

- The data is correct as of October 2022 and has been rounded to the nearest 10.
- Figures for Disability Employment Advisers were derived from the department's Activity Based Model (ABM), which provides full time equivalent (FTE) figures of Disability Employment Advisers and is a point in time estimate by line managers.
- The number of Disability Employment Advisers is unpublished management information, collected and intended for internal departmental use and has not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard. As the department holds the information, we have released it.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[95797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he expects the evaluation process of the Kickstart Scheme to be concluded by the end of 2023.

Guy Opperman:

The Kickstart evaluation will continue to assess the longer-term outcomes for Kickstart participants after they have completed their six-month jobs. The commissioned process evaluation will conclude in Spring 2023.

Local Housing Allowance: Inflation

Stephen Farry: [93713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he plans to increase the Local Housing Allowance from April 2023 to reflect the rate of inflation.

Mims Davies:

In April 2020 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were raised to the 30th percentile, a significant investment of almost £1 billion, we have maintained the rates in cash terms since then ensuring claimants continue to benefit from the significant increase.

On the 17 November the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions confirmed in his Written Ministerial Statement that LHA rates will be maintained at those increased levels for 2023-24.

For those who need additional support with housing costs, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are available from local authorities. Since 2011 we have provided almost £1.5 billion in DHPs.

To ensure stability and certainty for households, in the Autumn Statement the Government has announced £26bn in cost of living support for 2023/24. This includes Cost of Living Payments for the most vulnerable. In 2023/24, households on eligible means-tested benefits will get up to a further £900 in Cost of Living Payments. A £300 payment will be made to pensioner households and individuals in receipt of eligible disability benefits will receive a £150 payment. Also included is the amended Energy Price Guarantee which will save the average UK household £500 in 2023-24 and raising the benefit cap by 10.1% in line with inflation.

For those who require extra support, the Government is providing an additional £1 billion of funding, including Barnett impact, to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England in the next financial year. This is on top of what we have already provided since October 2021, bringing total funding to £2.5 billion. It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate their additional Barnett funding.

In addition, we are uprating benefits for working age households and disabled people, as well as the basic and new State Pensions, all by 10.1%.

Pension Credit: Applications

Caroline Lucas: [90783]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) new staff and (b) staff moved from other responsibilities have his Department deployed to process the increase in Pension Credit applications.

Laura Trott:

We have reassigned the full time equivalent of 100.27 colleagues and recruited 85 temporary staff to process the increased levels of Pension Credit Claims following the successful Pension Credit Campaign.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Chronic Illnesses

Wendy Chamberlain:

[94863]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance her Department issues to help ensure that Personal Independence Payment claimants with degenerative conditions are identified and recorded for the purposes of scheduling future reassessments.

Tom Pursglove:

The Personal Independence Payment Assessment Guide (PIPAG) contains guidance for health professionals carrying out PIP assessments. The PIP assessment is not a medical assessment to diagnose a condition, its severity, or recommend treatment options. Rather it is assessed on the basis of the needs arising from a health condition or disability and, as such, regular reviews are a key feature of PIP, to ensure that payments accurately match the current needs of claimants.

When recommending an appropriate review period, assessors are asked to consider when a significant change in functional needs is likely, giving due regard to the expected progression of a condition and whether it is likely to improve, stay the same, or worsen. It may be appropriate to set a specific review period for a claimant with a degenerative condition as, if the condition is likely to deteriorate over time, the claimant may become entitled to a higher rate of PIP. However, claimants with very high levels of functional impairment who are on the highest PIP awards, and whose needs are only likely to increase, should receive an ongoing award of PIP, with a light-touch review at the 10-year point.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[<u>94864</u>]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Personal Independence Payment claimants with degenerative conditions have been reassessed within (a) 10, (b) five and (c) three years of their original award.

Tom Pursglove:

Information on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants with degenerative conditions is not available. While the department holds data on a range of conditions, these are not collected centrally in a way that defines them as degenerative or not.

Detailed statistics on PIP can be found on <u>Stat-Xplore</u>. In particular, the PIP datasets on Award Reviews list the disability categories recorded on PIP. These cover over 500 conditions, but none are grouped or marked in any way as being degenerative. You can also view the disability categories <u>here</u>.

Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found <u>here</u>. An account is not required to use Stat-Xplore; the 'Guest Login' feature gives instant access to the main functions.

Poverty: Children

Fleur Anderson: [93667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent steps the Government has taken to address child poverty.

Mims Davies:

The Government is committed to reducing child poverty and supporting low-income families. We will spend over £242bn through the welfare system in 2022/23 including £108bn on people of working age and over £134 billion on pensioners. Of the total amount, around £64 billion will be spent on supporting disabled people and people with health conditions in Great Britain.

From 10 April 2023 we are uprating benefits for working age households and disabled people, as well as the basic and new State Pensions, all by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap will also be increased by 10.1%.

With over 1.22 million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting parents to move into, and progress in work, an approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time - in substantially reducing the risks of child poverty and in improving long-term outcomes for families and children.

To help people into work, including parents, our Plan for Jobs is providing broad ranging support for all Jobseekers with our Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP), Job Entry Targeted Support and Restart scheme. We are also extending the support Jobcentres provide to people in work and on low incomes. Through a staged roll-out, which started in April 2022, around 2.1 million low-paid benefit claimants will be eligible for support to progress into higher-paid work.

The government is also increasing the National Living Wage by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour from April 2023, representing an increase of over £1,600 to the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the National living wage, benefitting over 2 million low paid workers.

■ Poverty: York

Rachael Maskell: [92274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the York Cost of Living Summit, held on 31 October 2022, what recent steps her Department has taken to reduce levels of poverty in York in the context of the City of York Council estimating that up to 14,700 households in York could be experience poverty this year.

Mims Davies:

The Government is committed to reducing poverty and supporting low-income families. We will spend over £242bn through the welfare system in 2022/23 including £108bn on people of working age and over £134 billion on pensioners. Of the total amount, around £64 billion will be spent on supporting disabled people and people with health conditions in Great Britain.

From 10 April 2023 we are uprating benefits for working age households and disabled people, as well as the basic and new State Pensions, all by 10.1%. In order to increase the number of households who can benefit from these uprating decisions the benefit cap will also be increased by 10.1%.

With over 1.22 million job vacancies across the UK, our focus remains firmly on supporting people to move into, and progress in work, an approach which is based on clear evidence about the importance of employment - particularly where it is full-time in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. The government is increasing the National Living Wage by 9.7% to £10.42 an hour from April 2023, representing an increase of over £1,600 to the annual earnings of a full-time worker on the National living wage, benefitting over 2 million low paid workers.

For those who require additional support the current Household Support Fund in England, running from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023, is providing £421m of funding for those most in need. York City council has been allocated £1,037,906.47 for this period.

Retirement: Age

Fleur Anderson: [93669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the retirement age of 66 years old on the (a) financial situation, (b) mental health and (c) overall wellbeing of people aged 60-66.

Laura Trott:

Successive government have given due consideration to the impact of the proposals made in the Pensions Acts of 1995, 2007 and 2011 that made changes to the State Pension age.

The Pensions Act 1995 legislated to equalise men and women's SPa at 65, over a 10 year period between 2010 and 2020. Standardised impact assessments had not been introduced at the time, but an overview of the options and evidence considered when developing the policy is provided in the 1993 white paper 'Equality in State Pension age' -

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/283975/response/692460/attach/html/3/Equality%20in%20State%20Pension%20age%201993.pdf.html

The Pensions Act 2007 legislated to introduce a timetable for the increase of SPa to 66, 67 and 68, so that these rises took place by 2026, 2036 and 2046.

The impact assessment for the Pensions Act 2007 can be found here: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121204130650/http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pensions-bill-ria.pdf

The Pensions Act 2011 brought forward the equalisation of the male and female State Pension age at 65 by 18 months, so that it takes place by November 2018 rather than April 2020. It also brought forward the increase from 65 to 66 by five and a half years, so that it takes place by October 2020 rather than March 2026.

The impact assessment for the Pensions Act 2011 can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181462 /pensions-bill-2011-ia-annexa.pdf "

Sick Leave: Productivity

Andrew Gwynne: [95806]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the effect of long-term sickness on economic productivity in each of the last five years.

Guy Opperman:

The specific information requested on economic productivity is not held by the Department.

According to the latest figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS, <u>INAC01 SA</u>), the number of working age (16-64) people who state their main reason for being economically inactive as long-term sickness is 2.5 million, or 28% of the total inactive population.

Long-term sickness is now the most common main reason for being economically inactive and accounts for 65% of the increase in economic inactivity since the start of the pandemic.

Source: <u>INAC01 SA: Economic inactivity by reason (seasonally adjusted) - Office for</u> National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Social Security Benefits: Debts

Christopher Pincher:

[93529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will introduce a standardised assessment of affordability of debt repayments for people on benefits.

Tom Pursglove:

DWP remains committed to working with anyone who is struggling with their repayment terms.

The department has a well-established process for working with individuals to support them to manage their debts. Our agents will always look to negotiate affordable and sustainable repayment plans.

This includes working with individuals to review their financial circumstances and, in most instances, a temporary reduction in their rate of repayment can also be agreed.

There is no minimum amount that a claimant has to pay, and we have recently extended the time period for any reduced repayment to remain in place.

State Retirement Pensions: Females

Amy Callaghan: [92349]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of his Department's communications on changes to the State Pension age for women born in the 1950s.

Amy Callaghan: [92350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's reports on the Women's State Pension age, whether he is taking steps to improve communications processes in his Department.

Laura Trott:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's investigation into the communication of changes to women's State Pension age is ongoing. Section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

It would be inappropriate to comment whilst the investigation is ongoing.

Amy Callaghan: [92351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's reports on the Women's State Pension age, if he will hold discussions with representatives of Women Against State Pension Inequality on the Ombudsman's fundings.

Laura Trott:

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has not completed his investigation into communication of changes to women's state pension. It would be inappropriate to discuss the investigation whilst it is ongoing. Section 7(2) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 states that Ombudsman investigations "shall be conducted in private".

The Department is cooperating fully with the PHSO in their investigation.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Bob Stewart: [93495]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will take steps to increase Support for Mortgage Payments to reflect interest rate rises.

Mims Davies:

Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) is calculated using a standard interest rate that is based on the Bank of England's monthly published average mortgage rate.

Any increase in SMI payments will occur when the Bank of England's average monthly mortgage rate differs from the standard rate by 0.5 percentage points or more.

Unemployment: Birmingham

Preet Kaur Gill: [90857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an estimate of what the levels of unemployment will be in Birmingham in the financial years (a) 2022-23, (b) 2023-24 and (c) 2024-25.

Guy Opperman:

No estimate has been made.

Official forecasts for national unemployment were published by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, as part of its Economic and Fiscal Outlook and are available: Economic and Fiscal Outlook - November 2022 (obr.uk)

Universal Credit: Employment

Jonathan Ashworth: [94754]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 32 of the Autumn Statement 2022, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, what assessment he has made of the (a) demographic and (b) socio-economic characteristics of the 600,000 additional in-work Universal Credit claimants who will be required to meet with a work coach from September 2023.

Jonathan Ashworth: [94756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 32 of the Autumn Statement 2022, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, if she will publish a breakdown of the number of people who will be newly required to meet with work coaches in each (a) region and (b) nation of the UK.

Guy Opperman:

No specific assessment has yet been made for the Autumn Statement announcement.

Jonathan Ashworth: [94755]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential equalities impacts of the Autumn Statement 2022 policy to require an additional 600,000 in-work Universal Credit claimants to meet with a work coach from September 2023.

Guy Opperman:

No specific assessment has been made. An Equalities Impact Assessment was prepared for the Spending Review announcement on in-work progression and will be updated to reflect the changes announced at the Autumn Statement and as the offer rolls out.

Jonathan Ashworth: [94757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 32 of the Autumn Statement 2022, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, what her timeline is of the rollout from September 2023 onwards of the requirement that 600,000 additional in-work Universal Credit claimants are required to meet with work coaches.

Guy Opperman:

We are currently developing our phased plan for the new offer and will set out the details in due course.

Jonathan Ashworth: [94758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to page 32 of the Autumn Statement 2022, CP 751, published on 17 November 2022, whether the requirement for 600,000 additional in-work Universal Credit claimants to meet with work coaches will include a rise in the Administrative Earnings Threshold.

Guy Opperman:

There are currently no plans to raise the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) beyond the equivalent of 15 hours at the national living wage (NLW).

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Huntington's Disease: Research

Amy Callaghan: [85019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of public funding for the research of (a) adult- and (b) juvenile-onset Huntington's disease.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 21 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Will Quince:

The Government primarily funds research into rare conditions, such as Huntington's disease and Juvenile-onset Huntington's disease, via the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

From 2017/18 to 2021/22, funding for research into Huntington's disease was £32.6 million and in 2021/22, expenditure was £ **4.9 4.5** million. The NIHR and UKRI welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including adult Huntington's disease and Juvenile-onset Huntington's disease. While it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions, the NIHR and UKRI award funding through open competition to ensure the highest quality research is funded.

Smoking

Andrew Gwynne: [92139]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local authorities have a specialist stop smoking service open to all smokers in their area.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 November 2022. The correct answer should have been:

Neil O'Brien:

According to 'Reaching Out: Tobacco control and stop smoking services in local authorities in England, 2021' published by Action on Smoking and Health and Cancer Research UK, of 150 local authorities, 90% provide a universal stop smoking offer.

67% of local authorities provide this offer through a specialist stop smoking service and 9% provide stop smoking support to targeted populations.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

November 2022 update on progress in delivering the recommendations in Sir David Calvert-Smith's Independent Review into the Serious Fraud Office's handling of the Unaoil Case

The Attorney General (Victoria Prentis):

[HCWS395]

Following the Court of Appeal's judgment in the Unaoil case (*R. v Akle & Anor*) in December 2021, the then Attorney General, the Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP, commissioned Sir David Calvert-Smith to conduct an independent review into the Serious Fraud Office's (SFO) handling of the case.

On 21 July 2022, in a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS), the then Attorney General provided Parliament with the findings of Sir David's review and a response to his recommendations. This also included a commitment to update Parliament on progress in delivering these recommendations in both November 2022 and February 2023. This WMS provides the first of these updates.

Sir David's review made eleven recommendations, which were accepted. These cover a range of matters, including record keeping and case assurance, compliance with policies, and resourcing. While many of the changes recommended by Sir David can be — and have been — made quickly, it will necessarily take longer to fully embed his recommendations and assess the effectiveness of changes made.

Within this context, I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made in delivering Sir David's recommendations. For nine of the eleven recommendations, the SFO has already implemented specific measures or steps to ensure their effective delivery. For the two remaining recommendations, work has commenced to make changes in response to Sir David's proposals.

A detailed update on progress will be published on GOV.UK today and copies will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

I would also like to take this opportunity to notify Parliament of a change to the timing of the second update on Sir David's recommendations. This was originally planned for February 2023 but will now be provided by no later than May 2023. This is to allow the findings of an inspection of the SFO by His Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate to be considered as part of the update. The inspection, a report of which will be published in April 2023, is examining case progression in the SFO with reference to relevant findings in Sir David's review.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Energy Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Grant Shapps):

[HCWS394]

It will not be news to the Hon. Members that in the past year, Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine has sent energy prices soaring.

Without this Government's support, it would have sent thermostats sinking this winter, too. We have taken decisive action to keep homes, businesses, hospitals, and schools warm this winter. But if we are to avoid foisting this crisis onto future generations, we must think about the years to come, too.

This government is investing now in a long-term plan, deploying transformative technologies to secure a cheaper, cleaner, reliable supply of energy for Britain and laying firm foundations for growth.

We're one of the biggest economies in the world, but for far too long our energy dependency has threatened to make us vulnerable, when the price of our energy is dictated by the whims of international energy markets.

To put a stop to this situation, we're securing our energy sovereignty.

We're building an energy system fit for the future, by delivering low-carbon energy and greater energy efficiency. We will continue working with our allies, whilst reducing the impact of international energy markets on our energy system.

By developing our world-leading renewables and investing in new nuclear, we will generate home-grown British energy for British families and businesses, boosting British jobs and British growth even as we transition to Net Zero.

Energy sovereignty is within our grasp. Clean, affordable energy for households and businesses is not a pipe dream, but a project we have now embarked on. Today I am setting out the steps we're taking on our path to energy freedom, delivering opportunity, security, and prosperity for all.

I. Investing in nuclear power

Nuclear power will be at the core of our three-fold mission: to secure our energy supply; supercharge growth; and cut our carbon emissions. Today, it was announced that we have delivered on our commitments in the Autumn Statement, and that the Government will progress Sizewell C.

Our investment, the first made directly by a Government in nuclear power for thirty years, will drive forward the project's development, and confirm the Government as a project shareholder. Next year, the Government, EDF, and the project company will work together to raise private capital under our new Regulated Asset Base (RAB) funding model for nuclear.

This is a truly significant moment, and our biggest step so far towards increasing our energy independence. Sizewell C will create 10,000 highly skilled jobs for the area and provide cleaner, cheaper, low-carbon electricity for the equivalent of 6 million homes for over 50 years.

II. Great British Nuclear

We remain committed to developing a pipeline of new nuclear projects beyond Sizewell C, where these offer clear value for money for taxpayers and consumers. We have been working at pace on the scoping and set up of Great British Nuclear (GBN), with the support of industry, and we will make an announcement on the set up of GBN early in the new year.

GBN will be tasked with helping projects through every stage of the development process and developing a resilient pipeline of new builds. We will back it with funding to support projects to get investment ready and through the construction phase, while recognising the challenging fiscal environment outlined by the Chancellor at the Autumn Statement.

GBN will enable the delivery of clean, safe electricity over the decades to come, protecting future generations from the high prices of global fossil fuel markets.

III. Boosting energy efficiency

We must do all we can to boost energy generation, but we can also make sure that none of us uses more than we need.

The days of wasting energy are over. Boosting energy efficiency with warmer homes and buildings is key to bringing down bills and boosting jobs along the way with green growth.

We're aiming high, with a target to reduce the UK's final energy consumption from buildings and industry by 15% by 2030. And we're providing the money to get there, with a new £6 billion investment from 2025 to 2028 that comes on top of the £6.6 billion we are already spending over this parliament.

Installing insulation in hundreds of thousands of homes across the country will save consumers around £310 a year through our ECO+ scheme – making our energy system more resilient and secure by slashing energy demand.

We recently launched a consultation so that we can make sure that the right support gets to the right people in the right way.

The Government has stepped in with an unprecedented package of support for households this winter, but there is more that households can do to help meet our energy demand reduction target and save money on their bills.

The Government is expanding its public awareness campaign to help reduce bills for all households and protect the most vulnerable over this winter and beyond.

Backed by £18 million, this campaign will complement existing government support schemes. It will use public messaging to help consumers understand how they can reduce their own household usage and bills through making their homes more energy efficient for this winter and next. Moreover, it will provide vulnerable groups with the information they need to reduce energy usage without harming their health.

This information will also be available on the existing Help for Households website.

IV. Legislating to drive investment and to secure our energy future

We've put the legislative vehicle to power up this long-term plan, the Energy Security Bill, back on track; it will be taken forward this Parliament.

The Bill will liberate private investment, driving jobs and growth in every corner of the country. Importantly, it will help to transform our energy industry by firing up the nascent CCUS and Hydrogen industries, in which we already have a head start with pioneering projects from the Humber to the Mersey.

The Bill will encourage competition in the energy sector, enabling the economy to grow and flourish by creating opportunity, prosperity, and security with clean jobs, new skills, and cheaper bills.

DEFENCE

Defence Equipment Plan

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[HCWS396]

I am pleased to place in the Library of the House a copy of the 2022 Defence Equipment Plan report, which details the Department's spending plans in equipment procurement and support projects over a period of 10 years.

This year's Equipment Plan report comes at a pivotal point in time as the Ministry of Defence has become increasingly in the spotlight over the last year in the wake of Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

The uplift received from the 2020 Spending Review meant we were able to rectify an existing deficit and produce an affordable Equipment Plan. We have retained this affordable position for the 2022 Plan and continue to hold a contingency to mitigate against emerging financial pressures.

Since the publication of the last report the Department has made significant improvements in the process and production of the Equipment Plan. We have revised guidance to improve realism judgments, strengthened our assessment of affordability and ensured closer engagement between Top Level Budget holders and Head Office to mitigate finance and capability risks.

The recent Autumn Statement has recognised the need to increase Defence spending, and we look forward to the outcomes of this once the Integrated Review is refreshed. For now, however, we are assured that the spending decisions we have set out remain in line with Departmental priorities.

The Plan is not immune to risk, we have set ambitious savings targets and made hard decisions in spending priorities across the Commands. The Defence landscape has shifted, and we must and will remain agile to those emerging threats. We are entering a new age of warfare and will face pressure from the rising levels of inflation; the Department however remains confident in the resilience of our spending decisions despite now living in a more volatile environment.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Online Safety Bill - Update

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Michelle Donelan): [HCWS397]

The Online Safety Bill is a vital, world-leading piece of legislation, designed to ensure that tech companies take more responsibility for the safety of their users, particularly children. It is also vital that people can continue to express themselves freely and engage in pluralistic debate online. For that reason, I am today committing to make a number of changes to the Online Safety Bill to strengthen its provisions relating to children, and to ensure the Bill's protections for adults strike the right balance with its protections for free speech.

Since taking up the role of DCMS Secretary of State I have engaged extensively with colleagues to hear views on this legislation. We have heard concerns from many parliamentarians, stakeholders and members of the public on a number of issues, including a desire to go further on child protections, wanting better protections for legal speech and a concern that too much power over what we see and engage with online rests with tech giants themselves. Making progress on these important concerns did not, in my view, need to come at the expense of one another. I therefore set out a clear approach with three main aims:

- 1. Strengthen the protections for children in the Bill
- 2. Ensure that adults' right to legal free speech is protected
- 3. Create a genuine system of transparency, accountability and control to give the British public more choice and power over their own accounts and experience

We can say with confidence that all three aims have been achieved with the amendments the government is putting forward. We will go further to strengthen the elements of the Bill that specifically protect children online. At the same time, we will remove the clauses pertaining to 'legal but harmful' content for adults and replace them with a 'Triple Shield' that empowers users and ensures that control over the online experience rests with individuals rather than anonymous committees in Silicon Valley.

Protections for Children

The Bill's key objective, above everything else, is the safety of young people online. Not only will we preserve the existing protections, I will table a number of amendments that go further to strengthen the existing protections for children in the Bill to:

- make clearer the existing expectations of platforms in understanding the age of their users and, where platforms specify a minimum age for users, require them to clearly explain in their terms of service the measures they use to enforce this and if they fail to adhere to these measures, Ofcom will be able to act. I will table these amendments in the Commons;
- require the largest platforms to publish summaries of their risk assessments for illegal content and material that is harmful to children, to allow users and empower

- parents to clearly understand the risks presented by these services and the approach platforms are taking to children's safety
- name the Children's Commissioner as a statutory consultee for Ofcom in its development of the codes of practice to ensure that the measures relating to children are robust and reflect the concerns of parents

The government will table the remaining amendments in the Lords.

Legal Free Speech

A large number of colleagues, stakeholders and members of the public have been particularly concerned about provisions that would result in the over-removal of legitimate legal content by creating a new category of 'legal but harmful' speech. However admirable the goal, I do not believe that it is morally right to censor speech online that is legal to say in person.

I will therefore table a number of amendments in the Commons to remove 'legal but harmful' from the Bill in relation to adults, and replace it with a fairer, simpler and we believe more effective mechanism called the Triple Shield, which will focus on user choice, consumer rights and accountability whilst protecting freedom of expression. We are taking the same approach when assessing the proposed new harmful communications offence, which when applied could potentially have criminalised legitimate discussion of some topics. I have therefore tabled amendments for the second day of Report stage to remove the harmful communications offence from the Bill.

To retain protections for victims of abusive communications, including victims of domestic abuse, we will continue progressing new offences for false and threatening communications. Furthermore, the Bill will no longer repeal the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and relevant sections of the Communications Act 2003. To avoid duplication in legislation, the Government will remove elements of the offences in these Acts which criminalise false and threatening communications.

Protection for Adults: The Triple Shield

It is unquestionable that speech that is illegal in the street should also be illegal online, and that major platforms should remove illegal content from their sites. While most platforms, including social media sites, have robust terms of service detailing the types of content they do or do not allow, anyone who uses these platforms regularly will know that there is a widespread failure of companies to enforce their own terms of service and platforms can often treat some sections of society differently. Lastly, I believe that rather than censoring adults, the government should be standing up for free speech and choice by empowering people.

Together, these three common sense principles form the basis of the Triple Shield, a comprehensive set of tools to protect and empower adults. Under this system, three important rules apply:

1. Illegal: Content that is illegal should be removed. The Bill includes a number of priority offences, and companies must proactively prevent users from encountering this content. The Bill includes the relevant offences for England and Wales,

- Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Companies will also have to remove other relevant illegal content, when they become aware of it.
- Terms of service: Legal content that a platform prohibits in its own terms of service should be removed, and legal content that a platform allows in its terms of service should not be removed.
- 3. User empowermen t: Rather than tech giants' algorithms alone deciding what users engage with, users themselves should have the option to decide. Adults should be empowered to choose whether or not to engage with legal forms of abuse and hatred if the platform they are using allows such content. So the 'Third Shield' puts a duty on platforms to provide their users with the functionality to control their exposure to unsolicited content that falls into this category. These functions will, under no circumstances, limit discussion, robust debate or support groups' ability to speak about any of these issues freely.

The user empowerment tools will allow adults to reduce the likelihood that they will see certain categories of content if they so choose. The duty will specify legal content related to suicide, content promoting self-harm and eating disorders, and content that is abusive or incites hate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sex, gender reassignment, or sexual orientation. This is a targeted approach that reflects areas where we know adult users, in particular vulnerable users, would benefit from having greater choice over how they interact with these kinds of content. For the first time, tech giants will be required to give individual adults genuine control over their own accounts and online experience. I will table amendments relating to these provisions in the Commons.

This will be done while upholding users' rights to free expression and ensuring that legitimate debate online will not be affected by these stronger duties. There are high thresholds for inclusion in these content categories, which will exclude discussions about these broad topics - even where that could be controversial or challenging - but where it does not become abusive. Nothing in this duty will require companies to remove or take down legal content. This will also be made clear through the Bill's Explanatory Notes.

Category 1 services will still need to give users the option to verify themselves and choose not to interact with unverified users. This duty will remain unchanged, and again reinforces this government's commitment to ensuring users have genuine choice over their online experience.

These changes will ensure the Bill protects free speech whilst holding social media companies to account for their promises to users, guaranteeing that users will be able to make informed choices about the services they use and the interactions they have on those sites.

Accountability and further measures

Publication of enforcement notices: The regulator, Ofcom, will hold companies to account if they fail to comply with the requirements in the Bill by issuing fines or notifications requiring them to take steps to remedy compliance failures. To further strengthen transparency for users, we will give Ofcom the power to require services to

publish the details of any enforcement notifications, including notices requiring them to remedy breaches, that they receive. I have now tabled these amendments in the Commons.

Self-harm: I am aware of particular concerns around content online which encourages vulnerable people to self-harm. While the child safety duties in the Bill will protect children, vulnerable adults may remain at risk of exposure to this abhorrent content. I am therefore committing to making the encouragement of self-harm illegal. The government will bring forward in this Bill proposals to create an offence of sending a communication that encourages serious self-harm via an amendment in the House of Lords. This new offence will ensure that trolls sending such messages to a person, regardless of the recipient's age, face the consequences for their vile actions.

Tackling violence against women and girls: It is unacceptable that women and girls suffer disproportionately from abuse online and it is right that we address this through the Online Safety Bill. Therefore, extensive work has been undertaken, including with Home Office colleagues, to understand how we can further protect women and girls through the Online Safety Bill, including to:

- List Controlling or Coercive behaviour as a priority offence. This is an offence that disproportionately impacts women and girls - listing this as a priority offence means companies will have to take proactive measures to tackle this content, therefore strengthening the protections for women and girls under the Bill.
- Name the Victims' Commissioner and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner as Statutory Consultees for the codes of practice, to ensure that they are consulted by Ofcom ahead of drafting and amending the codes of practice.

These changes will be made to the Bill in the House of Lords.

As announced last week by the Deputy Prime Minister, we are also going to take forward reforms to the criminal law on the abuse of intimate images. Building on the campaign of Dame Maria Miller MP, as well as recommendations from the Law Commission, we will criminalise the sharing of people's intimate images without their consent. This, in combination with the measures already in the Bill to make cyberflashing a criminal offence, will significantly strengthen protections for women in particular as they are disproportionately affected by these activities. The government will table these amendments in the Lords. Separate to the Online Safety Bill, the Government will also bring forward a package of additional laws to tackle a range of abusive behaviour including the installation of equipment, such as hidden cameras, to take or record images of someone without their consent.

Epilepsy Trolling: I have tabled amendments for the second day of Report Stage to legislate for a new flashing images offence. I would like to pay tribute to the passionate campaigning that has been done on this issue, both by the Epilepsy Society, and parliamentarians from across both Houses to help the Government ensure that this appalling behaviour is tackled and that we fulfil the Government's previous commitment to legislate to protect victims from epilepsy trolling. We have also made a number of other technical changes to clarify existing policy positions, further details of which can be found in the amendment paper.

To ensure the proposed changes go through proper scrutiny, we intend to return a number of clauses back to a Public Bill Committee for consideration. These are issues that are of fundamental importance to the regime, and to members of this House, such as freedom of expression, user empowerment, and age assurance, and it would not be right to proceed with these changes without detailed scrutiny in the House of Commons. We intend to make further changes, as set out above, in the House of Lords, however the timing of these amendments will depend on parliamentary scheduling.

EDUCATION

■ Further Education Update

The Minister of State for Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert Halfon): [HCWS392]

Today the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published their decision to reclassify the further education sector and their subsidiaries as part of the central government sector.

The ONS is an agency independent of ministers, and periodically reviews the classification of all sectors of the economy for the purposes of National Accounts. More information on classification and how the ONS has reached this decision is available on their website.

This means the statutory further education sector (FE) (FE colleges, sixth form colleges and designated institutions) and their subsidiaries are treated from today 29 November 2022 for financial and accounting purposes as part of the central government sector, with my department as the principal department responsible for ensuring the sector complies with financial and accounting rules. In practice, this means that colleges are now subject to the framework for financial management set out in the Parliamentary document managing public money, guidance on senior pay and other relevant central government guidance.

The mission of colleges, to continue to fulfil their role at the heart of their communities, working in partnership with employers, local governments, and other providers to meet the needs of learners and the labour market has never been more important. The decision to reclassify the FE sector will not alter these strategic aims. Colleges will continue to play a leadership role in England's skills system. My officials will work to make sure that they provide the world-leading skills infrastructure that our country needs whilst adequately demonstrating that we are managing public money well.

My officials said at the start of the review that we wanted to ensure that if colleges were reclassified, it happened in as seamless a way as possible, maintaining continuity and stability for the sector where possible. We have taken the time to get these changes right; to give colleges the support that they need as the transition takes place; and to explore the ways that colleges, learners, employers, and communities might all make the most of this change. Colleges will retain many of the flexibilities they currently have and day to

day operations will continue with minimal changes, so colleges can maintain a smooth delivery.

With that in mind, my officials are publishing the government's response to this reclassification decision today, which sets out how my department will continue to support colleges following the ONS's decision.

To support and protect colleges, we'll be:

- investing £300 million of payments before the end of the current financial year to eliminate the current deficit in funding experienced by March and move to a profile of funding which better matches need, recognising the challenging environment the sector faces
- providing an additional £150 million of capital grant funding in 2023 to 2024 to support and protect colleges planning to invest in their infrastructure/estate where previously they would have borrowed from commercial lenders
- allowing colleges to retain flexibility on using surpluses and sale of assets ensuring that colleges can continue to invest in their estates, while complying with the managing public money framework
- working in partnership with the sector to develop the future approach to financial reporting, and a new college handbook

This means that how colleges report to and interact with government will change. Colleges will be required to ensure their systems of financial control support public sector standards of accountability.

Managing public money is clear that public sector organisations may borrow from private sector sources only if the transaction delivers better value for money for the Exchequer. Because non-government lenders face higher financing costs, in practice it is very unlikely that central government bodies (now including colleges) will be able to satisfy this condition for future private sector borrowing. If colleges have any proposals for new private sector borrowing, they will now need DfE approval (we'll update college learner grant agreements to include this as a condition of funding).

In recognition of the limitation on private sector borrowing that reclassification as part of central government imposes, and in response to feedback from the FE sector and stakeholder groups, I am pleased to confirm that my department will be investing an additional £150m of capital funding in further education and sixth form colleges. This change means that although colleges will have only very limited access to private finance, they will benefit from additional grant funding to improve the condition of the college estate. From the research we have done with colleges, I understand this is one of the main reasons that colleges currently seek private finance, and so I hope it will be welcomed by the FE sector.

Furthermore, to help colleges manage their cashflow, my department will address the historical issue of uneven monthly payments from central government, which leave colleges out of pocket by March each year. My department will invest £300 million in bringing forward payments into this financial year to enable us to smooth out the funding, so we have a new even profile for colleges from 2023 to 2024 for both the 16 to 19 and adult education budgets.

I can also confirm that colleges will retain the flexibility to carry over surpluses from one year to the next and to keep and spend the proceeds from the sale of assets, subject to certain conditions and this will be kept under review.

Many colleges have subsidiaries, some of which are profit making entities with commercial operations. Subsidiaries play an important role in the college system, both in delivering provision and generating commercial income. Colleges will also retain the ability to operate their trading subsidiaries, which the ONS has reclassified to the central government sector.

Regarding financial reporting, colleges will continue to produce their own annual report and accounts as normal for the year ended 31 July 2023. The Department will eventually be required to consolidate the accounts for all FE colleges into one. This means we will require additional information from colleges. We will be working with the sector to ensure that the impact of this request is manageable.

My officials will begin work to write a new College Financial Handbook and engage with representatives from the sector from the outset, with a view to sharing in draft with colleges and sector bodies in Autumn 2023 for consultation so that they are clear what is expected of them and build their understanding and support. In parallel, my officials will set up the necessary processes and data collection systems to operationalise the new MPM requirements. The handbook will be finalised for publication in March 2024, ahead of an effective date of August 2024 to coincide with the start of the financial year.

The changes will be explained in more detail in a letter from the Accounting Officer of the Education and Skills Funding Agency to all college financial directors and will be followed by further guidance to help colleges comply with the managing public money framework and other central government guidance as quickly as possible.

I am also writing today to college principals to explain the changes that need to be made and to thank them for the important role they will play in the public sector.

We have taken the opportunity of reclassification to strengthen our arrangements for, and invest more in, this hugely important sector, which is now more obviously than ever a vital part of the government's skills agenda for the future.

The government's response ensures we use this opportunity to continue to support colleges to do what they do best, whilst balancing this against the need to adequately demonstrate that we are managing public money well.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Announcement of additional £20m funding for woodlands and timber industry Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dr Thérèse Coffey): [HCWS393]

Today we announced £20 million of funding to improve tree planting stocks, woodland resilience, domestic timber production and to accelerate tree planting across England.

£10 million has been awarded through the Woodlands into Management Innovation Funds and the Tree Production Innovation Fund to support projects that explore new technologies and business models to improve tree planting stocks and woodland resilience.

In addition, 57 local authorities have been awarded nearly £10 million to accelerate tree planting.

These initiatives will see hundreds of thousands of trees planted in communities across England. They represent another step forward in the Government's drive to treble tree planting rates across England by the end of this Parliament.

The Local Authority Treescapes Fund and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund will reopen for new applications early in 2023.

APPLICANT	TOTAL GRANT £
Oxfordshire County Council	150,000
Lancashire County Council	300,000
Tees Valley Combined Authority	299,996
Nottinghamshire County Council	149,845
Kent County Council	299,642
West of England Combined Aut.	299,738
Rotherham Metropolitan BC	107,000
North Yorkshire County Council	150,000
City of York Council	149,800
Warwickshire County Council	150,000
City of Trees	299,880
Gateshead Council	147,886
Wakefield Metropolitan DC	147,921
Gloucestershire County Council	149,853

APPLICANT	TOTAL GRANT £
Lambeth Council	142,024
London Borough of Enfield	144,042
London Borough of Hillingdon	148,712
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	103,153
City of Bradford Metropolitan DC	150,000
Portsmouth City Council	147,116
Calderdale Borough Council	55,332
Devon County Council	298,476
Lincolnshire County Council	283,387
Doncaster Council	138,108
Shropshire Council	149,618
Hertfordshire County Council	148,500
Halton Borough Council	148,402
Knowsley Metropolitan BC	150,000
Newcastle City Council	290,000
Buckinghamshire Council	144,778
North Somerset Council	150,000
Kirklees Council	80,524
Worcestershire CC	149,708
North Lincolnshire Council	149,932
Surrey County Council	150,000
London Borough of Islington	146,411
Haringey Council	88,296
Somerset County Council	296,948
Sheffield City Council	147,520
Leicestershire County Council	149,577

APPLICANT	TOTAL GRANT £
London Borough of Barnett	100,000
Walsall Council	149,624
Cheshire West & Chester Council	144,520
Royal Borough of Greenwich	135,488
Wirral Council	85,274
Hampshire County Council	150,000
Norfolk County Council	148,225
Leeds City Council	125,176
Central Bedfordshire	140,028
Solihull MBC	149,215
Wiltshire Council	294,800
Bedford Borough Council	150,000
Cambridgeshire County Council	300,000
St Helens Council	149,000
North Northamptonshire	150,000
City of London Corporation	88,292
Peterborough City Council	149,809