



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 10 January 2023 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:34 P.M., 10 January 2023). 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

■ Property: India

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114624\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether any holder of her office has made representations to the (a) Indian High Commission, (b) Indian government and (c) state authorities in Goa, India, on legal disputes over property ownership and alleged misappropriation of land in the town of Assagao in the state of Goa, India since 1 January 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

Following her appointment on 25 October 2022, the Attorney General has made no representations to (a) the Indian High Commission, (b) the Indian Government or (c) the state authorities in Goa in relation to the matters raised in your question. For the period from 1 January 2022 to 25 October 2022, and having undertaken relevant searches across the department, no written representations from the holders of the office of Attorney General have been issued by this office to (a) the Indian High Commission, (b) the Indian Government or (c) the state authorities in Goa in relation to the matters raised in your question.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114625\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether any representations have been made to her office by (a) UK and (b) non-UK citizens requesting assistance with legal disputes over property ownership and alleged misappropriation of land in the state of Goa, India since 1 January 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

Since her appointment on 25 October 2022, the Attorney General has received no representations by (a) UK and (b) non-UK citizens in relation to the matters raised in your question. For the period from 1 January 2022 to the 25 October 2022, and having undertaken relevant searches across the department, no written representations have been made to this office by (a) UK and (b) non-UK citizens in relation to the matters raised in your question.

Emily Thornberry:

[\[114627\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether any holder of her office has written to the state authorities in Goa, India, regarding cases under consideration by the Special Investigation Team of Goa Police set up to examine cases of alleged land fraud in the region, since the formation of that team in June 2022.

Michael Tomlinson:

Following her appointment on 25 October 2022, the Attorney General has not written to the state authorities in Goa, India regarding the issues raised in your question. From the period from June 2022 to the 25 October 2022, and having undertaken relevant searches across my office, there have been no written communications from the holders of this office issued by this office with the state authorities in Goa, India regarding the issues raised in your question.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY■ **Energy Bills Rebate****Stephen Doughty:**[\[114658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of households who do not have their own direct relationship with an energy supplier have received support from the Energy Bills Support Scheme as of 20 December 2022.

Graham Stuart:

Through the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) Alternative Funding the Government has ensured that the £400 is available to households that do not have a direct relationship with their energy supplier and will therefore not automatically receive the EBSS. The total number of households eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding is estimated to be 900,000.

Those who are eligible for the EBSS Alternative Funding will need to submit a short online form via GOV.UK, with the application portal due to open in January. A dedicated customer helpline will be available to assist customers who do not have online access, with further details to be released next month.

■ **Energy Bills Support Scheme****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[114776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of people using heat network schemes received a payment through the Energy Bills Support Scheme as of 20 December 2022.

Graham Stuart:

The Government does not currently have this information. Heat network consumers who have a domestic electricity meter are receiving £400 off their energy bills through the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS). The EBSS Alternative Funding will provide a £400 payment to eligible households who do not have a domestic electricity meter, including heat network consumers on a private wire.

■ Energy: Meters

Dan Carden:

[\[114764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2022 to Question 107134 on Energy: Meters, whether his Department is taking steps to ensure that energy suppliers comply with Ofgem's rules on forcible prepayment meter installations.

Graham Stuart:

As the independent regulator, Ofgem is responsible for ensuring licensed energy suppliers are complying with their rules.

Dan Carden:

[\[114789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has held discussions with (a) Ofgem and (b) energy suppliers on (i) forcible prepayment meter installations and (ii) self-disconnection in the last six months.

Graham Stuart:

BEIS Ministers and officials regularly hold discussions with Ofgem and energy suppliers on a range of issues relating to the energy markets.

Ofgem has rules in place that restrict the force-fitting of a prepayment meter on customers who are in debt, except as a last resort. Ofgem rules also require energy suppliers to take all reasonable steps to identify prepayment meter customers who are self-disconnecting and provide appropriate support.

■ Flats: Energy

Olivia Blake:

[\[114867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support residents in flats with communal boilers who are not covered by the energy price cap.

Graham Stuart:

Energy suppliers to communal heat networks use commercial contracts. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme (EBRS) provides a price reduction to eligible Heat Suppliers. The EBRS Pass-through Requirement (Heat Suppliers) Regulations 2022 requires eligible heat suppliers to pass on the benefits of the discount to heat customers in a just and reasonable way.

Support provided via the EBRS is in addition to other help available, such as the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) which gives all domestic electricity customers in Great Britain £400 off their bills.

■ Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicines Pricing and Access

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[\[113163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of changes to the Voluntary Scheme for Branded

Medicines Pricing Access (VPAS) rebate on (a) foreign direct investment into UK R&D and (b) employment levels and footprint of the UK life sciences industry.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

The Government is working to better understand the impacts the operation of the current Voluntary Scheme on investments and the footprint of the UK life sciences industry. We are therefore in direct conversations with companies to understand these impacts. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is in close discussions with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department responsible for the Voluntary Scheme, about the business environment for life sciences and its impact on investment.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Government Departments: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry:

[114588]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) cross-departmental steering groups and (b) other arrangements are in place to provide oversight and guidance on the use of electronic purchasing cards by central government departments.

Alex Burghart:

Purchase to Pay (P2P) is one of the 12 areas of the finance taxonomy governed by the Finance Global Design Principles. These Principles are a set of common processes and procedures which are used by departments to ensure consistency across government and facilitate greater sharing of expertise. The cross-department P2P network supports direction giving and guidance in this area, including for EPCs.

■ Government Departments: Surgo Construction

Grahame Morris:

[114586]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for , what the value of contracts awarded to Surgo was in each of the last five years.

Alex Burghart:

Details of Government contracts above £10,000, and £25,000 in the wider public sector, are published on Contracts Finder:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Search>

■ Prison Officers: Retirement

Grahame Morris:

[114589]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2022 to Question 902659 on Prison officers: retirement, and to the Answer of 19 December 2022 to Question 110664 on Cabinet Office: Transfer of Questions, which Department leads on Government policy relating to prison officer pension age.

Jeremy Quin:

HM Treasury leads on all public sector pension scheme policy making and sets clear parameters within which pension scheme rules must be set, including the pension age for public servants.

The Cabinet Office is responsible for making the Civil Service pension scheme regulations. This pension scheme covers the overwhelming majority of civil servants in active service, including prison officers, and must be delivered within the wider HM Treasury policies.

Finally, the Ministry of Justice leads on local policy relating to prison officer terms and conditions. It may consider utilising employment, retirement and pension flexibilities for particular groups, if affordable and as they deem appropriate.

DEFENCE**■ Afghanistan: Refugees****Dan Jarvis:**[\[113300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy applications his Department has approved from applicants who served as part of Afghan Territorial Force (a) 444 and (b) 333.

James Heappey:

To date, we have relocated over 12,000 individuals under the ARAP scheme to the UK.

It is not possible to provide a breakdown of these figures by job role or specific unit.

■ Annington Homes**John Healey:**[\[114521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, to the Answer of 26 October to Question 65603 on Annington Homes, what proportion of applications and allocations for Service Family Accommodation are processed within 15 working days.

John Healey:[\[114522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 67845 on Annington Homes, what proportion of routine repairs have been attended and rectified within 12 working days in each quarter since the contract began.

John Healey:[\[114523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 67845 on Annington Homes, what proportion of urgent repairs have been attended and fixed by Regional Accommodation Maintenance Services suppliers within 48 hours in each quarter since the contract began.

John Healey:

[\[114524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 67845 on Annington Homes, what proportion of Emergency make safe repairs were made within two hours in each quarter since the contract began.

Alex Chalk:

In line with the Future Defence Infrastructure Services (FDIS) Accommodation contracts, comprehensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) statistics are not published for the initial six month bedding-in period as there is insufficient quality assured data.

KPI data will be available for Q3 (October - December) from 15 January 2023.

I will write to the right. hon Member in due course and place a copy of my response in the Library of the House.

John Healey:

[\[114525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 67845 on Annington Homes, what the level of occupant satisfaction with Response Maintenance was in each quarter since the contract began.

Alex Chalk:

The level of occupant satisfaction with response maintenance is measured as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of the Future Defence Infrastructure Service (FDIS) accommodation contract.

Pinnacle is responsible for administering surveys to capture levels of satisfaction with Pinnacle, VIVO and Amey. Partial KPI data from Pinnacle will be available for Quarter 3 (November - December 2022) from 15 January 2023.

I will write to the right hon. Member in due course and will place a copy of my response in the Library of the House.

John Healey:

[\[114526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October to Question 67845 on Annington Homes, what is the level of occupant satisfaction at move in is being achieved by Regional Accommodation Maintenance Services contractors in each quarter since the contract began.

Alex Chalk:

The level of occupant satisfaction at move in is measured as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of the Future Defence Infrastructure Service (FDIS) Accommodation contract.

Pinnacle is responsible for administering surveys to capture levels of satisfaction with Pinnacle, Vivo and Amey but these surveys were not administered in the early months of the contracts. Partial KPI data from Pinnacle will be available for Quarter 3 (November – December 2022) from 15 January 2023.

I will write to the right hon. Member in due course and place a copy of my response in the Library of the House.

■ **Armed Forces: Housing**

John Healey: [\[113176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many private engineers have been hired by Armed Forces families living in Service Family Accommodation to conduct repairs in each month since January 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The Department does not hold this information.

Any repairs requests to Service Family Accommodation should be reported by Service Personnel to the Pinnacle helpdesk and handled by our contractors, Amey and Vivo.

John Healey: [\[113177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average time is for an (a) VIVO and (b) Amey engineer to attend a Service Family Accommodation for issues related to heating.

John Healey: [\[113202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many engineers from (a) VIVO and (b) Amey attended Service Family Accommodation for issues related to heating in each month since January 2022.

Alex Chalk:

This information is not held in the format requested and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

VIVO and Amey record when a heating issue is reported and when it is resolved, not the average time it takes for an engineer to attend a property (some faults can even be resolved remotely) or the number of heating engineers attending reactive tasks month on month, so are unable to provide a monthly breakdown.

All calls relating to a loss of heating are treated as urgent, meaning families should receive a response as soon as possible and within 48 hours in line with the contract response maintenance category. No home should be left without heating for more than 24 hours. Should it not be possible to quickly resolve the issue, alternative forms of heating are provided, and, in some cases, alternative temporary accommodation offered.

John Healey: [\[113203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many times engineers from (a) VIVO and (b) Amey have not attended Service Family Accommodation within 48 hours of an issue related to the loss of heating since January 2022.

Alex Chalk:

The information is not available in the format requested and can be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

VIVO and Amey record when a heating issue is reported and when it is resolved, not the number of times heating engineers have attended reactive tasks month on month, so are unable to provide a monthly breakdown or the time it takes for an engineer to attend a property (some faults can even be resolved remotely).

All calls relating to a loss of heating are treated as urgent, meaning families should receive a response as soon as possible and within 48 hours in line with the contract response maintenance category. No home should be left without heating for more than 24 hours. Should it not be possible to quickly resolve the issue, alternative forms of heating are provided, and, in some cases, alternative temporary accommodation offered.

John Healey:[\[113204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what obligations contractors providing maintenance and management of (a) Service Family Accommodation and (b) Single Living Accommodation have to respond to requests for repairs for issues related to the loss of heating within 48 hours.

Alex Chalk:

For Service Family Accommodation, Amey and VIVO have a contractual obligation to treat loss of heating as Urgent during the winter months (31 October to 01 May). An Urgent issue must be responded to within 48 hours.

Should a vulnerable person live in Service Family Accommodation, loss of heating is defined as Urgent at any time of year.

No home should be left without heating for more than 24 hours. Should it not be possible to quickly resolve the issue, alternative forms of heating are provided, and, in some cases, alternative temporary accommodation offered.

For Single Living Accommodation, contractors are obliged to respond to the loss of heating immediately to make safe, and within 12 hours to restore functionality.

John Healey:[\[114519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December to Question 110586 on Armed Forces: Housing, what the (a) total and (b) average value of the compensation vouchers is.

Alex Chalk:

The total number of compensation vouchers provided for issues relating to Service Family Accommodation is 5,947.

The total value of compensation vouchers provided for issues relating to Service Family Accommodation is £294,516.

Compensation vouchers range in value from £10-£100, depending on the nature of the issue.

John Healey:

[\[114530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2022 to Question 110586 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many compensation payments have been made to armed forces personnel and their families for issues relating to service family accommodation in each year since 2010.

Alex Chalk:

Under the Future Defence Infrastructure Services contracts, 5,947 compensation payments (in the form of vouchers) have been made since the 1 April 2022 for issues relating to Service Family Accommodation.

These compensation payments are administered and funded by the suppliers at no cost to the Ministry of Defence.

Under the previous National Housing Prime contracts, both the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Amey paid compensation to Armed Forces Personnel and their families.

DIO made 13,279 compensation payments between April 2017 and April 2022 for issues relating to Service Family Accommodation.

Data is not held prior to 2017 as the DIO compensation scheme began in April 2017.

John Healey:

[\[114531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2022 to Question 110586 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many and what proportion of these compensation payments were vouchers for (a) missed appointments, (b) failed move-in, (c) hotel stay - subsistence, (d) incorrect tradesperson, (e) total loss of heating where temporary heating is provided and (f) total loss of cooking facilities.

Alex Chalk:

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

Detailed compensation claim data is not recorded by category type. Each individual claim or compensation would need to be manually checked, and this could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

John Healey:

[\[114532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 20 December 2022 to Question 111517 on Armed Forces: Housing, how many and what proportion of these calls resulted in compensation payments to armed forces personnel and their families.

Alex Chalk:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ Pinnacle Group

John Healey: [\[114520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 26 October to Question 65603 on Annington Homes, what is the overall customer satisfaction level with Pinnacle Group; and what the relevant Key Performance Indicators are.

Alex Chalk:

Two out of the KPIs Pinnacle have for their contractual responsibilities are related to customer satisfaction, as follows:

- Application completions: to measure the performance of Pinnacle in processing fully completed Entitled Applications for SFA that have an offer or other suitable compliant outcome made to the Applicant within fifteen working days of verification of the application.
- Allocation satisfaction: to determine the overall level of customer satisfaction of families with the service received.

Pinnacle is responsible for administering surveys to capture levels of overall customer satisfaction with Pinnacle, Vivo and Amey. Partial KPI data will be available for Quarter 3 (November - December) from 15 January 2023 and will be broken out according to each individual contractor.

I will write to the right hon. Member in due course and place a copy of my response in the Library of the House.

■ War Pensions: Disability

Ian Blackford: [\[114663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason veterans in receipt of war pensions assessed at less than 40% do not receive cost-of-living support.

Ian Blackford: [\[114664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reason applicants for War Pensions are graded in terms of percentages of disability.

Ian Blackford: [\[114665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has plans to review the grading of war pensions for existing and new recipients to make them more aligned with civilian disability benefits.

Ian Blackford: [\[114666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will reassess the entitlements of existing recipients of the War Disablement Pension whose assessment of disablement is less than 40 per cent; and whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of the War Disablement Pension for people who have degenerative conditions.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Government has paid a £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment to those in receipt of Armed Forces Independence Payment, War Pension Mobility Supplement, or War Pension Constant Attendance Allowance, with a further £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment in 2023-24. These payments were selected because they are the allowances under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pension Scheme that are similar to the relevant benefits administered by the Department for Work and Pensions, such as Personal Independence Payment. Receiving a war pension does not prevent individuals from receiving payment of the broader social security benefits that are in scope for the disability payment.

The basic War Pension is worked out based on an individual's degree of disability as a percentage to enable Defence to take a holistic view of impact of their conditions on their overall health and functionality, with payments made to reflect that. There are specific set levels of assessments for certain prescribed injuries, which range from 20 to 100 per cent. These are mainly for the loss of body parts or total sensory loss and help act as a benchmark for assessing conditions which are not listed. Ongoing pensions can be for a single or a number of conditions but the overall assessed disablement level, called a combined assessment, is certified and cannot exceed 100 per cent. For those injuries that are minor in nature, with a percentage disablement of less than 20 per cent, a lump sum gratuity may be payable

The War Pensions Scheme and civilian disability payments provide financial support for two different things, which is why they do not align. The War Pensions Scheme provides compensation for any injury, illness or death which was caused by service before 6 April 2005. Civilian disability benefits provide financial support for those too ill, or whose conditions prevent work to support themselves entirely independently.

The Ministry of Defence is confident that extant War Pensions assessments are appropriate and there are no plans to reassess existing entitlements outside the scope of routine reviews. It is possible for pensions to be increased as a result of a request for a review from the individual or an appeal against the percentage level awarded. Defence considers the level of payment available to those with degenerative conditions under the War Pensions Scheme to be appropriate.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ 5G****Sarah Olney:****[114820]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many agreements were reached to install 5G masts on private property in each of the last five years; and what proportion of those agreements were concluded consensually.

Julia Lopez:

Digital connectivity is important now more than ever and the Government is committed to providing good quality digital infrastructure and mobile coverage,

including 5G, across the UK. This will ensure that people are able to stay connected and businesses are able to grow. The Government's ambition for the majority of the UK population to have access to 5G by 2027 was met 5 years early with basic "non-standalone" 5G. Non-standalone 5G is available outside up to 77% of UK premises.

However, Government policy in this area consistently aims to maintain a proportionate balance between the public benefits of digital rollout, and the rights of individual landowners. This is reflected in the legal framework underpinning rights to install and keep electronic communications apparatus on public and private land, contained in the Electronic Communications Code ("the Code").

5G network rollout and the acquisition and management of masts, mobile sites and network infrastructure is, ultimately, a matter for the mobile network operators (MNOs), operating within that legal framework. The Government therefore does not routinely collate comprehensive data on site acquisitions.

However, you may find it useful to note that information provided by mobile operators and infrastructure providers during passage of the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act showed that the number of agreements being concluded on new and existing sites has increased year on year since 2020. This data shows that in 2022, at least 107 agreements were reached in relation to new sites, with heads of terms agreed on a further 66 sites. That is in addition to the 533 renewal agreements which have concluded this year, along with heads of terms being agreed on a further 119 renewals.

To be clear however, this data does not represent a complete picture of the number of agreements agreed during 2022, but rather a snapshot provided by some mobile operators. We do not have any additional data breaking down these figures into agreements concerning the installation of 5G masts on private property, or how many agreements were completed consensually. However, as you may be aware, measures contained in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure (PSTI) Act aim to encourage consensual negotiations.

EDUCATION

■ BTEC Qualifications: Assessments

Bridget Phillipson:

[113239]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 27 September 2022 to Question 51624 on BTEC Qualifications: Assessments, what recent steps she has taken to develop mitigations that support students to receive grades that reflect their performance.

Robert Halfon:

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, to write to the Honourable Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Childcare

Dame Diana Johnson:

[114609]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help ensure childcare is (a) accessible and (b) affordable.

Claire Coutinho:

The department is committed to improving the availability and affordability of childcare which is why we have spent more than £20 billion over the last five years to support families with the cost of childcare. This means that thousands of parents are benefitting from government childcare support.

In the 2021 Spending Review, the department announced additional funding of £160 million in financial years 2022/23, £180 million in 2023/24 and £170 million in 2024/25, compared to the 2021/22. This is for local authorities to increase hourly rates paid to childcare providers, reflecting cost pressures and changes in the number of eligible children anticipated at the time of the review.

For 2023/24, the department will invest an additional £20 million into early years funding, on top of the additional £180 million for 2023/24. Taken together, this will help support providers at a national level with the additional National Living Wage costs associated with delivering the free childcare entitlements in 2023.

In July, the department announced measures to reduce the costs and barriers facing providers and ensure families can access government support to save them money on their childcare bills.

This included the launch of a new £1.2 million communications campaign via the childcare choices website to ensure every parent knows about the government funded support they are eligible for. This is accessible here:

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>.

The department continues to work across government, looking at ways to make childcare more affordable and accessible to ensure that families benefit from the government-funded support they are entitled to.

■ Childcare: Energy

Helen Hayes:

[114705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the average annual cost of energy for (a) nurseries, (b) childminders and (c) other childcare settings in each of the last five years.

Helen Hayes:

[114706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the average increase in energy costs for childcare settings since 1 January 2022.

Helen Hayes:

[114707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an estimate of the number of childcare settings that have increased costs for places as a result of (a) inflationary pressure and (b) energy bills.

Helen Hayes:

[114711]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the average increase in childcare costs by region in 2022.

Claire Coutinho:

The Childcare and Early Years Provider Survey 2022 provides information on childcare fees, overall and by region, and can be found here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/childcare-and-early-years-provider-survey>. The survey suggests that the mean hourly fees were highest in London, followed by the South East and East of England. They were lowest in Yorkshire and the Humber and the North East.

The Providers' finances: Evidence from the Survey of Childcare and Early Years Providers 2021 report contains information on provider finances, and can be found at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1071812/Frontier - SCEYP 2021 Finance Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1071812/Frontier_-_SCEYP_2021_Finance_Report.pdf). This report contains information on how much of a percentage providers spend on 'other' costs. The 'other' category includes spend on energy costs as well as other factors. The report does not break the 'other' category down further into provider spend on only energy costs or only inflationary costs.

The department recognises the impact that rising energy prices can have on businesses, the voluntary sector and public sector organisations of all sizes, including all early years settings. The energy regulator Ofgem and the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy are in regular contact with business groups and suppliers to understand the challenges they face and to explore ways to protect consumers and businesses.

In September 2022, the government announced unprecedented support to protect households and businesses from high energy prices. The Energy Price Guarantee and the Energy Bill Discount Scheme, the successor to the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, are supporting millions of households and businesses, including Early Years settings, with rising energy costs until 31 March 2024.

■ Children: Social Services

Dame Diana Johnson:

[114610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she is taking steps to help reform children's social care services; and if she will make a statement.

Claire Coutinho:

The department committed to review the children's social care system, so that children's outcomes can be improved. Earlier this year, three reviews were published

that provide an opportunity to reset children's social care and make the urgent progress children need.

The department is rapidly working up a detailed implementation strategy in response to the reviews and this will be published in early 2023. The implementation strategy will set out the steps we are taking to reform children's social care services.

■ Children's Social Care National Implementation Board

Tim Loughton:

[R] [114506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what representatives from the independent children social care sector will be included on the National Implementation Board for the Social Care Review.

Claire Coutinho:

The National Implementation Board was established to advise, support, and challenge the department on its delivery of children's social care reform. It is made up of individuals with expertise in leading transformational change and direct experience of the children's social care system. Its membership can be found online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-social-care-national-implementation-board/list-of-members-childrens-social-care-national-implementation-board>. The Board does not include any members from the independent care sector.

Since publication of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, officials have engaged with stakeholders across the Children's Social Care sector to deliver the ambitious and detailed Implementation Strategy that is needed. As part of this engagement, the Children's Homes Association meets with officials on a fortnightly basis and has representation on an Expert Advisory Group, which was established to look at Standards of Care. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education will also be hosting a roundtable with children's homes providers in early 2023.

The department is committed to engaging widely with those with care experience and all interested stakeholders, to help us drive the right change and scale up good practice across the country. There will be other avenues through which people can engage with the reform programme, including consultations and a range of advisory groups. The department will share information on this in early 2023.

■ Department for Education: Energy

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[109710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which energy provider supplies energy to their Department; how much carbon dioxide was emitted by their Department in the latest period for which figures are available; whether the criteria their Department uses to select an energy supplier include how environmentally friendly that supplier is; and what recent steps their Department has taken to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from its energy use.

Nick Gibb:

The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) operates a centralised energy procurement strategy for central Government and is responsible for selecting the gas and power supply companies on behalf of all departments. CCS is currently conducting its latest tender round on behalf of departments and the supplier's environmental credentials will be part of the selection criteria.

The Government Property Agency (GPA) manages the Department's building assets and procures energy through the CCS frameworks. The current suppliers are Total Energies Gas & Power Ltd for gas and EDF Energy for electricity. These suppliers are used in the following offices where the Department is the major tenant: Coventry, London and Sheffield.

The Department is also the major tenant in its Darlington and Manchester offices. The GPA do not hold the details of utilities suppliers for those offices where energy suppliers are managed directly by the landlord.

The Department's most recent carbon emissions data is in the Greening Government Commitments 2019 to 2020 annual report. It is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1029548/Greening_Government_Commitments_Annual_Report_2019_to_2020.pdf

The Department's steps to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from its energy use are delivered through the GPA's activities. More broadly, the Department's steps to reduce emission are outlined in the Greening Government Commitments, which outlines the UK Government's intentions to mitigate climate change and work towards Net Zero by 2050: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greening-government-commitments-2021-to-2025/greening-government-commitments-2021-to-2025>.

The Department is also supporting the education sector to play its role in positively responding to climate change. This work was set out in April 2022 in our Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for the education and children's services systems: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems>.

■ Food: Pre-school Education**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[114542]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of sensory food play for the health of children.

Claire Coutinho:

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

The department has published an article promoting sensory food education on the 'Help for early years providers' online platform, which is a resource for childminders, nursery leaders and pre-school practitioners. This supports practitioners to look at incorporating sensory food education into their practice, while delivering the statutory EYFS requirements. The sensory food education article can be found here:

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/get-help-to-improve-your-practice/sensory-food-education>.

■ Foster Care: Allowances

Caroline Lucas:

[114587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2022 to Question 98806 on Foster Care: Finance, if she will make an assessment of the financial impact on foster parents of not uprating the national minimum fostering allowance in line with September 2022 consumer prices index inflation; what mechanisms are in place to determine the adequate level of uprating necessary to ensure that no one suffers financially because of their fostering role; if she will make it her policy to uprate the national minimum fostering allowance in line with September 2022 consumer prices index inflation; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Gavin Williamson:

[114694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when pay rates for foster carers will next be reviewed.

Claire Coutinho:

Foster parents deserve high quality support to provide safe and loving homes for children in their care. The department is working with stakeholders to understand the impact of financial pressures on foster carers, particularly in the context of the cost of living. The department is also in the process of looking at the annual uplift to the national minimum allowance (NMA), with the next update to come into effect in April 2023. The NMA is not considered a wage or income for the foster parent but money to support the child in the family.

It is the responsibility of fostering service providers to set their own payment structures in accordance with local needs, using the NMA. This includes reviewing their rates each year and setting out a clear policy on what payments their foster carers can expect. This policy should include how other necessary expenses are covered for the care, education, and reasonable leisure interests for any child living with them in a fostering placement and any additional fees that the foster carer is entitled to. In 2021, the department wrote to any local authority that failed to provide the NMA.

Foster carers can also benefit from reformed tax and benefit allowances which ensure they receive the best support for their individual financial circumstances, in recognition of their role. As with all aspects of the tax system, the government will keep tax reliefs under review and any decisions on future changes will be taken by the Chancellor in the context of the wider public finances.

■ Further Education: Energy

Dame Diana Johnson: [114558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effect of increases in energy costs on further education college budgets.

Rachael Maskell: [114750]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of energy costs on further education college budgets.

Robert Halfon:

The department knows that one of the biggest challenges facing some colleges is the rising cost of energy. The potential impacts of the rising cost of energy on educational providers is being kept under review by the department.

Further education (FE) colleges are autonomous institutions responsible for their own financial sustainability.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has outlined the range of support on energy cost increases that will be available for businesses, the public sector and households. As part of that, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including colleges, are protected from high energy bills this winter. Discounts will be applied to energy usage initially between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

Schools and colleges in England will also be allocated a share of £500 million in capital funding in the 2022/23 financial year. This comprises £447 million for schools and sixth form colleges and £53 million for FE colleges to spend on energy efficiency upgrades.

These upgrades will not only help schools and colleges save money, but they will also make schools and colleges more energy efficient during the cold period and increase winter resilience for future years. A FE college group will receive £290,000 on average from that additional funding. Allocations were published on 6 December 2022 to help colleges plan and payments are expected to be made in January 2023.

The department assesses and reviews colleges' financial health on a regular basis and uses this information to determine where support and intervention from the department, Education Skills Funding Agency and FE Commissioner can help colleges to improve their position. More information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/college-oversight-support-and-intervention>.

■ Higher Education: Conditions of Employment and Industrial Disputes

Tulip Siddiq: [114839]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the (a) real terms pay, (b) working conditions and (c) staff pension

schemes of university staff; and whether she has taken any steps to resolve the industrial disputes in the higher education sector.

Robert Halfon:

Universities are autonomous and responsible for the pay and pension provision of their staff. While the department plays no role in such disputes, we hope all parties can reach an agreement that delivers good value for students, staff and the universities, so that industrial action can be avoided.

It is disappointing that students who have already suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic face further disruption to their learning due to industrial action. The department hopes that all sides can work together so that students do not suffer with further learning loss. If students are worried about the impact of strikes on their education, they should raise this with their university.

■ **School Rebuilding Programme: Birmingham**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[114843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in Birmingham (a) applied and (b) were successful with their application to the School Rebuilding Programme in the last two years.

Nick Gibb:

The Department announced the next 239 schools prioritised for the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) on 16 December 2022. This included 10 schools of the 30 nominations received from within the Birmingham Local Authority area. This is in addition to the five schools previously announced in rounds one to three of the programme and means that a total of 15 schools will be rebuilt or refurbished as part of the SRP.

■ **Schools: Buildings**

Bridget Phillipson:

[\[113271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the School Buildings Condition Survey, whether the condition of school buildings in England has been included in the National Risk Register.

Nick Gibb:

The condition of school buildings in England is not included in the National Risk Register. School buildings safety has been escalated to the Civil Service Board as a cross-governmental risk, as part of the broader principal risk entitled 'unsafe public property and building failure'.

The Department prioritises capital support where there is a risk to health and safety. Over £13 billion has been allocated since 2015 to maintain and improve school facilities across England, including £1.8 billion in 2022/23. The Department is transforming the environment at 500 schools and sixth form colleges over the next decade. In December 2022, the Department announced 239 more schools to be rebuilt or refurbished, taking the total to 400 of the 500 projects already planned.

Where a building risks closure on safety grounds, and the issues cannot be managed within the school's resource, the Department will always provide additional advice and support on a case-by-case basis.

■ Schools: Capital Investment

Bridget Phillipson:

[114757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much capital funding was received by each school that had a Building Schools for the Future project cancelled in 2010 in each of the last 12 years.

Nick Gibb:

The Department allocates condition funding each year to those responsible for school buildings to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate, including £1.8 billion for the 2022 to 2023 financial year. The majority of annual capital allocations are provided to responsible bodies (such as Local Authorities and large academy trusts) to prioritise locally across their schools instead of directly to individual schools. The Department therefore cannot provide the information requested.

In addition to annual condition allocations the Department also delivers rebuilding programmes centrally. The Department has launched the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) in 2020 with a commitment to 500 rebuilding projects over the next decade, replacing poor condition and ageing school buildings with modern designs, which will be net zero carbon in operation. The Department has now announced 400 schools in total for SRP, reserving 100 places for later in the programme. A list of these schools is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-rebuilding-programme-schools-in-the-programme>.

■ Social Services: Energy

Helen Hayes:

[114709]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the average increase in energy costs (a) children's homes and (b) other social care settings have experienced in 2022.

Claire Coutinho:

The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year and that have impacted education and care settings and providers. The department continues to monitor the impact of the cost of living, including energy costs, and is working with other government departments to provide support.

The department recognises that children's homes and other social care settings, much like the wider economy, are facing increased costs, including rising energy bills. From October 2022 to 31 March 2023, education and care settings and providers are benefiting from the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which provides a price reduction, protecting them from excessively high energy bills over the winter period.

■ Surgo Construction: Contracts

Grahame Morris:

[\[114585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many contracts were awarded to Surgo Construction relating to the (a) construction, (b) repair and (c) maintenance of schools in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

There have been no contracts awarded by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, to Surgo Construction in the last five years, comprising calendar years 2018 to 2022.

■ Vocational Education: Assessments

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[114559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to investigate the reasons for the delayed results for vocational and technical exam and assessment results in 2022.

Robert Halfon:

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, to write to the right hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Chemicals: Regulation

Clive Lewis:

[\[114653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make a comparative assessment of the adequacy of the protective approach to (a) the environment and (b) human health taken by (i) UK REACH and (ii) the EU.

Rebecca Pow:

UK REACH retains the fundamental approaches and key principles of EU REACH and aims to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment within Great Britain. There is a long-term monitoring and evaluation strategy in place for the implementation of UK REACH, which incorporates the impacts on human health and the environment. Having our own independent regulatory framework for chemicals allows us to identify the most pressing priorities which best reflect the specific circumstances in GB. The decisions we take are based on the best available evidence, including looking at approaches taken by chemical regimes across the world, including the EU.

■ Flood Control

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[114613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what precautionary steps his Department is taking to support communities at risk of flooding.

Rebecca Pow:

In July 2020, the Government published a long-term Policy Statement, which sets out our ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. The Policy Statement includes five policies and a number of supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion.

The Government announced in March 2020 a record £5.2 billion investment in around 2,000 flood and coastal erosion schemes to better protect communities across England. In July 2020 we announced an additional £170 million to accelerate the building of 23 flood schemes across the country.

To support communities that have experienced repeated flooding, the Government announced the creation of a new Frequently Flooded Allowance in July 2022 to boost schemes in these areas. The new ring-fenced £100 million allowance, as part of the £5.2 billion programme, will be targeted at eligible communities where 10 or more properties have flooded twice or more in the past 10 years.

In addition to the £5.2 billion investment in flooding and coastal erosion, the government's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation fund (2021–2027) will allocate:

- £150 million to the flood and coastal resilience innovation programme, to support 25 local areas to demonstrate how practical innovative actions can work to improve resilience to flooding and coastal erosion;
- £36 million to the coastal transition accelerator programme, to trial opportunities, in a small number of coastal areas at significant risk of coastal erosion, to transition and adapt to a changing climate; and
- £8 million to the adaptation pathways programme for work on long term planning for climate adaptation in the Thames and Humber estuaries, the Severn Valley and Yorkshire.

■ Hazardous Substances: EU Law

Clive Lewis:

[\[114652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department is taking steps to put mechanisms in place to resolve concerns raised by the European Chemicals Agency about hazardous substances registered in the EU that are grandfathered in the UK and subject to transitional data requirements.

Rebecca Pow:

When identifying UK priorities for action under UK REACH, we will look at evidence from the European Chemicals Agency, along with other countries. If the EU is taking action on a substance, this does not mean that there has been a clear demonstration of risk within Great Britain. Where a risk has been identified within Great Britain, we might decide to address the issue in other ways, such as initiating actions under the occupational health and safety regulations or the classification, labelling and packaging regulations. The first two UK REACH Work Programmes have set out work in similar areas to the EU.

Under UK REACH, all chemical substances that are manufactured in, or imported into, Great Britain in quantities of over 1 tonne a year must be notified and registered with the Health and Safety Executive. In addition, manufacturers, importers and downstream users have the ongoing duty to identify appropriate risk management measures, pass them down the supply chain, and apply them when they use a substance.

■ Marine Protected Areas: Fishing Vessels**Abena Oppong-Asare:**[\[114833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many supertrawlers were given permission to fish in UK Marine Protected Areas in the last year for which data are available.

Mark Spencer:

We are considering our policies for large-scale pelagic vessels or 'supertrawlers' and working with industry to develop more robust management of the non-quota species which these vessels are targeting alongside quota stocks. Any action needs to be evidence-based and in line with the UK/EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. However, these trawlers operate by targeting shoals of fish in the mid-upper water column and do not touch the seabed. This means that they are unlikely to damage the seabed habitats, such as reef and sediment habitats, that most Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are designated to protect.

Marine regulators assess on a site-by-site basis which fishing activities could prevent MPAs from achieving their conservation objectives. Byelaws are developed using an evidence-led process to determine what management is required to protect sites and to not restrict non-damaging fishing. 60% of our 178 English MPAs are already protected from damaging fishing activity, including byelaws this year in the first four offshore sites, which ban bottom towed gear over sensitive habitats. We are aiming to have all MPAs in English waters protected from damaging fishing activity by 2024.

■ Rivers: Suffolk**Tom Hunt:**[\[114816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the environmental condition of the River Gipping in Suffolk.

Rebecca Pow:

The Environment Agency monitors the water quality, ecology (plants, invertebrates and fish), rainfall, river flows and groundwater levels of the River Gipping and its catchment. The Environment Agency delivered a fish survey report in 2019 for the River Gipping which indicated that fish populations in the river are stable, with an average of 10 species being recorded at each of the five survey sites. A further survey was completed this year and the results are still being analysed.

The river is currently at Moderate Ecological Potential, with a target to achieve Good Ecological Potential by 2027.

■ Sportsgrounds: Environment Protection**Chris Grayling:****[114541]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of 3G sports pitches on the environment.

Rebecca Pow:

Concerns about environmental impacts of Third Generation (3G) synthetic surfaces regarding runoff to watercourses and into groundwater have been previously raised with the Environment Agency however there is currently limited evidence to substantiate these concerns.

3G synthetic surfaces often contain rubber crumb. This rubber crumb may be derived from waste materials, which can be permitted as a non-waste product under the [Quality Protocol for Tyre Derived Rubber Material](#). Quality protocols seek to ensure recycled materials are handled correctly to be used with minimised environmental impacts. The Environment Agency is conducting a routine review of this Quality Protocol to ensure it reflects current uses in products, remains fit for purpose and takes account of the latest available evidence.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Cuba: Political Prisoners****Fabian Hamilton:****[107058]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Cuba on reports of the incarceration of political prisoners.

David Rutley:

Many protestors, including minors, remain detained in Cuba following protests in July 2021. The UK Government has raised the ongoing detentions directly with the Cuban Government, both in London and Havana. Most recently our Ambassador did so last month. We are clear that all Cubans should have the right to protest peacefully, and that detention must not be used as a tool to restrict freedom of expression and assembly. The UK was one of the first countries to call for the Cuban people to be

allowed to express their views freely and peacefully following the Cuban Government's response to the July 2021 protests.

■ EU Aid

Stephen Doughty:

[114660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish a breakdown of Official Development Assistance spend in Europe by country in the latest period for which data is available.

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.

The volume of UK bilateral ODA disbursed for the benefit of European countries is available in Table A4d of SID: Final UK Aid Spend 2021:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1119396/Table-A4d.ods

Please note that this includes only bilateral ODA given specifically for the benefit of individual countries. The UK also spends ODA in the form of core contributions to multilateral organisations and bilaterally to programmes which benefit multiple countries/regions, which may also benefit European countries.

■ Jagtar Singh Johal

Preet Kaur Gill:

[114794]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues about seeking the release of Jagtar Singh Johal.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government has consistently raised Mr Johal's case with the Government of India, and is committed to doing what it can to assist him. The Foreign Secretary discussed Mr Johal's case with the Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, in Delhi on 29 October, and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister for South Asia, raised the case with the Indian High Commissioner to the UK on 13 December. The FCDO regularly coordinates across His Majesty's Government on different aspects of the UK-India bilateral relationship at official and Ministerial level.

■ Korea: BBC World Service

Fiona Bruce:

[114630]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will take steps to help ensure that the BBC World Service broadcasts into the Korea Peninsula.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The FCDO strongly values the BBC World Service's role in bringing high-quality and impartial broadcasting to audiences in need, particularly where free speech is limited.

The BBC has provided assurance that it will continue to serve audiences in countries lacking media freedom and a free press, such as North Korea. Through the World2020 programme, the FCDO provides support to the BBC Korean service which is aimed at audiences across the Korean Peninsula, including inside North Korea where access to international media sources is extremely limited.

The UK is committed to media freedom, and to championing democracy and human rights around the world.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: Humanitarian Situation**Stephen Doughty:**[\[114657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) supply of (i) gas and (ii) other critical supplies and (b) wider humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has made clear that the closure of the Lachin corridor risks severe humanitarian consequences. The UK has spoken at the Organization for Security Co-operation in Europe and at the United Nations Security Council to urge the immediate reopening of the corridor given this risk. We are aware that gas supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh have been reinstated and continue to urge the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan to abide by all commitments in relation to the Lachin corridor in good faith, and to settle the remaining conflict issues as soon as possible. We are clear that there is no military solution to this conflict and we continue to support international efforts to facilitate a sustainable and peaceful settlement that will ensure security and lasting stability in the region.

■ Russia: Unmanned Air Vehicles**Tulip Siddiq:**[\[114633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help reduce the Russian military's access to drones.

Leo Docherty:

The UK, along with its allies, has introduced severe sanctions against Russia's defence industry. This includes prohibitions on the export, supply, delivery and making available of unmanned aircraft to Russia.

Russia's procurement of Iranian drones corroborates our assessment that Russia is struggling militarily and isolated internationally. The UK has sanctioned Iranian individuals and businesses responsible for supplying Russia with drones. We are working with France and Germany to support a UN investigation into Iran's transfers and will continue to work with the international community to hold Russia and Iran to account and deter other countries from supporting Russia's illegal war in Ukraine.

■ Transcaucasus: Roads

Stephen Doughty:

[\[114656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his Azerbaijani counterpart on the disruption of the Lachin corridor.

Leo Docherty:

The UK Government has made clear that the closure of the Lachin corridor during winter risks severe humanitarian consequences. I [Minister Docherty] issued a statement highlighting the importance of re-opening the Lachin corridor on 13 December and our Ambassadors in the region and other senior UK officials have reinforced this message with key interlocutors. We also called for early resolution of this issue in our interventions in New York at the UN Security Council on 20 December. We continue to urge the governments of both Azerbaijan and Armenia to abide by all ceasefire commitments in good faith. This is consistent with our support for international efforts to facilitate a sustainable and peaceful settlement to the conflict.

■ Ukraine: Electricity

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[113185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help mitigate the impact of recent attacks on Ukraine's power grids.

Leo Docherty:

The UK is providing support to repair and restore Ukraine's energy infrastructure, as well as supporting Ukrainian air defence to protect critical infrastructure against Russian attacks. We have provided £22 million in direct support for Ukraine's energy sector, including £10 million for emergency energy equipment, £7 million for over 850 generators and £5 million for civil nuclear safety and security equipment. We have also provided a financial guarantee of €54.4 million to unlock €97.3 million in European Bank for Reconstruction and Development loan financing to help ensure Ukraine's provision of electricity to its citizens. We are working with UK industry to mobilise the provision of equipment and services and with international partners to scale up assistance.

■ Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[113186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of humanitarian support to Ukraine.

Leo Docherty:

The UK has committed £220 million of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and the region to enable the provision of essential services and protection for the most vulnerable, including women and children, the elderly and those with disabilities. UK

funding has supported the UN to reach over 13.4 million people in need. We work closely with the Government of Ukraine, the UN and international partners to assess humanitarian needs. We continue to assess and monitor all programmed assistance spent on Ukraine and the region. We have contracted an independent monitoring supplier to conduct field visits of our projects. A review of humanitarian spend will be published in late 2023.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[113164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department is taking steps to change (a) NICE and (b) NHS England's processes to help adapt to developing cell and gene therapies.

Will Quince:

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) carried out a comprehensive review of its methods and processes in early 2022. The changes introduced will ensure its methods and processes are suited to new and emerging types of technology, including cell and gene therapies, and provide more equitable access (to these technologies) for those with severe diseases.

As committed to under Action 12 of England Rare Diseases Action Plan 2022, NHS England are developing a strategic approach for gene therapies and other advanced therapy medicinal products based on horizon scanning. This work is ongoing and the Department will receive an update on progress and next steps ahead of publication of the action plan, due in early 2023.

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[113166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps they are taking to encourage clinical trials for cell and gene therapy.

Will Quince:

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) provides investment to support multiple organisations in encouraging clinical trials across all specialities. This includes 20 NIHR Biomedical Research Centres and 28 NIHR Clinical Research Facilities across England which have the capacity and expertise to deliver clinical trials for cell and gene therapies.

NHS Blood and Transplant also operate three advanced therapy units to support cell therapies and are building a new Clinical Biotechnology Centre to increase the United Kingdom's ability to develop new gene therapies. Innovate UK has also established the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult to help companies, researchers and innovators throughout development, manufacturing and clinical adoption, to accelerate the process of cell and gene therapies coming to market.

■ Autism and Learning Disability

Barbara Keeley:

[\[114568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the quality and effectiveness of Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews.

Maria Caulfield:

We are committed to the ongoing monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews (C(E)TRs).

NHS England has recently asked the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to commission a national study to consider this in more detail for both community and inpatient C(E)TRs.

NHS England monitor C(E)TR adherence using Assuring Transformation Data in line with the frequency standards set out in the C(E)TR policy. This includes whether the person is reported as having a community C(E)TR before admission, or a post-admission C(E)TR on admission. It also records whether people in hospital have had their most recent C(E)TR within the timescale set out in the policy, three months for children and young people, six months for adults in acute settings and 12 months for adults in secure settings.

NHS England will shortly be publishing the refreshed Dynamic Support Register and C(E)TR policy.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Hospital Wards

Barbara Keeley:

[\[114569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Care Quality Commission on reducing the number of inpatient wards for people with learning disabilities and autistic people rated as inadequate.

Maria Caulfield:

Ministers and officials regularly discuss a range of matters with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) including making improvements to services that are rated inadequate by the CQC.

The Government, cross-system Building the Right Support Delivery Board, chaired by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health and Women's Health Strategy, is responsible for monitoring progress on the commitments in the Building the Right Support Action Plan. The CQC are members of the Delivery Board and attend the meetings which are held quarterly. The Delivery Board will continue to discuss and monitor progress on the commitment in the Action Plan to avoid people with a learning disability and autistic people being admitted to hospital settings rated inadequate by the CQC and on actions to improve the quality of care these individuals receive in inpatient settings.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Sir Alan Campbell: [\[114552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his planned timetable is for bringing forward legislation on rights to visits in care settings.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[114837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on guaranteeing the rights of care homes residents to receive visitors.

Helen Whately:

The Government's guidance states that every resident should be able to have at least one visitor in all circumstances. We are looking at a range of options to strengthen the guidance around visiting and avoid instances where residents are unable to receive visitors.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Karin Smyth: [\[112119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the workloads of informal carers.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 January 2023]: No specific assessment has been made.

■ Continuing Care: Autism and Learning Disability

Barbara Keeley: [\[114571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion of NHS continuing healthcare funding is spent on learning disability and autism.

Maria Caulfield:

The information requested is not collected centrally. Determination of NHS continuing healthcare eligibility is based on a comprehensive assessment of care needs rather than any specific medical condition, disease or diagnosis.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[114511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many cases of post-vaccine (a) myocarditis and (b) pericarditis have been identified by NHS England since January 2020.

Will Quince:

Data on an individual's complete vaccination record is held by their general practitioner. Although recent vaccinations may be identified and recorded within individual patient hospital records upon presentation and diagnosis with myocarditis

or pericarditis, there is no single data platform available to systematically identify patients presenting with these conditions in a time period following any vaccination.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for monitoring the safety of all vaccines authorised in the United Kingdom. One of the sources of safety information is reports received through the Yellow Card scheme, which collects and monitors information on suspected side effects following any medicinal product or device.

Since January 2020 MHRA has received 1217 Yellow Card reports of myocarditis, 161 Yellow Card reports of myopericarditis and 979 Yellow Card reports of pericarditis following receipt of a vaccine. It is important to note that a Yellow Card report does not necessarily mean the vaccine caused that reported events.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[114512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 25 November 2022 to Question 93438 on Coronavirus: Vaccination, what the maximum time is that could elapse before the Secretary of State is able to respond to the invitation from the hon Member for Christchurch to meet representatives of those people affected by vaccine damage.

Maria Caulfield:

A response to the invitation from the hon. Member has now been issued.

■ Diabetes

Geraint Davies:

[\[114517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of research published in the British Medical Journal on 7 December 2022 which shows that the UK had the fastest increase in the age standardised incidence rate for early onset type 2 diabetes between 1990 and 2019; and whether he is taking steps to help reverse that trend.

Helen Whately:

The Department with the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), invests in high-quality research on diabetes. NIHR is investing £2 million in an evaluation of scalable behavioural weight management programmes for the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes.

■ Domestic Abuse

Feryal Clark:

[\[103058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the importance of ensuring healthcare professionals have adequate training on domestic abuse.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department recognises that it is important for healthcare professionals to have training on domestic abuse. All National Health Service staff undertake mandatory

safeguarding training, including on domestic abuse. NHS England and Health Education England continue to review training to ensure that healthcare professionals are fully equipped with the appropriate skills, knowledge and principles required.

In addition, integrated care boards (ICBs) are required to set out how they will address the needs of victims of abuse in their Joint Forward Plans. ICBs will be helped in this by the supporting guidance being developed by the NHS England national lead on domestic abuse and sexual violence, who is providing dedicated support to the National Health Service and integrated care systems.

■ Food: Advertising

Alex Sobel:

[114808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, why the Government has postponed the implementation of the new advertising restrictions on unhealthy foods online and on TV to October 2025; and if he will make a statement.

Neil O'Brien:

We need to take several steps ahead of implementation of the new advertising restrictions, including publishing regulations, consultations and guidance from the Government and the regulators. We have also listened carefully to the concerns raised by advertisers, broadcasters and regulators about having sufficient time with these documents to fully prepare and restructure their advertising. We also recognise that food businesses need time to reformulate products. Therefore, we have decided to delay implementation until 1 October 2025.

■ General Practitioners: Medical Treatments

Catherine West:

[117753]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of a finding in a survey by Savanta ComRes that one in six people agreed that difficulty of getting an in-person family doctor appointment meant they had carried out medical treatment on their own or asked somebody else to do so who was not a medical professional.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made. However, despite the hard work of general practice teams, who are delivering more appointments than pre-pandemic, we recognise that some people have struggled to access timely care from their general practice.

NHS England guidance is clear that general practitioners (GPs) practices must provide face to face appointments, alongside remote consultations and should respect preferences for face-to-face care unless there are good clinical reasons to the contrary. 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.

■ General Practitioners: Travellers

Ian Byrne:

[\[113480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the accessibility and availability of GP appointments for people from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ GP Surgeries: Vaccination

Abena Oppong-Asare:

[\[113452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of communications on (a) managing availability of and (b) access to vaccination services at GP surgeries.

Neil O'Brien:

While no specific assessment has been made, general practices (GPs) are contractually obliged to provide various routine vaccinations and immunisations. They may also opt in to provide seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations.

Practices are also required to communicate information on clinical appointments, including vaccinations and immunisations, to patients which may be done through the National Health Service website, the practice leaflet, the practice website, on a waiting room poster, by writing to the patient and through active offers by staff booking appointments.

Where a seasonal or response vaccine drive is in place, such as COVID-19, flu and polio, vaccination centres and pharmacies are being used in addition to GPs to deliver the vaccination, to offer more availability and accessibility for patients.

Communications evaluation does not specifically assess the effect on managing availability of and access to vaccination services at GP surgeries, but instead focuses on driving intention and uptake via relevant and available operational routes.

■ Health Services: Travellers

Ian Byrne:

[\[113481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what provisions his Department has in place to help increase the accessibility of Women's Health Services to people from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds.

Maria Caulfield:

In 2022, we published the Women's Health Strategy for England, which identified tackling disparities in access to services, experiences of services and outcomes across different groups of women including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds.

■ Health: Energy**Dan Carden:**[\[114793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has held discussions with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the potential health impact of self-disconnection of prepayment meters in winter 2022-23; and what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of expected levels of self-disconnection of prepayment meters in winter 2022-23.

Neil O'Brien:

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Health and Social Care work collaboratively on such areas of crosscutting policy.

No specific assessment has been made. The Government recognises that rising energy prices can make it more difficult for people to heat their homes, and that cold homes can have an adverse impact on the health of vulnerable population groups. We are providing a £37 billion package of cost-of-living support to help households and businesses this winter, including a £15 billion targeted package of direct support for the most vulnerable households. A further funding package worth £26 billion will provide support to the most vulnerable households in 2023/24.

The Priority Services Register is also maintained by electricity network operators to identify and target support to the most vulnerable customers.

■ Health: Travellers**Ian Byrne:**[\[113478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in rates of (a) mortality and (b) long-term illness in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Neil O'Brien:

No specific assessment has been made.

■ Hearing Impairment: Babies**Olivia Blake:**[\[114856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when she expects NHS England will publish the annual data report for the new-born hearing screening programme for 2018-19; and for what reason that report has not yet been published.

Neil O'Brien:

NHS England are expecting to publish annual data reports for the periods of 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 in January 2023. The reasons for the delay are due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition of Public Health England to the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities and NHS England.

Olivia Blake:

[114857]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when was the last NHS England annual data report for the new-born hearing screening programme published.

Neil O'Brien:

The last data report for the newborn hearing programme was for 2017/18 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/newborn-hearing-screening-standards-data-report-april-2017-to-march-2018>

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Afzal Khan:

[114798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to reply to correspondence from the Hon. member for Manchester, Gorton dated 10 November 2022, reference AK55590.

Maria Caulfield:

I replied to the hon. Member on 22 December 2022.

■ **Mental Health Services: Finance**

Barbara Keeley:

[114567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the RedQuadrant report entitled Building the Right Support: An analysis of funding flows published on 14 June 2022, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing ring-fenced funding for preventative and crisis support.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made.

The Government has a long-standing policy to provide funding to local authorities on a non-ringfenced basis. It is considered more efficient for local authorities to manage funding according to local priorities, rather than central Government trying to control every spending decision.

■ **Mental Health Services: Travellers**

Ian Byrne:

[113482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure accessible and culturally sensitive suicide prevention support is available to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Maria Caulfield:

In Preventing suicide in England: Fifth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives, the Government highlighted the importance of considering the needs of gypsy, traveller and Roma communities in suicide prevention activity. This includes encouraging local areas to reflect the specific needs

of their population in their suicide prevention plans, with specific consideration to local gypsy, traveller and Roma communities where relevant.

■ NHS: Innovation

Mr Clive Betts:

[\[113165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice he has received on the potential impact of medical innovation in the NHS on global research and development investment decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Will Quince:

The Government's Life Sciences Vision, published in July 2021, sets out our ambition to stimulate the United Kingdom's life sciences sector. The Vision commits the Government to supporting the National Health Service to test, purchase and spread innovative technologies more effectively, to result in cutting-edge science and innovations being embedded widely across the NHS, as early as possible, and rapidly adopted across the rest of the world.

We are working with industry and system partners to make the NHS the country's most powerful driver of innovation. This work is overseen by the Life Science Council, chaired by the Secretaries of State for the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and driven through the Life Sciences Vision Delivery Board, chaired by Ministers within the departments. We will continue to work closely with a wide range of public and private sector bodies and stakeholders across the sector to deliver the Life Sciences Vision.

■ Nurses

Richard Burgon:

[\[114662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the cumulative number of years of experience held by all NHS nursing staff in each year since 2010.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Public Health: Finance

Helen Hayes:

[\[114704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to inform local authorities of their provisional public health grant budgets for 2023-24.

Neil O'Brien:

We will announce the 2023/24 Public Health Grant allocations to local authorities shortly.

■ Restraint Techniques: Children

Barbara Keeley:

[\[114570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of conducting cross-departmental review on the use restrictive practices for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Maria Caulfield:

No specific assessment has been made. However, the Government states that restrictive practices should only ever be used as a last resort, using the least restrictive option, when all attempts to de-escalate a situation have been employed.

The Department for Education has commenced a programme of work to minimise instances of the use of reasonable force and restraint in all schools, starting with extensive evidence gathering in early 2023, including a public call for evidence. The call for evidence will help inform revisions to the current guidance, use of reasonable force in schools, to provide school staff with advice on alternative and preventative strategies to using reasonable force or restrictive practices, as well as guidance on when and how it is appropriate to do so. This will empower school staff with a range of safe and effective approaches when dealing with extremely challenging situations. The Department for Education will ensure that the updated guidance will consider the age and needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

We welcomed the Care Quality Commission, Out of sight – who cares?, report into restraint, seclusion, and segregation. Although this report did not focus specifically on children it did include findings from some children's services. We published our response in July 2021, in which we accepted in full or in principle all recommendations.

■ Social Services: Finance

Karin Smyth:

[\[112120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to local authorities of implementing the cap on lifetime social care costs.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 January 2023]: The impact assessment for the consultation on charging reform, published in January 2022, set out our estimate of the projected cost to local authorities of implementing charging reform in October 2023.

■ Social Services: Waiting Lists

Karin Smyth:

[\[112118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of people who have moderate social care needs but have not yet been (a) assessed and (b) provided with support.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 January 2023]: Local authorities are responsible for assessing individuals' eligibility for care and support, including financial as set out in the care act. We are taking action to address national data gaps with 54 local authorities contributing to our new Collection of Client-Level Adult Social Care Data (No 2) Direction which collects data on the people who draw on care and support as well as unpaid carers. This will be mandatory for all local authorities from April this year.

■ **Weather****Ian Lavery:**[\[113244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made with Cabinet colleagues of the potential merits of encouraging (a) elderly and (b) vulnerable people to find a warm space when unable to travel due to weather conditions.

Neil O'Brien:

The Government published The Cold Weather Plan for England Protecting health and reducing harm from cold weather advising on steps individuals, including pensioners and other vulnerable populations, can take to stay safe and well during cold weather. Decisions on provision of warm spaces are taken at a local level. The local government financial settlement in England for 2022/2023 invested £3.7 billion to councils in England, the majority of which allowing councils to determine local priorities.

There is also guidance to help people make decisions on and plan for travel during bad weather published by the Meteorological Office.

HOME OFFICE■ **Asylum****Alan Brown:**[\[114728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will list the safe and legal routes for asylum seekers for access to the UK to claim asylum.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK, like most other countries, does not accept asylum claims from abroad. Individuals should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

The UK will continue to welcome refugees from across the world through existing safe and legal resettlement routes. These are the existing global UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship, the Mandate Resettlement Scheme, and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

■ Asylum: Rwanda

Alison Thewliss:

[114681]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many notices of intent have been issued to asylum seekers under the Rwanda plan.

Robert Jenrick:

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

The latest published Immigration Statistics detail the number of individuals being managed under inadmissibility rules and can be found online at [How many people do we grant protection to? - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/how-many-people-do-we-grant-protection-to).

■ Firearms

Helen Hayes:

[114669]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of antique firearms (a) traded in the UK in each year since 2017 and (b) in circulation now.

Helen Hayes:

[114670]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the amount of ammunition for antique firearms traded in the UK since 2017.

Helen Hayes:

[114671]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the current regulatory regime for antique firearms on their (a) use in crime and (b) modifications.

Helen Hayes:

[114672]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of (a) deaths, (b) injuries and (c) crimes involving an antique firearm in each year since 2017.

Chris Philp:

The UK has some of the toughest firearms legislation in the world and we keep the controls under constant review to keep the public safe.

Following a sharp increase in the criminal use of antique firearms, the Government introduced the Antique Firearms Regulations 2021, which provide a statutory definition of 'antique firearm' to clarify which firearms can safely be exempt from the controls and which should be subject to licensing. We took the opportunity to omit from that definition seven cartridges which had regularly featured in crime, making firearms chambered for use with those cartridges subject to licensing.

Antique firearms are not identified separately in official crime statistics. However, information provided by the National Ballistics Intelligence Service shows the following:

- there were two fatalities from obsolete calibre firearms in each year from 2017 to 2021 and one fatality so far in 2022;
- injuries involving obsolete calibre firearms (excluding suicides) were 15 in 2017, 13 in 2018, 9 in 2019, 7 in 2020, 6 in 2021, and 5 so far in 2022;
- obsolete calibre firearms recovered from crime or from suspicious circumstances were 87 in 2017, 75 in 2018, 77 in 2019, 83 in 2020, 84 in 2021, and 41 so far in 2022.

When making the 2021 Regulations, the Government committed to an annual review to consider the latest developments with the criminal use of antique firearms, and to a full review of the Regulations themselves every three years.

A first review of the criminal use of antique firearms has just been completed and identified no need to revise the controls further at this time. The position will be monitored and reviewed again next year, but we will not hesitate to act sooner should the need arise.

For a firearm to qualify as exempt from licensing control it must be possessed, sold or purchased as a curiosity or ornament. Ammunition cannot be similarly exempt and is subject to licensing. If an owner wanted to acquire ammunition for use with an antique firearm, the firearm would no longer qualify to be exempt as an antique and would revert to certificate controls.

Since antique firearms are exempt from most firearms controls, including the need for licensing, we do not hold figures on the trade in antique firearms nor the number currently in circulation.

■ Home Office: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry:

[114581]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is her Department's policy that government procurement cards should not be used for purchases (a) of alcohol and (b) that could be made via an alternative compliant purchasing route.

Chris Philp:

Government Procurement Cards (GPC) are only issued to civil servants who are required to purchase low value goods and services which are not available via other purchasing routes. Each card has a transaction and monthly credit limit and merchant category code restrictions. The guidance issued to the cardholder and their manager includes clear instruction about all restrictions in place. This guidance helps cardholders understand what goods and services are inappropriate, which includes the purchase of alcohol.

Guidance for other purchasing routes mirror the GPC approach. Prior SCS sign-off is required for hospitality purchases.

■ Home Office: Members' Constituency Work

Dr Julian Lewis:

[114505]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Home Office Hub in Portcullis House as a means of successfully processing MPs' casework arising out of the invasion of Ukraine; for what reasons the Hub has been discontinued; and if she will make it her policy to establish similar arrangements within the Palace of Westminster to progress casework arising from the (a) Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and (b) obligations accepted by the UK to save Afghan former interpreters and other locally employed civilians who are now at risk for having helped UK armed forces during NATO's intervention.

Robert Jenrick:

Following the closure of the Portcullis House hub, we have now set up a national programme of engagement events enabling MPs and their caseworkers to meet with Home Office officials nearer to their constituencies.

Urgent enquiries, including passport and Ukraine visa applications should be sent to the Urgent inbox mpurgentqueries@homeoffice.gov.uk.

■ Home Office: Vacancies

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[113286]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2022 to Question 106525 on Home Office: Vacancies, for what reason this information is not held centrally; if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of not collating this information on her ability to view levels of vacancies within teams; and what the number of vacancies is by each Director General in her Department.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office centrally manages all active recruitment, but this will not cover all current vacancies as there are a wide range of business reasons whereby vacancies may not be actively recruited against.

DG area recruitment plans are routinely reviewed and details of current live recruitment can be found at [Home - Home Office Careers](#)

■ Immigration Removal Centres: Albania

Tim Loughton:

[117406]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Albanian nationals held in immigration detention centres in the UK have subsequently been subject to criminal charges in the last 2 years.

Robert Jenrick:

This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Members: Correspondence

David Linden: [\[114850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow East of 12 October 2022 and 16 November 2022 with reference DL13230.

David Linden: [\[114859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will respond to the correspondence sent by email on 26 October 2022 and again on 28 November and 12 December 2022 from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL11726.

Robert Jenrick:

DL13230 – the Home Office replied on 6 January 2023.

DL11726 - The Home Office has no record of receiving this correspondence.

David Linden: [\[114851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Glasgow East of 21 September 2022, 19 October 2022 and 16 November 2022 with reference DL12985.

David Linden: [\[114854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will respond to the correspondence sent by email on 21 October 2022, 21 November and 7 December from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL13510.

David Linden: [\[114860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence sent by email on 21 October 2022 and again on 21 November and 12 December from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL13604.

Robert Jenrick:

DL12985 – the Home Office replied on 21 December 2022.

DL13510 – the Home Office replied on 21 December 2022.

DL13604 – the Home Office replied on 21 December 2022.

David Linden: [\[114855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence sent by email on 18 October 2022 and again on 22 November and 7 December from the hon. Member for Glasgow East, reference DL11698.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office replied on 21 December.

John Penrose:

[\[117539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the correspondence from the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of 6 October 2022 and 24 November 2022 on temporary rights to work within the UK.

Robert Jenrick:

The Home Office responded on 22 December 2022.

Dan Carden:

[\[117895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to correspondence via email dated 21 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton on Mehdsam Oso.

Dan Carden:

[\[117896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 21 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton on Madleen Alqawasmeh.

Dan Carden:

[\[117897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the email of 21 November 2022 from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton on Habiba Binte Jahan.

Robert Jenrick:

MPAM/0480304/22 – The Home Office will provide a response shortly.

MPAM/0481673/22 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 10 January 2023.

MPAM/0481625/22 – The Home Office responded to the hon. Member's correspondence on 10 January 2023.

■ Money Laundering: China

Jim Shannon:

[\[114634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of Chinese illicit finance on money laundering in the UK.

Tom Tugendhat:

The Government recognises the threat posed by China-linked illicit finance. As noted in the 2020 National Risk Assessment of money laundering and terrorist financing, a significant volume of proceeds of crime flow in and out of China annually, particularly through the use of informal value transfer system.

The Government's response is multi-departmental and multi-agency both in the UK and upstream. For reasons of operational security, we are not able to provide further details publicly.

■ Police: Equality

Andrew Lewer: [\[113287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many full-time equivalent employees are in equality, diversity and inclusion roles in police forces in England.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold centrally information on how many police employees are in equality, diversity and inclusion roles in police forces in England.

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of full-time equivalent police officers and staff by function in the [‘Police Workforce, England and Wales’](#) statistical bulletin. These functions are based on the framework set out by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as part of the Police Objective Analysis (POA) estimates. The POA framework does not include a specific function on diversity and inclusion roles.

■ Qatar Embassy: Lobbying

Andrew Rosindell: [\[114537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to monitor lobbying activities of the Qatar Embassy in London; and if she will make a statement.

Tom Tugendhat:

All lobbying of Government, including by Embassies, must be carried out in accordance with the relevant legislation and through proper processes.

Transparency is ensured through various mechanisms such as the Register of Consultant Lobbyists and departmental transparency returns.

The Codes of Conduct for both Houses set out the rules on lobbying of Parliamentarians and the declaration of Members' interests.

■ Radicalism: Pupils

Bridget Phillipson: [\[114730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many referrals to prevent for concerns in the mixed unstable category came from schools in each of the last three years.

Bridget Phillipson: [\[114731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many referrals to Prevent for concerns in the mixed, unstable category relating to incel behaviour came from schools in the last 12 months.

Tom Tugendhat:

A breakdown of individuals referred to Prevent and their associated sector of referral between 2015/2016 and 2020/2021, can be found in Table 14 of the latest published

statistics, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2020-to-march-2021>

We have also included a summary of this data below for convenience.

YEAR	REFERRALS FOR CONCERNS RELATED TO MIXED, UNSTABLE, UNCLEAR IDEOLOGIES BY EDUCATION SECTOR	TOTAL REFERRALS CONCERNS RELATED TO MIXED, UNSTABLE, UNCLEAR IDEOLOGIES FROM ALL SECTORS
2018/19	831	2,169
2019/20	1,071	3,203
2020/21	737	2,522

Regarding the referrals to Prevent in the last 12 months, referrals between the period April 2021 – March 2022 will be released in the upcoming “ *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales, April 2021 to March 2022* ” statistics, set for publication on 26 January 2023. As per official statistics guidelines, we are unable to release these statistics ahead of the formal publication date. Subsequent data will be published the year after.

■ Refugees: Afghanistan

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[113154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Afghan nationals have been (a) accepted and (b) evacuated from Afghanistan under the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme since it was formally opened.

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[113155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme, and if she will make a statement.

Robert Jenrick:

The UK has made one of the largest commitments to support Afghanistan of any country and, so far, we have brought around 23,000 people affected by the situation in Afghanistan to safety. This includes more than 6,300 vulnerable Afghan nationals through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Whilst the UK has made a generous resettlement commitment, we must bear in mind the capacity of the UK to resettle people is not unlimited and therefore difficult decisions about who will be prioritised for resettlement have to be made.

Resettlement is just one element of the UK Government's response to the situation in Afghanistan, in addition to our diplomatic efforts and international aid in the region, working alongside like-minded states and as part of the international community.

Sir Stephen Timms:

[113156]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance she has given to Afghan nationals at risk in Afghanistan who (a) worked for and (b) are affiliated with the UK Government.

Robert Jenrick:

The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) offers support and relocation to those who worked for, or with, the UK Government in Afghanistan, who are at risk of threat to life because of their work.

Guidance is available on GOV.UK here: [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy: further information on eligibility criteria, offer details and how to apply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy).

■ **Retail Trade: Crimes of Violence**

Daisy Cooper:

[114832]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many crimes involving (a) violence or (b) abuse against retail employees committed while they were at work have been reported to the police in the years 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Chris Philp:

The information requested on the number of crimes of violence or abuse against retail employees is not held centrally by the Home Office. However, estimates from the 2021 Commercial Victimisation Survey (CVS) offer valuable evidence in this area, indicating that 14% of premises in the Wholesale and Retail business sector experienced assaults and threats, robbery, or both in the year ending March 2021; equivalent to 53,000 premises.

Partnership working between the police and businesses is vital to ensuring an effective response to retail crimes. The Home Office is encouraging closer local partnerships between police and business, for example through Business Crime Reduction Partnerships to help local police understand the issues in a local area and determine an appropriate response. We also encourage the use of Victim and Business Impact Statements to help the police understand how a crime has affected the victim.

The Government has also taken action to tackle violence and abuse against retail workers and other public-facing workers by introducing a statutory aggravating factor via the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. This will mean that the public facing nature of the victim's role will be considered an aggravating factor when it comes to sentencing for assault offences. It applies where an assault is committed against those providing a public service, performing a public duty, or providing a service to the public. The provision commenced on 28 June.

■ Vetting: Care Workers

Julian Sturdy:

[\[113227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will take steps to (a) increase the speed of DBS checks and (b) provide applicants with updates on the progress on their application for people who have previously completed those checks within the social care sector.

Miss Sarah Dines:

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) operates to published service standards of completing 80% of Basic checks within 2 days, 80% of Standard checks within 14 days, and 80% of Enhanced checks within 14 days.

DBS' year-to-date performance up to 31 October 2022 has been positive, providing 88% of Basic checks within 2 days, 95.2% of Standard checks within 14 days, and 79.5% of Enhanced checks within 14 days. These attainments apply to applications across all employment sectors, including the care sector. Furthermore, DBS is working closely with police forces to improve turnaround times for Enhanced checks.

In addition, DBS provides an Update Service which allows:

- individuals to subscribe so they can keep their standard or enhanced certificates up-to-date; and
- employers to check that person's certificate online.

This service may reduce the need to apply for multiple certificates when individuals move from one job to another in the same workforce, or when a re-check is required, as employers can carry out a quick online status check to see if an individual's certificate is still up-to-date. This service may be of significant benefit for individuals that work within the social care sector.

DBS also provides an 'adult first check' service to employing organisations in the care sector. Employers can request the result of a check of DBS' list of barred adults, ahead of the completion of an Enhanced application. Depending on the result, a person can be permitted to start work with vulnerable adults, under supervision, before the result of an Enhanced DBS check.

Although DBS does not provide automatic progress updates during the processing of applications. However, it is possible for relevant parties to check on the progress of applications through DBS' online tracking services.

■ Visas: Applications

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[111723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish her Department's internal customer service targets for processing each category of visa application.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[111724]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish her Department's internal guidance on compassionate grounds to expedite a visa application.

Robert Jenrick:

Visa applications are assessed on their individual merits and caseworkers will consider any compassionate grounds raised as part of the application assessment. Published policy guidance for each visa route will factor this where relevant. Caseworker guidance for each visa types can be found here: [Visas and immigration operational guidance: Immigration staff guidance - detailed information - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visas-and-immigration-operational-guidance-immigration-staff-guidance-detailed-information)

Those seeking to raise compassionate grounds to expedite their application should still apply and pay for their visa application online in the normal way. They should alert their request to their chosen Visa Application Centre or by contacting the UKVI Call Centre. There is no internal guidance on compassionate grounds to expedite a visa application, as where a case may contain individual factors which make it compelling or compassionate then the case will be expedited by UK Visas and Immigration staff and considered under its own merits.

The Department does not have internal customer service standards. Further information relating to Visa waiting times can be found on the .GOV website here: [Visa decision waiting times: applications outside the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk).

■ Visas: Seasonal Workers

Wendy Chamberlain:

[113406]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 15 December 2022 to Questions 105495 and 105505 on Visas: Seasonal Workers and 105507 on Agriculture: Seasonal Workers, whether his Department has put accountability structures in place to respond to Scheme Operators who terminate workers' contracts early without offering alternative work placements.

Robert Jenrick:

The sponsor licence regime places a broad range of responsibilities on Scheme Operators to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are protected.

We keep these protections under close ongoing review and the route has seen improvements to its worker welfare protections throughout its lifetime. This includes the announcement on 16 December that the Government will introduce rules ensuring seasonal workers are guaranteed a minimum number of paid hours each week, alongside increased compliance capacity to monitor welfare.

The Home Office cannot compel a private organisation to continue sponsoring workers it does not wish to sponsor. We do however expect the Scheme Operators to maximise the work opportunities for participating seasonal workers and we will continue to monitor this situation closely.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Overseas Trade: Bangladesh

Tom Hunt:

[\[114804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) trade and (b) investment between the UK and Bangladesh.

Andrew Bowie:

The Government is working with Bangladesh to strengthen our trading relationship and support investment through our Trade and Investment Dialogue.

Under the UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), 100% of goods exported from Bangladesh are eligible for duty-free access to the UK, while the Department for International Trade's (DIT's) reform of the rules of origin for Least Developed Countries will help Bangladesh integrate into global supply chains.

Working with UK Export Finance, DIT ensures that UK-based Bangladeshi companies selling goods and services of UK origin are eligible for support. The UK Centres of Expertise also support Bangladesh trade through technical assistance and the SheTrades Commonwealth programme directly supports women entrepreneurs.

■ Small Businesses: Trade Barriers

Seema Malhotra:

[\[114674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of any potential barriers that small businesses face when exporting overseas.

Andrew Bowie:

Through the Export Strategy, the Department for International Trade is targeting the barriers affecting small-and-medium sized businesses (SMEs) by providing a single point of contact for businesses who export or wish to do so as well as helping them access opportunities in new markets.

As well as negotiating Free Trade Agreement (FTA) chapters, our work on market access includes removing non-tariff barriers. Last year (FY 21-22) we resolved 192 barriers, just 45 of which are estimated to boost UK exports by around £5 billion over the next five years.

Supported by the Export Support Service (ESS), the UK Export Academy, UK Export Finance, our International Trade Advisers and global networks, UK businesses will be supported at every stage in their export journey.

JUSTICE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Liz Twist:**[\[903026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reform the criminal justice system to help tackle violence against women and girls.

Edward Argar:

In 2021, HMG published the VAWG Strategy and the End-to-End Rape Review, in which the Government committed to more than doubling the number of adult rape cases reaching court. The number of people convicted of an adult rape offence went up by 65 percent over the past year (from 323 in the year to June 2021 to 532 in the year to June 2022).

As part of this we are rolling out Operation Soteria, a joint police and CPS programme to make investigations suspect-focussed rather than focussed on victim credibility. This has begun operating across nineteen police forces, with a national rollout ready from June 2023.

We are also increasing the number of Independent Sexual and Domestic Abuse Advisors to over 1,000 by 2024/25.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[903036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to reform the criminal justice system to help tackle violence against women and girls.

Edward Argar:

In 2021, HMG published the VAWG Strategy and the End-to-End Rape Review, in which the Government committed to more than doubling the number of adult rape cases reaching court. The number of people convicted of an adult rape offence went up by 65 percent over the past year (from 323 in the year to June 2021 to 532 in the year to June 2022).

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We are also increasing the number of Independent Sexual and Domestic Abuse Advisors to over 1,000 by 2024/25.

■ **Powers of Entry: Meters****Dan Carden:**[\[114787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will take steps to create a central record of the reasons for which court warrants allowing energy suppliers to force entry into people's homes are granted.

Mike Freer:

Under the applicable statutory framework, in order to grant a warrant to enforce a right of entry, a justice must be satisfied that:

- There is a right of entry;
- Admission is reasonably required; and
- The requirements of the Gas Act or Electricity Act have been complied with (this relates principally to the giving of notice).

While the department has no plans to introduce a central record of the reasons for granting warrants, because all successful applications for a warrant of entry are granted on the same basis, applications are inputted and processed through a central register.

Dan Carden:[\[114790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether his Department has had recent discussions with HM Courts and Tribunals Service on warrants issued for forcible prepayment meter installations.

Mike Freer:

Under the applicable statutory framework, a justice of the peace will deal with applications made in the manner prescribed by law and procedure. HM Courts and Tribunals Service administer those applications in the same manner. My Department has no right or role to intervene in that process, or to interfere in the administration of justice.

■ Prisons: Drugs**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[903028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce drug use in prisons.

Damian Hinds:

We are investing up to £120 million to get offenders off drugs and into recovery.

We are also cracking down on drug supply into prisons, and have installed 75 additional x-ray body scanners resulting in full coverage across the closed adult male estate. As of April 2022, we had recorded approximately 20,000 positive scans, preventing drugs from entering prisons.

Prisoners will have access to high-quality treatment with a focus on abstinence-based recovery to end their addiction. We are rolling out up to 18 new, abstinence-only Drug Recovery Wings, and increasing the number of Incentivised Substance Free Living units where prisoners commit to remaining drug-free to up to 100.

■ Trials: Crown Court and Magistrates' Courts

Andy Slaughter: [\[114554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many hearings for trials in (a) magistrates' and (b) Crown courts could not take place when listed due to a prosecutor not being available for those hearings in (i) 2018, (ii) 2019, (iii) 2020, (iv) 2021 and (v) 2022 to date.

Mike Freer:

This information is published as part of Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly – 'Trial effectiveness at the criminal courts' tool. The tool includes ineffective trials by reason and court type. The latest tool is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2022>.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ Affordable Housing: Construction

Rachael Maskell: [\[114732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to help increase the number of affordable houses being built in areas of greatest need.

Lucy Frazer:

Further to my answer in response to [Question UIN 106527](#) of 16 December 2022, we will work closely with our delivery partners, local authorities, and the wider housing sector to ensure the geographical spread of housing delivered through the Affordable Homes Programme remains fair and balanced.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Change of Use

Rachael Maskell: [\[114738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he is planning to launch his consultation on the change of use class for short term holiday lets and their registration scheme.

Lucy Frazer:

The government has committed through the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill to introduce a registration scheme for short term lets. The details of the scheme will be subject to consultation.

In addition, we have committed to consult on the introduction of a new planning use class for short term lets.

Further announcements on both measures will be made in due course.

■ Housing: Repairs and Maintenance

Stephen Doughty:

[114659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many developments affected by fire and building safety issues have undergone remediation works funded by developers; and what estimate he has made of the total value of those works as of 20 December 2022.

Lee Rowley:

Information and data on the remediation progress of high-rise (over 18 metres) residential and publicly-owned buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding systems, including information on the source of funding for remediation works, is available in the Building Safety Programme data release [here](#).

Information on buildings that have received or were due to receive government funding from the Building Safety Fund, Private Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund, or Social Sector ACM Cladding Remediation Fund, but will now be funded by developers is being collated.

The developer remediation contract is being finalised and will be published shortly.

■ Infrastructure: Construction

Daisy Cooper:

[113447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, how many Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects have been (a) approved, (b) commenced and (c) completed without having sought a Development Consent Order since 2014.

Lucy Frazer:

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects do not get approved without Development Consent Orders (DCOs).

■ Lakes: Safety

Seema Malhotra:

[114678]

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in the context of the Babbs Mill tragedy in December and the death at Bedford Lakes in August, what steps he is taking to help ensure safety in and around lakes.

Dehenna Davison:

There is ongoing work across government to ensure that appropriate lessons are learned from this terrible tragedy. Owners and operators of water assets are responsible for safety on their inland waterways.

■ Land Use: Housing

Rachael Maskell: [\[114736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to assess the (a) amount and (b) locations of all publicly-owned land which could potentially be made available for housing development.

Rachael Maskell: [\[114737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on the availability of public land for the use for affordable and social housing.

Lucy Frazer:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN [109638](#) on 21 December 2022.

The Government is working to release public land for new housing. In line with the practice of successive administrations, details of internal discussions are not normally disclosed.

■ Local Government Finance

Sir Stephen Timms: [\[114515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, pursuant to his statement yesterday, UIN HCWS469, on Local Government Finance, whether he took steps to ensure his proposals adequately reflected population increases identified in the Census 2021 such as the 14 per cent increase in population in the London Borough of Newham in the period 2011-2021.

Lee Rowley:

I refer the Rt. Hon. Member to [this letter](#) from Jeremy Pocklington, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to the Public Accounts Committee, which sets out the interaction between census data and local government finance.

■ Planning Permission

Paul Holmes: [\[114809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps he is taking to provide residents with increased powers over planning decisions in their communities.

Lucy Frazer:

Further to the Secretary of State's statement, UIN [HCWS415](#), of 06 December 2022, our reforms to the planning system will enhance the opportunities for community involvement, ensuring development is brought forward in a way that works best for local people. We will improve the process for producing plans so that it is simpler, faster and easier for communities to engage with. There will be clear opportunities to

get involved at key stages in the process, made easier by plans themselves being shorter with more accessible documents.

In addition, we are seeking new powers to introduce 'neighbourhood priorities statements'. These will provide communities with a way to determine priorities for their area and formally input into the local plan. We are also seeking new powers to introduce a new 'street votes' system. This will allow residents to propose development, such as extensions to existing homes, on their street and vote on whether it should be given planning permission.

■ Planning: Finance

Daisy Cooper:

[\[113442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he is taking steps to provide additional financial resources to local planning authorities to enforce planning conditions where they are imposed by the Government as part of a nationally strategic site.

Lucy Frazer:

We are already working closely with the Planning Advisory Service and several local authorities to understand how local authorities currently engage with the Nationally Significant Infrastructure regime and are considering ways to improve outcomes.

As part of our work to make improvements to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime, we have established the Innovation & Capacity Fund where £760,000 has been shared amongst 10 local authorities to support them in trialling new and innovative ways to engage with the NSIP planning process.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Public Appointments

Dr Philippa Whitford:

[\[114635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will establish a post of Permanent Secretary in his Department.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Scotland Office is headed up by a Director who is also the department's Accounting Officer.

TRANSPORT

■ Driving Licences: Fees and Charges

Drew Hendry:

[\[114755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of revising DVLA driving license fee processes to

accept other forms of payment as well as cheques and postal orders when a license is applied for by post.

Mr Richard Holden:

The Driver Vehicle Licensing Agency is currently considering alternative payment methods with a view to moving away from paper-based payments and providing customers with options that match their needs. Improvements will aim to support reducing paper-based transactions and payment methods wherever possible in addition to providing a wider range of options for customers.

■ **East Midlands Rail Franchise**

Nadia Whittome: [\[114799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the East Midlands Trains National Rail contract.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is in the process of reviewing the documents to understand if any information is exempt under the FOI Act and should therefore be redacted prior to publishing. Once the Department has completed this process the East Midlands National Rail Contract will be published on the Government website, occurring no later than 5 April 2023.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Carbon Emissions**

Mark Pawsey: [\[113245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the impact of his proposals to phase out new non-zero-emission vehicles by 2035 on UK (a) manufacturers and (b) importers of L-Category vehicles.

Mark Pawsey: [\[113246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has of whether his proposal to phase out non-zero emission L-Category vehicle sales by 2035 will encourage manufacturers of those vehicles to leave the UK market.

Jesse Norman:

In February 2022, the Motorcycle Industry Association and Zemo Partnership published a government-commissioned action plan, "Realising the Full Potential of Zero Emission Powered Light Vehicles", to support the transition to zero emission L-category vehicles. The Government has also made up to £350,000 of funding available to grow the zero-emission motorcycle supply chain in the UK that could lead to thousands of new jobs and the Government continues to work with investors through our Automotive Transformation Fund to build a globally competitive electric vehicle supply chain in the UK.

The consultation on when to end the sale of new non-zero emission L-category vehicles was open to written responses from 14 July to 21 September 2022. The

Department is in the process of analysing the responses and will bring forward the Government's response in due course which will consider impacts to industry.

■ Railways: Environment Protection

Bill Esterson:

[\[114690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential (a) financial and (b) environmental merits of mandating the use of composite materials in railway sleepers.

Huw Merriman:

The Department is aware of Network Rail's ongoing work exploring the lifecycle costs and carbon implications of using composite materials for both sleepers and long-bearers, and Network Rail has begun to use these materials. The Department is not currently making a financial or environmental assessment of mandating the use of composite materials in railway sleepers at this time.

■ Train Operating Companies

Kate Osamor:

[\[117732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 December 2022 to Question 111663, on Train Operating Companies, if he will list the dates Ministers in his Department have met with representatives from train operating companies in each month since April 2022.

Kate Osamor:

[\[117733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 22 December 2022 to Question 111663 on Train Operating Companies, whether his Department has kept a record of meetings between Ministers and train operating companies that have taken place since 1 January 2022.

Huw Merriman:

Ministers and officials regularly hold meetings with representatives from the train operating companies.

TREASURY

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties

James Murray:

[\[114853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to HMRC of (a) changes to IT systems and (b) additional support staff arising from the decision to cancel the freeze on alcohol duty in the Autumn Statement 2022.

James Cartlidge:

HM Revenue & Customs incurred no additional costs from the government's decision to cancel the freeze on alcohol duty announced at Autumn Statement 2022.

■ Energy: Taxation

Afzal Khan:

[\[113464\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the Energy Profits Levy on (a) clean energy producers and (b) encouraging energy producers to produce clean energy.

James Cartlidge:

The Energy Profits Levy (EPL) was introduced in May 2022 in response to sharp increases in oil and gas prices over the past year. At the Autumn Statement 2022, the Chancellor announced that the rate of the levy would rise by ten percentage points to 35% and will last until 31 March 2028. The Levy applies to profits earned by companies from the production of oil and gas in the UK or on the UK Continental Shelf.

The government has been clear it wants to see the oil and gas sector reinvest its profits to support the economy, jobs and the UK's energy security. That is why the levy includes a new investment allowance, ensuring that for every £1 an oil and gas company spends, they can claim around 91p in tax relief for most types of investment expenditure.

For every £100 an oil and gas company invests to decarbonise upstream oil and gas production, they will be able to deduct £109.25 when calculating their levy profits. This provides an immediate and significant fiscal incentive to reinvest profits in the UK.

Since the levy is targeted at the extraordinary profits from oil and gas upstream activities, any relief for investment must also be related to oil and gas upstream activities. Therefore, tax relief is only available in relation to expenditure incurred for activity that is charged under the oil and gas ring fence corporation tax regime. For other investments, such as renewables, companies will continue to be able to claim relief for their investments from the Corporation Tax they pay.

In addition, the government is taking significant action to encourage investment in renewable energy generation in the UK, including committing £30 billion to support the domestic green industrial revolution from March 2021 to the end of 2027-28.

■ Investment Income and Personal Savings: Devolution

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[112174\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent requests have been received from the Scottish Government for the Devolution of powers to allow savings and dividend income to be subject to Scottish income tax rates.

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[112175\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has received recent requests from the Scottish Government for the devolution of powers to allow for the introduction of a wealth tax in Scotland.

John Glen:

The Treasury has not received any recent requests from the Scottish Government in relation to further tax devolution. The UK Government remains committed to the tax devolution agreed by the multi-party Smith Commission.

Members: Correspondence**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[114551\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter to his Department from the Rt hon. Member for North Durham of 17 November.

James Cartlidge:

Your letter of 17 November 2022 was transferred to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) on 28 November 2022 as it did not fall within the remit of HM Treasury.

HMRC issued a request for further business information on 29 November 2022, under reference XST/3134/2022, to enable the original correspondence to be investigated and replied to.

This request for further information was re-issued on 23 December 2022.

Refugees: Ukraine**James Murray:**[\[114858\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Ukrainian nationals were registered with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs under the conditions of the 1993 UK/Ukraine Double Taxation Convention as amended by the 2017 Protocol on (a) 6 April 2012, (b) 20 February 2014, (c) 24 February 2022, (d) 15 September 2022 and (e) 19 December 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

There is no concept of registration under double taxation agreements. The Ukraine/UK Double taxation agreement specifies how the two countries should tax income paid between the two countries with a view to avoiding double taxation.

Ukrainian nationals may need to register with HMRC if they are considered tax resident under the UK's domestic rules (the Statutory Residence Test). Therefore Ukrainian nationals will be registered with HMRC for the purposes of paying income tax in the UK.

However, HMRC does not collect nationality information through Self-assessment returns or Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records so the number of Ukrainian nationals registered cannot be provided.

James Murray:[\[114863\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Ukrainian nationals seeking refuge in the UK paid income tax and national Insurance contributions to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs on income from employment based in Ukraine on (a) 20 February 2014, (b) 24 February 2022, (c) 15 September 2022 and (d) 19 December 2022.

Victoria Atkins:

HM Revenue and Customs does not hold information on the refugee status of individuals.

Consequently, HM Revenue and Customs cannot determine the Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions from such individuals.

Furthermore, HM Revenue and Customs does not hold information on individuals' income from employment based in Ukraine.

Retail Trade: VAT**James Murray:**[\[114852\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the cost to HMRC of (a) changes to IT systems and (b) additional support staff arising from the decision to cancel VAT-free shopping in the Autumn Statement 2022.

James Cartlidge:

No additional staff and IT costs had been incurred as a result of this change.

Revenue and Customs: Staff**Sarah Olney:**[\[113389\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many staff worked within HMRC's Customer Compliance Group in each of the last five financial years.

Victoria Atkins:

Customer Compliance Group (CCG) keeps internal records of staffing. The figures below are the average number of FTE in CCG per year.

2021-22: 25,451

2020-21: 24,027

2019-20: 24,474

2018-19: 23,222

2017-18: 24,526

River Severn: Flood Control**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[113250\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will meet River Severn Partnership representatives to discuss further funding for flood defences for that river.

James Cartlidge:

Better protecting properties from flooding remains a key priority for government and significant investment in flood mitigation has taken place in Shrewsbury and the wider Severn Valley. In the English Severn and Wye region, £170 million will be invested on flood and coastal erosion risk management within the current Flood and Coastal

Erosion Risk Management Programme. The programme is delivered by the Environment Agency and other Risk Management Authorities.

■ Taxation

Sarah Olney:

[113381]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an estimate of the number of tax compliance cases (a) opened and (b) closed by HMRC in each of the last five financial years.

Victoria Atkins:

Please see links to previously reported data:

2019-

20 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1012429/HMRC_quarterly_performance_data_January_to_March_2020_to_2021.xlsx

2020-21 and 2021-

22 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101475/HMRC_quarterly_performance_data_table_Q4_2021_to_2022.xlsx

2017-18 Cases started 480,000. Cases closed 475,000.

2018-19 Cases started 375,000. Cases closed 390,000, (numbers rounded to the nearest 5000, in order to be consistent with data provided in earlier years).

Definitions (link to external quarterly publications) can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-quarterly-performance-updates#reporting-year-2019-to-2020>:

- “Cases Started” – From the external quarterly publication: “Compliance checks may span many years and may range from light-touch single risk compliance checks to complex, multiple risks compliance checks. The compliance check will be opened when a risk is opened in a given tax year for a given tax regime”.
- “Cases Closed” – From the external quarterly publication: “Compliance checks may span many years and may range from light-touch single risk compliance checks to complex, multiple risks compliance checks. The compliance check will close once all risks pertaining to the relevant years and tax regime have been closed”.

Sarah Olney:

[113384]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of HMRC’s compliance yield in each of the last five financial years.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC publishes its Compliance Yield estimates each year in its Annual Report & Accounts. Estimates for the last five financial years are as follows:

2021-22: £30,792m

2020-21: £30,450m

2019-20: £36,948m

2018-19: £34,070m

2017-18: £30,292m

■ Taxation: Domicil

James Murray:

[114862]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Certificates of Residence His Majesty's Revenue and Customs issued to Ukrainian nationals in tax years (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK and the Ukraine have been signatories in a comprehensive Double Taxation treaty since 1993, which is available on Gov.uk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-tax-treaties>

This treaty specifies how the two countries should tax income paid between the two countries with a view to avoiding double taxation.

A key concept for interpreting the treaty is the residence of the person receiving the income. A Ukrainian national living in the UK may be resident in either the UK or Ukraine under each country's domestic legislation, or they may be resident in both. If the recipient is resident in both countries, the treaty sets out several tests to establish one single 'treaty residence'. These tests consider all the individual's facts and circumstances.

HMRC is unable to provide the number of certificates issued because this figure is not held centrally.

Certificates of residence are only required when a Ukrainian national that is tax resident in the UK under the treaty needs to claim a repayment from the Ukrainian tax authorities.

So far we have not seen high numbers of Ukrainians applying for certificates of residence in this way, but we do expect to see more now that the tax year in Ukraine (which matches the calendar year) is over.

■ Treasury: Electronic Purchasing Card Solution

Emily Thornberry:

[114574]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December to Question 110629, how many photographs were purchased for exhibition in HM Treasury's Horse Guards Road building; which photographer's art was purchased; and whether these photos are currently the property of his Department or the Government Art Collection.

James Cartlidge:

13 prints were purchased, which are the property of HM Treasury.

■ **Treasury: Staff**

Sarah Olney:

[\[113392\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Customer Compliance Group staff in his Department moved to Covid support schemes in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Victoria Atkins:

At the start of the pandemic, HMRC worked at pace to design and administer the Covid-19 support schemes, enabling payments to be made quickly to those in need. Staff were redeployed from across the Customer Compliance Group (CCG) to support activities related to the Covid-19 schemes.

In 2020-21, there were 1,357 existing CCG Staff redeployed to work on the Covid-19 schemes administered by HMRC.

In 2021-22, there were 1,249 existing CCG Staff redeployed to work on the Covid-19 schemes administered by HMRC.

Sarah Olney:

[\[113393\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many departmental staff within the Customer Compliance Group were assigned to work on matters relating the UK's departure from the EU.

Victoria Atkins:

HMRC takes a flexible and dynamic approach to resourcing in order to achieve their objectives. Consequently, the numbers of staff on particulate pieces of work will fluctuate.

In 2021-22, 1,043 Customer Compliance Group staff Full Time Equivalent were assigned to EU exit work.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Carers Allowance: Uprating**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[114688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of raising the Carer's Allowance earnings limit to the value of 21 hours of work a week at the National Living Wage rate.

Tom Pursglove:

Many carers who are receiving Carer's Allowance are also in households receiving Universal Credit, whose structure of tapers and work allowances (where applicable) effectively takes precedence over the earnings rules in Carer's Allowance for these carers. This helps ensure that, if they wish to work, carers on the lowest incomes are better off doing so. There is, however, no requirement for those caring for 35 hours or

more a week to undertake work search whilst receiving Universal Credit. In work or out of work, these carers may also receive the Universal Credit Carer Element, worth around an additional £2,000 a year.

The Carer's Allowance earnings limit itself will increase from £132 to £139 net earnings per week in April 2023. This means it will have increased by more than one third since 2010. Whilst the Government does not directly link the earnings limit to any other particular factor (including hours worked or the National Living Wage), it does keep it under regular review and increases it when it is warranted and affordable.

■ Employment: Government Assistance

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[114683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper by his Department entitled Helping people secure, stay and succeed in higher quality, higher paying jobs, published on 13 December 2022, what process his Department will use to evaluate the performance of the district progression leads.

Guy Opperman:

We plan to conduct analysis and research, including of the impact of the district Progression Leads, as part of a robust evaluation of our in-work progression offer.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[114684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper by his Department entitled Helping people secure, stay and succeed in higher quality, higher paying jobs, published on 13 December 2022, if he will make an estimate of the cost of the district progression leads in the 2023-24 financial year.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[114685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the policy paper by his Department entitled Helping people secure, stay and succeed in higher quality, higher paying jobs, published on 13 December 2022, how much funding his Department will provide to invest in and support work coaches to deliver an in-work service to claimants in the 2023-24 financial year.

Guy Opperman:

At the 2021 Spending Review, DWP was allocated £99m over the 3-year period to introduce a new Jobcentre Plus led in-work progression offer. Funding for the 37 new Progression Leads and for work coaches to deliver the offer was included in this settlement.

The Autumn Statement announcement has accelerated our delivery plans for the offer, and we are therefore reviewing the funding requirements for this measure, alongside other departmental priorities.

■ Finance: Older People

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[114686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Mid-life MOTs have been provided (a) overall and (b) to over-50s since the initiative was launched.

Guy Opperman:

Mid-life MOTs are carried out by DWP online and via number of external organisations and private companies therefore the data requested is presently unavailable.

■ Jobcentres

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[113359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish a geographical map of Jobcentre Groups and Districts as of 19 December 2022.

Guy Opperman:

Yes, see attached document.

Attachments:

1. Table 1 [\[Table 1.xlsx\]](#)

■ Personal Independence Payment: Sleep Apnoea

Rachael Maskell:

[\[117685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to what extra financial support people with sleep apnoea who are receiving Personal Independence Payment are entitled to assist with their winter fuel bills; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of that support to allow affected people to run essential medical devices which require electricity, in the light of increased fuel costs.

Tom Pursglove:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her previous Question [UIN 110766](#).

■ Universal Credit: Employment

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[114680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2022 to Question 94758 on Universal Credit: Employment and the Answer of 6 December 2022 to Question 99855 on Social Security Benefits: Disqualification, how the 600,000 additional in-work Universal Credit claimants required to meet with work coaches from September 2023 will be subject to sanctions without increasing in the Administrative Earnings Threshold.

Guy Opperman:

The Houses of Parliament passed legislation in 2013 (Regulation 90 of the 2013 UC Regulations) which provides that DWP can place work related requirements on

Universal Credit claimants who are earning less than their Conditionality Earnings Threshold.

To date, we have not routinely used these to apply conditionality to those earning between the Administrative Earnings Threshold and the Conditionality Earnings Threshold. However, as announced at the Autumn Statement, from September 2023, we will require claimants in the Light Touch Group to attend appointments with their work coach and to undertake activities that will increase their chances of securing more hours or better paid work now or in future.

■ **Work Capability Assessment: Kingston upon Hull North**

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[117519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what was the average waiting time for a Work Capability Assessment in Kingston upon Hull North constituency in the latest period for which data is available.

Tom Pursglove:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ First Launch of Satellites from Cornwall

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Grant Shapps):
[\[HCWS489\]](#)

Last night, Virgin Orbit attempted the first orbital launch from Spaceport Cornwall. Unfortunately, the launch was unsuccessful. We will work closely with Virgin Orbit as they investigate what caused the failure in the coming days and weeks. While a failed launch is disappointing, launching a spacecraft always carries significant risks. Despite this, the project has succeeded in creating a horizontal launch capability at Spaceport Cornwall, and we remain committed to becoming the leading provider of commercial small satellite launch in Europe by 2030, with vertical launches planned from Scotland in the next year.

■ Update on Statutory Deadline for Planning Decision

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Grant Shapps):
[\[HCWS488\]](#)

This Statement concerns an application for development consent made under the Planning Act 2008 by Alternative Use Boston Projects Limited for the construction and operation of an energy from waste facility at Boston in Lincolnshire.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make a decision on an application within three months of the receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) of the Act to set a new deadline. Where a new deadline is set, the Secretary of State must make a Statement to Parliament to announce it. The current statutory deadline for the decision on the Boston Alternative Energy Facility application is 10 January 2023.

I have decided to set a new deadline of no later than 6 July 2023 for deciding this application. This is to enable my Department to seek further information from the Applicant and to ensure there is sufficient time to allow for consideration of this information by other interested parties.

The decision to set the new deadline for this application is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant or refuse development consent.

EDUCATION

■ Education Update

The Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education (Robert

Halfon):

[HCWS490]

Today, I am notifying Parliament of the next stage in the government's review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England – the publication of new criteria for alternative academic and technical qualifications funded from 2025.

In July 2021, we published the government response to the second stage consultation of the review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below. Here, we made clear our intentions to streamline the qualifications landscape, simplify choices for students and only fund qualifications that are high quality and lead to good progression outcomes. It is vitally important for social mobility to ensure that everyone, no matter their background, is able to access the education and skills opportunities which lead to good jobs.

The reforms are taking place in 3 stages.

In July 2022, we completed the first phase of streamlining the qualifications landscape by removing funding approval from around 5,500 qualifications at level 3 and below in England, which had very low numbers or no new students enrolled on them

By August 2025, we will also have removed funding approval from qualifications which overlap with our new, highly rigorous T Levels, so that T Levels have the space they need to flourish as the main technical route for 16-19 year olds. In October 2022, we published details of the first 106 qualifications that will have funding approval removed from 1 August 2024 because they overlap with a T Level in Education and Childcare, Digital, or Construction and the Built Environment. Funding approval will also be removed from qualifications which overlap with the Health and Science T Levels and we will publish this list once the review of the outline content of those T Levels has concluded. Funding approval will be removed in August 2025 for qualifications which overlap with T Levels in waves 3 and 4 (Legal, Finance and Accounting; Engineering and Manufacturing; Business and Administration; Hair and Beauty; Catering and Hospitality; Creative and Design; and Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care). A provisional list of these qualifications will be published in spring 2023.

From August 2025, all alternative academic and technical qualifications in scope of the review will be required to demonstrate that they serve a clear and distinct purpose and meet new quality and funding criteria, irrespective of the T Level overlap assessment process. Details of the new approval process, which all qualifications at level 3 in scope of the review must go through in order to be publicly funded from 2025, are being published today. This includes full details of the types of qualifications and subjects that we will fund, and the criteria that awarding organisations must meet to secure funding approval.

For academic qualifications this includes progression to higher education, evidence of demand and a clear statement of why the qualification is needed. Technical qualifications will be required to meet new occupational relevance and employer demand tests developed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). This will ensure that technical qualifications deliver the content that truly matter to employers, and that the skills system is simpler for learners, training providers and employers to navigate.

All qualifications must also meet regulatory requirements set by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

Our reforms do not constitute a binary choice between T Levels and A levels. We have listened to feedback and recognise the need for additional qualifications, including alternative qualifications such as some BTECs designed to be taken as part of a mixed study programme including A levels. These alternative qualifications are an important part of how we will support diverse student needs and deliver skills that employers need for a productive future economy, in areas that A levels and T Levels do not cover. In addition, the T Level Transition Programme provides a high-quality route onto T Levels, for students who would benefit from the additional study time and preparation that it will give them before they start their T Level.

The government also recognises that there are still too many people who are being held back by poor maths. The Prime Minister has set out his intention that all students in England should study some form of maths to age 18, to ensure they are better equipped for the jobs of the future. Further detail on this measure will be set out at a later date.

Today's announcement marks the start of the final stage of the reforms to post-16 qualifications and will give the education sector clarity on the shape of the future post-16 qualifications landscape.

I look forward to engaging with parliamentarians and colleagues in awarding bodies and further education as we implement these important reforms.

LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

■ English Freeports Update

Minister for Levelling Up (Dehenna Davison):

[\[HCWS487\]](#)

Today I am announcing another major milestone for the flagship UK Freeports programme, with two further English Freeports – Freeport East and Liverpool City Region Freeport – now fully up and running after receiving final government approval. Both of these Freeports will now receive £25 million of seed funding and potentially hundreds of millions in locally retained business rates to upgrade local infrastructure and stimulate regeneration. This is alongside a generous package of trade and innovation support for businesses locating there.

This significant milestone is an important step on the Freeports journey and sends a clear message: the UK Government is backing these places as a key part of its economic strategy.

Freeports are at the heart of the Government's Levelling Up agenda. They will unlock much-needed investment into port communities and their hinterlands. This in turn will help these areas overcome the barriers holding them back and bring jobs and opportunity to some of the UK's historically overlooked communities.

Freeports catalyse investment through a combination of tax reliefs on new economic activity, a special streamlined customs procedure, an ambitious programme of public

investment, and wide-ranging support from the UK Government to help businesses trade, invest, and innovate.

Excellent progress has been made with delivery: investors can now take advantage of tax reliefs in all eight English Freeports and are starting to do so, and we expect the remaining three English Freeports to join Plymouth, Solent, Teesside, Liverpool City Region, and Freeport East in receiving final approvals shortly.

This Government also remains committed to ensuring that all four corners of the UK can reap the benefits of our Freeports programme. We have recently concluded competitions for two Green Freeports in Scotland and a Freeport in Wales, and we will announce the winning locations in due course. We also continue discussions with stakeholders in Northern Ireland about how best to deliver the benefits associated with Freeports there.

TREASURY

■ Economic Update

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Cartlidge): [\[HCWS486\]](#)

Following a review of the Energy Bills Relief Scheme (EBRS), the Government today announces a new energy support scheme for businesses, charities, and the public sector. The new Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) will provide all eligible UK businesses and other non-domestic energy users with a discount on high energy bills until 31 March 2024, following the end of the EBRS in March 2023.

This will help businesses locked into contracts signed before recent substantial falls in the wholesale price manage their costs and provide others with reassurance against the risk of prices rising again.

This further support follows the government's unprecedented package for non-domestic users through this winter through the EBRS, worth £18 billion per the figures certified by the OBR at the Autumn Statement.

At Autumn Statement, we were clear that such levels of support, unprecedented in its nature and scale, were time-limited and intended as a bridge to allow businesses to adapt. Wholesale energy prices are falling and have now gone back to levels just before Putin's invasion of Ukraine. But to avoid a cliff-edge for businesses and provide reassurance against the risk of prices rising again we are launching the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme, giving them the certainty they need to plan ahead.

The new scheme strikes a balance between supporting businesses over the next 12 months and limiting taxpayer's exposure to volatile energy markets, with a cap set at £5.5 billion based on estimated volumes.

Through the scheme, from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, eligible non-domestic customers who have a contract with a licensed energy supplier will see a unit discount of up to £6.97/MWh automatically applied to their gas bill and a unit discount of up to £19.61/MWh applied to their electricity bill, except for those benefitting from lower energy

prices. The relative discount will be applied if wholesale prices are above a price threshold of £302/MWh for electricity and £107/MWh for gas.

A substantially higher level of support will be provided to businesses in sectors identified as being the most energy and trade intensive – predominately manufacturing industries. A long-standing category associated with higher energy usage, these firms are often less able to pass through cost to their customers due to international competition. Businesses in scope will receive a gas and electricity bill discount based on a price threshold, which will be capped by a maximum unit discount of £40.0/MWh for gas and £89.1/MWh for electricity. This discount will only apply to 70% of energy volumes and will apply above a price threshold of £185/MWh for electricity and £99/MWh for gas.

This government is committed to supporting UK business and the voluntary sector, and through this package we aim to give organisations the certainty they need to plan through next winter.