



Daily Report

Wednesday, 26 May 2021

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 26 May 2021 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:06 P.M., 26 May 2021). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Climate Change

Ruth Jones:

[\[3156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last discussed the climate emergency with Ministers in the Welsh Government.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government and the devolved administrations have established an Inter-ministerial Group that covers Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change. This meets at least bi-monthly and brings together Ministers from the four administrations to discuss emission reduction efforts across the UK. The most recent meeting of the Group was in April.

This intergovernmental engagement on net zero will continue to facilitate collaboration and coordination across devolved and reserved competence, ensuring we are delivering effectively for all parts of the UK.

Ruth Jones:

[\[3157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last discussed the climate emergency with Ministers in the Scottish Government.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government and the devolved administrations have established an Inter-ministerial Group that covers Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change. This meets at least bi-monthly and brings together Ministers from the four administrations to discuss emission reduction efforts across the UK. The most recent meeting of the Group was in April.

This intergovernmental engagement on net zero will continue to facilitate collaboration and coordination across devolved and reserved competence, ensuring we are delivering effectively for all parts of the UK.

Ruth Jones:

[\[3158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he last discussed the climate emergency with Ministers in the Northern Ireland Executive.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government and the devolved administrations have established an Inter-ministerial Group that covers Net Zero, Energy and Climate Change. This meets at least bi-monthly and brings together Ministers from the four administrations to discuss emission reduction efforts across the UK. The most recent meeting of the Group in April.

This intergovernmental engagement on net zero will continue to facilitate collaboration and coordination across devolved and reserved competence, ensuring we are delivering effectively for all parts of the UK.

■ **Company Liquidations: West Yorkshire**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[3199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many companies which were operating in the 2018-19 financial year ceased trading in the 2019-20 financial year in (a) Wakefield and (b) West Yorkshire.

Paul Scully:

Companies House has identified the number of companies that were operating in Wakefield and West Yorkshire in the financial year 2018/19 and for which either a first or second notice was published in the London Gazette in the financial year 2019/20. These notices are indicative that a company is no longer trading and will be dissolved in due course.

Wakefield:

There were 1,794 companies that were operating in Wakefield in 2018/19 for which first or second notices were published in the London Gazette in 2019/20.

WestYorkshire:

There were 14,841 companies that were operating in West Yorkshire in 2018/19 for which first or second notices were published in the London Gazette in 2019/20.

■ **Conditions of Employment**

Gavin Newlands:

[3018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with (a) employers' representatives, (b) employee representatives; and(c) devolved Administrations on potential amendments to the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Paul Scully:

Ministers meet regularly with stakeholders, including representatives of employers and employees on various employment-related issues, including matters concerning the Employment Rights Act 1996.

Employment Law is a reserved area except in Northern Ireland where it is devolved. BEIS will continue to work with each devolved administration respecting their unique settlements to ensure we build a strong economy across the United Kingdom.

■ **Consumers: Subscriptions**

Hywel Williams:

[2897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of protections offered by the (a) Consumer

Contract (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 and (b) Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Practices Regulations 2008 in supporting protecting consumers from subscription traps.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to tackling subscription traps and preventing consumers from being exploited.

The existing law requires that a trader informs consumers of the price and length of a subscription, before a contract is entered in to. Failure to provide this information is a breach of contract and can be challenged by consumers.

The Government is working with regulators and other key partners within the consumer protection framework to ensure that the current legal framework is robust in prohibiting harmful business practices to consumer contracts.

■ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[3013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the adequacy of scrutiny of the recovery practices of coronavirus business loan lenders.

Paul Scully:

Covid-19 loan scheme lenders are expected to pursue appropriate recovery processes in line with existing industry standards. Lenders undergo periodic audits to check that scheme eligibility rules and processes are being followed.

Under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), lenders, the British Business Bank and Government have agreed a set of principles relating to collections and recoveries, in order to facilitate fair and consistent treatment of BBLs borrowers.

For the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILs) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILs), lenders retain some of the risk and so are expected to utilise their usual industry practices.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[3014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what arrangements are in place in the event that a claim is made against a Government guarantee for a coronavirus business loan that has been used to repay existing loans.

Paul Scully:

The arrangements in place for a claim made against a Government Guarantee for a Coronavirus Business Loan are the same whatever the purpose of the loan.

Borrowers remain liable for the outstanding debt. Lenders are required to pursue borrowers for repayment of all outstanding debt, in accordance with their normal processes for the recovery of a loan. Provided the facility was eligible when it was offered, claims on the guarantee can be made within a reasonable time period following the lender making a Formal Demand to the borrower.

Once a claim has been made, the lender is still obliged to seek further potential recoveries if the process has not been completed. Lenders should apply their normal commercial judgement to decide when it is appropriate to cease recovery activity. If a recovery is made after the settlement of the Guarantee Claim, lenders should refund the British Business Bank in respect of the Guarantee Claim they received.

■ **Electricity Interconnectors: Portsmouth**

Stephen Morgan:

[3132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish his decision on the Aquind Interconnector project.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Following the close of the examination in respect of the application for development consent for the Aquind Interconnector project on 8 March 2021, the examining authority is currently writing its report for my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State which will contain its conclusions and recommendation on the project. Once he has received the report, which is expected no later than the 8 June 2021, the Secretary of State will have three months to take his decision to grant or refuse development consent.

■ **Employment: Loneliness**

Rachael Maskell:

[3041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his plans to abolish the Industrial Strategy Council, what plans he has to ensure the delivery of the employment measures in the Loneliness Strategy that relate to the Industrial Strategy.

Paul Scully:

The Employer Leadership Group, chaired by the Campaign to End Loneliness and supported by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, was established in November 2018.

The work of the Employer Leadership Group has now been taken over by the government's Tackling Loneliness Network, with members of the group invited to join the new network. A subgroup of the network, led by the Campaign to End Loneliness, has produced a short report bringing together emerging good practice on how employers can support social connections amongst their staff, drawing on the expertise of Network members and employers.

The report was published in May 2021 and is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employers-and-loneliness>.

■ Energy

Alan Brown:

[\[3036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when his Department will publish an energy Strategy and Policy Statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Government committed in the Energy White Paper to consult on an energy sector Strategy and Policy Statement (SPS) for Ofgem during the course of 2021. Following this, the Government will lay the SPS before Parliament for designation.

■ Energy: Meters

Chi Onwurah:

[\[2971\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the minimum data set is that will be collected from energy consumers who agree to the installation of smart meters; and what steps consumers can take to ensure that additional data is not being collected by energy providers and other bodies.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Smart meters are replacing traditional gas and electricity meters in Great Britain as part of an essential infrastructure upgrade to make the energy system more efficient and flexible, enabling the cost-effective delivery of net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

The Government has put in place a strict Data Access and Privacy Framework that protects consumers' privacy and set outs the levels of access to energy consumption data from smart meters permitted for different parties. The Framework ensures that households have control over who can access their energy consumption data and for what purposes, except where this is required for regulated purposes (such as accurate billing).

Consumers can also choose to share their data with third parties for example to obtain tailored energy efficiency advice. Where third parties are accessing consumption data via the smart metering network they must have the consumer's consent which consumers can withdraw at any time. In addition to the specific protections of the Framework, all parties are required to comply with relevant data protection laws when processing personal data.

■ Energy: Public Consultation

Alan Brown:

[\[3037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when the Government most recently consulted on an Energy Strategy and Policy Statement; what the outcome of that consultation was; and if he will make a statement.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The last consultation on an energy sector Strategy and Policy Statement for Ofgem was in August 2014. However, the SPS was not taken forward at this time.

As was set out in the Energy White Paper in December, we will consult on an energy sector SPS for Ofgem during the course of 2021, and it will reflect this Government's priorities.

■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Ruth Jones:

[\[3159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to achieve the net zero emissions target.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK has achieved record clean growth - between 1990 and 2019, our economy grew by 78% while our emissions decreased by 44%, this is the fastest rate in the G7. We have built on this, setting out concrete steps to reach net zero by 2050, for instance through my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan which brought together £12 billion of government investment, our Energy White Paper and Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy.

The Government has also laid legislation for the UK's sixth carbon budget, proposing a target which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels, marking a decisive step towards net zero by 2050.

Ahead of COP26, we will bring forward further bold proposals, including a Net Zero Strategy, to cut emissions and create new jobs and industries across the whole country – going further and faster towards building a stronger, more resilient future and protecting our planet for this generation and those to come.

■ Hospitality Industry: Staff

Sarah Olney:

[\[5224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the effect of the UK's departure from the EU on staffing levels in the hospitality industry.

Paul Scully:

We are in regular dialogue with the hospitality sector to understand how business operating models have been affected by leaving the EU.

■ OneWeb

John Healey:

[\[2880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to use OneWeb to enhance the UK's space capabilities.

Amanda Solloway:

With an increasing number of global players developing Low Earth Orbit Satellite constellations, OneWeb enables the UK to be at the forefront of rapidly evolving Space technology and helps the UK project its influence internationally through a global asset.

OneWeb will help grow UK-based capabilities in the satellite technology value chain by creating opportunities for high-value manufacturing, launch capability, and space data applications.

■ **Post Offices: ICT**

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[2962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help ensure that sub-postmasters wrongly convicted as a result of faults in the Horizon IT system receive (a) justice and (b) compensation.

Paul Scully:

The Government understands the serious impact that issues arising from faults with the Horizon IT system, and the Post Office's management of these issues, have had on affected postmasters' lives and livelihoods. This is why it is vital that postmasters affected by Horizon get the compensation and justice they deserve.

We welcome the decisions taken by the Court of Appeal and Crown Courts to overturn convictions - 47 to date. We are keen to see that all postmasters whose convictions are overturned are fairly compensated as quickly as possible and we are working with Post Office towards this goal. Post Office will be engaging with the postmasters in the first instance to understand what redress they are seeking.

It is the courts' responsibility to decide whether convictions are overturned. The Criminal Cases Review Commission is continuing to consider applications made by postmasters to have their convictions quashed. Government will continue to closely monitor the Post Office's work on addressing the issues identified by Justice Fraser.

■ **Retail Sector Council: Xinjiang**

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[3031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whom from his Department attended the retail sector council on Xinjiang in February 2021; whether minutes of that event have been published; and which of the businesses that attended that event are continuing to work in Xinjiang.

Paul Scully:

Revised, detailed Overseas Business Risk guidance was published on 12 January and, based on this new guidance, the Government has embarked on a comprehensive programme of engagement with businesses and UK trade bodies. Businesses should take heed of the updated guidance on Xinjiang to understand the human rights risks associated with sourcing from that region and to take appropriate remedial action based on their circumstances.

On 3 February 2021, I co-chaired a retail sector council meeting. It was attended by representatives from both BEIS and industry, including Amazon, Primark, BIRA, ASOS and HSBC. At the meeting, I raised the issue of Xinjiang and outlined current government advice in relation to Chinese supply chain issues. The minutes for the

meeting and list of attendees are available on the Retail Sector Council website (<https://retailsectorcouncil.co.uk/retail-sector-council>).

In March 2021, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade hosted two roundtables on the issue of forced labour in Xinjiang, which 22 organisations attended. This issue will also be a focus of the Business Against Slavery Forum later this year, which brings together the Home Office with 13 large companies with global supply chains across different sectors.

■ Space Debris

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3108]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to (a) prevent and (b) reduce the amount of space debris.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space and has taken proactive measures to prevent, mitigate and remove space debris.

In carrying out safety assessments under its licensing process for activities in outer space, the UK Space Agency considers operators' collision avoidance and debris mitigation measures as applied over the entire time the spacecraft remains in orbit around the Earth.

The Government also actively participates in a number of multi-lateral fora, including the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Subcommittees (UN COPUOS) and the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), as well as a number of bodies defining safety standards. Within these fora, the Government works collaboratively with international partners to define best practice and the associated guidelines that will ensure space remains accessible for future generations.

Finally, the UK plays a leading role in supporting the development of technology for the sustainable and responsible use of space, having invested strongly in European Space Agency (ESA) programmes aimed at preventing collisions in space, improving detection and tracking of objects in space and fielding demonstration missions of active capture and safe de-orbiting of spent satellites. The UK Government has also licensed a number of UK-operated technology demonstration missions for active debris removal in orbit.

■ Weddings: Coronavirus

Kerry McCarthy:

[2919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether (a) private farms and (b) other unlicensed venues will be allowed to host weddings receptions after June 21 2021.

Paul Scully:

At Step 4 of the roadmap, which will be no earlier than 21 June, the Government aims to remove limits on weddings, civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations. This will be subject to the outcome of the Social Distancing Review and the Events Research Programme.

■ Wind Power: Investment**Dr Alan Whitehead:**[\[2858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what actions he is taking to increase investment in the onshore wind supply chain.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The UK Government at this present time is not undertaking any direct actions to increase investment specifically in the onshore wind supply chain. The BEIS ministerial team and officials meet a wide range of developers and manufacturers in the course of our work, and the Department is always seeking to ensure that we make the most of the economic opportunities created by our world-leading decarbonisation commitments.

The Contracts for Difference (CfD) scheme is the Government's main mechanism for supporting new renewable electricity generation projects in Great Britain, and in March 2020 we announced that onshore wind would be able to bid in the Contracts for Difference allocation round 4, which is planned to open in December 2021. In parallel, we have also consulted on proposals to strengthen our Supply Chain Plan policy to ensure that developers who bid into the Contracts for Difference allocation round 4 deliver on their commitments to build strong, competitive supply chains for all eligible technologies.

CABINET OFFICE**■ Civil Service: Conditions of Employment****Grahame Morris:**[\[5182\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 5 of the Civil Service management code, if he will provide details of all legislation that Ministers have undertaken to apply as if it were binding on the Crown.

Julia Lopez:

The Civil Service has not applied any legislation which is not binding on the Crown. However, certain legislative provisions, which do not apply to the Crown, apply to Civil Servants as set out within the Civil Service Management Code and within departmental policies.

■ Emergencies: Mobile Phones

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [3117]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Emergency Alerts service will send the personal user data of the recipient of an alert through that service to the Government.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [3118]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make it his Department's policy to ensure that hon. Members are notified of alerts issued to their constituents through the Emergency Alerts service at the time of those alerts.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [3119]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the average number of alerts that will potentially be issued through the UK's Emergency Alerts Service on an annual basis; and what safeguards will be in place to ensure that only serious emergencies trigger the alerts so as to ensure messages are always taken seriously.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [3120]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether individuals will be able to opt-out of the UK's Emergency Alerts Service.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [3121]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect of the Emergency Alerts Service issued alert on telecommunication capacity in emergency areas as a result of any significant increase in access to the telecommunication demand following recipients' receipt of an alert.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the [Written Ministerial Statement](#) published on 17 May 2021. No personal data is used at any stage of the message sending process. The Government is committed to ensuring Emergency Alerts reach members of the public during an emergency as quickly as possible; as such it is not possible to provide advance notice to Hon. Members prior to transmission of an alert, similar to other local responses.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: Assets

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [4681]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the value of (a) buildings, (b) nuclear power stations and (c) other UK assets owned outside the UK; and which countries' residents rank highest in terms of their ownership of such UK assets.

Julia Lopez:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have, therefore, asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSAs response to PQ4681 [UKSA Final response to PQ4681.pdf]

■ UK Trade with EU: Customs**Sarah Olney:**[\[5225\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to resolve customs delays at the UK-EU border.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [175882](#) on 28 April 2021.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Deployment****John Healey:**[\[2882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 15 of the Government's Defence Command Paper, what the planned timetable is for increasing the UK's global network by one third.

James Heappey:

We will begin to realise the expansion of the Global Network this year. Thereafter we will grow the network incrementally until the full extent of the expansion, as currently planned, is realised in 2027.

Early gains are to be made in countries where the training burden, particularly the requirement to learn a language, is less or we have suitable candidates with the pre-requisite skills to deploy quickly. The highest priority posts requiring longer training will start to be realised in years two and three, with growth continuing out to 2027.

■ Armed Forces: Technology**Chris Green:**[\[3012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the armed forces are supported by world-class technological capabilities.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for North Devon (Selaine Saxby), to Question 900383, and Newcastle Under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), to Question 900390, during Defence Oral Questions on 24 May 2021.

Attachments:

1. Armed Forces Technological Capabilities [900383 - Armed Forces Technological Capabilities.docx]

■ Army

John Healey: [5147]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to deliver the proposed warfighting division.

James Heappey:

Warfighting already is, and will remain, the cornerstone of deterrence and the bedrock of the British Army. The plans announced by the Defence Secretary ensure that the Army will continue to have a warfighting division at its heart.

■ Army: Employment

John Healey: [5149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many personnel will make up the new Security Force Assistance Brigade.

John Healey: [5150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much funding will be allocated to the new Security Force Assistance Brigade.

John Healey: [5151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what specific training will be provided to personnel as part of the new Security Force Assistance Brigade.

James Heappey:

The design of the new Security Force Assistance Brigade is under development and the plan for how the Army will reorganise to create this, and other new capabilities, will be announced later in 2021. Detailed programming and balanced decisions about the optimum resourcing and sequencing of this institutional change will follow. As with all our personnel, we will ensure members of this new Brigade are trained and equipped to fulfil their role, operating across the globe to develop the capacity of partners and allies.

■ Defence Cyber Academy

John Healey: [5145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timeframe is for the establishment of the Defence Cyber Academy.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Cyber Academy builds upon the existing Defence Cyber School, and will reach Initial Operating Capability in 2023 and Full Operating Capability in 2024. At Initial Operating Capability the Defence Cyber Academy will be able to address the current Ministry of Defence requirement for individual cyber training in full. At Full Operating Capability, all positions in the Defence Cyber Academy will be filled, programmes in place for external engagement, international courses available to

allies and partners and a cross-Government Defence and Security skills framework established.

■ **Defence Cyber Academy: Finance**

John Healey: [\[5146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the annual budget for the Defence Cyber Academy is in each financial year between 2021-22 and 2024-25.

Jeremy Quin:

The annual budget for the Defence Cyber Academy for financial year (FY) 2021-2022 is £4.47 million. This budget is forecast to increase in FY 2022-23 and again in FY 2023-24.

■ **Defence Cyber Academy: Location**

John Healey: [\[5144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where the Defence Cyber Academy will be located.

Jeremy Quin:

The Defence Cyber Academy will be located in Shrivenham, Wiltshire, as part of the UK Defence Academy.

■ **Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft: Procurement**

John Healey: [\[5148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to decide on the number of Lightning II F-35 aircraft to order in addition to those aircraft already ordered.

Jeremy Quin:

Following the outcome of the Integrated Review and confirmation that the UK Lightning Force will grow beyond 48 F-35B aircraft, we are undertaking a period of further analysis to evaluate the scale and optimum delivery profile of our second tranche of F-35Bs as well as associated infrastructure and support equipment. Once complete, this activity will inform procurement timelines.

■ **Shipbuilding**

John Redwood: [\[2853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to publish his plans to procure more support and protection vessels from UK yards.

Jeremy Quin:

On 16 March 2021, the Shipbuilding Tsar announced a refresh of the National Shipbuilding Strategy. This will outline the Government's future plans for shipbuilding programmes and how we will set the conditions for a globally successful, innovative and sustainable shipbuilding enterprise.

Our new Defence and Security Industrial Strategy has already set out how we are moving away from global competition by default to a more flexible and nuanced approach. This will allow us to consider all the relevant factors and decide on the best strategy for the procurement of any given capability. This approach will enable us to take into account our national security requirements and the potential benefits for growth and prosperity across the UK in our procurement decisions.

■ **Veterans: Northern Ireland**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[2901]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many meetings the Minister for Veterans has had with the Northern Ireland Office to discuss the matter of Northern Ireland since occupying the role.

Leo Docherty:

Since assuming post on 20 April 2021, I have had one official meeting with the Secretary of State for the Northern Ireland Office.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Broadband: Southport**

Damien Moore:

[3136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to increase broadband speeds in Southport.

Matt Warman:

The Government is working with mobile operators and suppliers to build an open, flexible, and diverse telecoms supply market, following the recommendations of the Diversification Taskforce, published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The Taskforce recommendations are helping to guide our approach delivering the Diversification strategy, including its central pillar of attracting new suppliers. The Government is designing a programme of targeted R&D to level the playing field for smaller suppliers, and we continue to consider all options.

Suppliers are themselves taking positive steps to support this agenda and a number of smaller suppliers have already announced new research facilities in the UK.

■ **Broadband: Standards**

Jon Trickett:

[2886]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the average internet (a) download and upload speed and (b) monthly cost for households in each region of the UK in the latest period for which figures are available.

Matt Warman:

Superfast broadband coverage is now available to over 97% of the UK, and Think Broadband reports that gigabit-capable networks now serve more than two in five (40%) premises in the UK.

Earlier this month, Ofcom published its UK Home Broadband Performance research which showed that the average download speed in the UK was 80.2 Mbps. This is an increase of 25% from 2019. The same report highlighted upload speeds of 21.6 Mbps which is equal to a 54% increase over the same period. Upload and download speeds will vary based on the type of connectivity installed within a property and the consumer's individual retail package.

Ofcom published as part of its Connected Nations report in June 2020 the average speeds for each Nation. This showed the average download speeds as:

- England: 74 Mbps
- Wales: 58 Mbps
- Scotland: 70Mbps
- Northern Ireland: 64 Mbps

Regional data is produced on a quarterly basis by the website ThinkBroadband, and can be accessed at the following address:

<https://labs2.thinkbroadband.com/local/browse>. Average speeds have been increasing each quarter as more premises have access to gigabit-capable broadband networks.

Different packages offered by suppliers may offer greater speeds, data allowances or other benefits, so it is difficult to assess the average cost. For example a number of broadband packages may include Pay TV subscriptions and other additional add-ons. However, to ensure decent broadband is affordable to everyone, a number of operators have brought in new nationwide affordable tariffs starting at £15 per month. For example, BT and Hyperoptic provide fibre social tariff products for households in receipt of Universal Credit and other means-tested benefits offering download speeds ranging from 40Mbps, up to 150Mbps.

■ Digital Technology: Disadvantaged**Jon Trickett:****[2887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) people and (b) households that are considered digitally excluded (i) in the UK and (ii) in each region of the UK in the latest period for which figures are available.

Caroline Dineneage:

According to the latest Lloyds Bank 2021 Consumer Index, over 9 million people in the UK are lacking in foundation digital skills and 5% (2.6 million) of the population have not been online in the last 3 months.

There has been a substantial decrease amongst the amount of households that do not have internet access. Between 2020 and 2021, the percentage of households without internet access has decreased from 7% to 4% in the UK.

The Lloyds Bank Consumer Index estimates that 13% of people in Wales, 8% of people in the North East and 8% of people in the South West have not been online in the past 3 months. These are the areas with the highest proportion of people offline. The East Midlands is estimated to have 6% of people offline, the North West, South East, and Yorkshire and the Humber have an estimated 4% offline. Both the West Midlands and London have 3% of their population offline.

■ Football Index

Alex Sobel: [5260]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when he intends to (a) publish the Terms of Reference and (b) appoint the independent expert for the independent review of Football Index.

Mr John Whittingdale:

DCMS will appoint an independent expert to conduct a review of the regulation of the Football Index gambling product and to make recommendations to government and the regulators. The review will take an objective look at the decisions and actions of the Gambling Commission and any other relevant regulatory bodies to provide a clear account of how the activities of its operator, BetIndex Ltd, were regulated, identify if there were areas for improvement, and inform our Review of the Gambling Act 2005. We intend to publish a report this summer and the appointment of an independent reviewer and further details on the terms of reference will be announced very shortly. Further information can be found in a Written Ministerial Statement on Regulation of Football Index, available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-04-20/hcws929>

■ Gambling: Children

Jeff Smith: [4624]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with publishers of children's magazines on ending the depiction of football shirts with gambling advertising in their publications.

Jeff Smith: [4625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of gambling advertising on children; and if he will take steps to ban the depiction of football shirts in publications which are marketed to children.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Gambling operators advertising in the UK must abide by the advertising codes issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP). A wide range of provisions in these codes are designed to protect children. For example, gambling adverts must not be targeted at children or

feature content which appeals particularly to them. Further detail about the codes and their scope can be found at: <https://www.asa.org.uk/codes-and-rulings/advertising-codes.html>. The Gambling Industry Code for Socially Responsible Advertising requires that operators ensure their logos do not appear on commercial merchandise which is designed for children, which includes replica football shirts in children's sizes.

The government launched its Review of the Gambling Act 2005 on 8th December with the publication of a Call for Evidence. This closed on 31 March and received approximately 16,000 submissions from a broad range of interested organisations and individuals. As part of the wide scope of that Review, we called for evidence on the benefits or harms of allowing operators to advertise and engage in sponsorship arrangements, with a specific focus on impacts on children and young people, and we are considering the evidence carefully.

■ Internet: Freedom of Speech

Andrew Rosindell:

[2908]

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

Caroline Dinenage:

Freedom of expression and the media are essential qualities of any functioning democracy, and the government is committed to maintaining a free and open internet, in line with our democratic values.

We recently published draft Online Safety legislation which will tackle harmful content while protecting users' rights online. In-scope companies will have a legal obligation to consider and implement safeguards for freedom of expression when fulfilling their duties, for which they can be held to account. The largest social media platforms will no longer be able to arbitrarily remove harmful content. They will need to be clear what content is acceptable on their services and enforce these rules consistently. They will also need to put in place additional protections for democratic and journalistic content. Users will have access to effective mechanisms to appeal content that is removed without good reason.

The government is also taking steps to boost competition in digital markets through a new pro-competition regime. The new regime will aim to promote fair trading, open choices, trust and transparency to allow swift action to pre-empt competition concerns in fast-moving markets. This has the potential to support greater choice and plurality in digital services, for example through boosting a greater diversity of platforms for speech online.

■ Internet: Safety

Chris Elmore:

[4655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will publish the timetable for the Online Safety Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2021 including for

(a) pre-legislative scrutiny, (b) the date on which relevant businesses will be obliged to report their risk assessments to Ofcom and (c) post-legislative scrutiny to assess whether the regime is working.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Online Safety Bill will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny in this session. It is for Parliament to determine when the Bill will be scrutinised but I hope that the process will be able to start shortly now that the draft Bill has been published. This is a priority for my Department and for the Home Office, however the timetable for introduction is dependent on the wider parliamentary timetable.

The Online Safety Bill will place a duty on Ofcom to carry out a risk assessment of the sector and, as soon as is reasonably practicable, to issue guidance to companies about risk assessments. Companies will then have three months to carry out their risk assessments, unless they agree a longer timetable with Ofcom.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the regulatory framework, the Online Safety Bill provides for a review to be undertaken by the Secretary of State, to be published and laid before Parliament, between 2 and 5 years after the duties on services are commenced.

Chris Elmore:

[\[4656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support Ofcom to prepare for its role as the independent online safety regulator as announced in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Caroline Dinéage:

The new Online Safety regulatory remit will entail a significant expansion of Ofcom's existing responsibilities. We are working closely with Ofcom to ensure it is prepared for its new role, and to ensure the legislation is effectively implemented. This includes work to ensure it has the resources, skills and capabilities it needs to prepare to take on its new functions.

Chris Elmore:

[\[4657\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to include provisions that tackle harmful content shared across multiple platforms in the Online Safety Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Chris Elmore:

[\[4658\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to include provisions to ensure cross-platform co-operation in combating online harms in the Online Safety Bill announced in the Queen's Speech 2021.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Online Safety Bill will address harmful content shared across multiple services in several ways. Ofcom will have a duty to publish a risk assessment identifying risks to individuals on regulated services. This will cover risks associated with the cross platform nature of harms.

Companies will need to assess whether these harms are likely to appear on their services and mitigate the risks of them doing so. Ofcom will set out details on how this can be achieved in codes of practice. Where appropriate, these will include measures to address cross-platform harms and could include cooperation between platforms.

Ofcom will also undertake research and horizon-scanning to spot any cross-platform emerging issues, backed up by robust information gathering powers. It will have a role in sharing best practice on mitigation amongst service providers. This will drive improvements in the ways service providers identify and tackle these issues.

In addition, the super-complaints process will enable organisations to submit evidence of systemic issues that are causing harm to certain groups across multiple services, which Ofcom will review.

Martyn Day:

[5215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the potential merits of expanding the scope of the proposed online safety Bill to tackle online scams and fraud.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Online Safety Bill was developed jointly by DCMS and the Home Office, involving close cooperation at Ministerial and official level.

The government is deeply concerned about the growth and scale of online fraud. The Online Safety Bill, published on the 12th May, will therefore require companies in scope of regulation to take action to tackle fraud, where it is facilitated through user-generated content (for example by social media posts) or via search results. We expect the regulatory framework to have a particular impact on specific types of fraud, such as romance scams, which are estimated to cost over £60 million a year and cause significant psychological harm to victims.

■ Music: Internet

Kevin Brennan:

[5160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent representations he has received on changing the law to ensure greater earnings for artists and composers when recorded music is streamed online.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises that it is important that artists are fairly remunerated for their work. We welcome the DCMS Select Committee inquiry looking at the economics of music streaming. This is an important debate for the music sector. Once the Select Committee publishes its recommendations from the inquiry, the Government will review and respond in due course.

We have received a number of representations relating to the issue of artist remuneration in music streaming, including an open letter from artists and composers.

Kevin Brennan:

[5161]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has plans to meet artists and songwriters following their open letter to the Prime Minister on 19 April 2021 on changing the law in respect of online streaming of recorded music.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government recognises that it is important that artists are fairly remunerated for their work. We are aware of the concerns that have been raised recently with regards to musicians' incomes, including the open letter to the Prime Minister from artists and songwriters.

We welcome the DCMS Select Committee inquiry looking at the economics of music streaming. This is an important debate for the music sector. Once the Select Committee publishes its recommendations from the inquiry, the Government will review and respond in due course. We will be happy to consider any meeting requests from interested stakeholders as appropriate.

We continue to encourage dialogue between music creators, record labels, and streaming services as they seek to resolve the challenges in this area.

Robust evidence is vital. This is why the Government has funded a 12-month industry-led research project investigating the flow of money from streaming to creators which is due to report this summer.

■ Telecommunications: Infrastructure

Anthony Mangnall:

[3163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the findings of the Telecommunications Diversification Taskforce, what steps he plans to take to attract small-scale vendors to the UK market.

Matt Warman:

The Government is working with mobile operators and suppliers to build an open, flexible, and diverse telecoms supply market, following the recommendations of the Diversification Taskforce, published on 20 April on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

The Taskforce recommendations are helping to guide our approach delivering the Diversification strategy, including its central pillar of attracting new suppliers. The Government is designing a programme of targeted R&D to level the playing field for smaller suppliers, and we continue to consider all options.

Suppliers are themselves taking positive steps to support this agenda and a number of smaller suppliers have already announced new research facilities in the UK.

Esther McVey:

[3853]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when his Department plans to publish the Government's response to the consultation into the Electronic Communications Code.

Esther McVey:**[3855]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to include provisions in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill, announced in the Queen's Speech, to quicken the process by which wayleaves are granted.

Matt Warman:

We are currently analysing the responses to the consultation and will publish the Government response in due course. This will include our proposals for measures to ensure that the Electronic Communications Code continues to support the faster deployment of digital infrastructure. We expect any legislative measures to be taken forward in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill.

Chi Onwurah:**[5194]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 709 on Telecommunications: Infrastructure, for what reason legislative proposals were required in respect of a matter for private negotiation between operators and site providers; and if he will undertake an assessment on whether the fall in rents reflects the impact assessment.

Matt Warman:

The 2017 reforms to the Code reflected this government's view that the prices being paid for rights to install communications apparatus were too high and with digital communications becoming an increasingly critical part of daily life, needed to be addressed.

In the first instance, rental payments remain a matter for negotiation between the operator and landowner. The valuation framework contained in the Code is one applied by the courts where the parties are unable to reach a mutually acceptable agreement and the courts are asked to impose Code rights. In these circumstances the court will decide not only whether the requested rights should be imposed, but also what the terms of any subsequent agreement should be.

In those circumstances, the legislation provides that, for valuation purposes, the specific use of the land for telecommunications networks is disregarded. However, the landowner remains otherwise entitled to reasonable rental payments, as well as compensation for any loss or damage. We believe that framework strikes the right balance between the public need for digital communications and ensuring individual landowners are not left out of pocket for allowing their land to be used.

We have no plans to undertake an assessment of reductions in rents following the 2017 reforms in the near future. We were clear at the time the 2017 legislation was introduced that the changes would take time to achieve their intended effect, not only because the market would require time to adapt, but also because case law would need to be developed and the new provisions would not be immediately applied to existing agreements.

Our recent consultation makes it clear that the government is not revisiting the valuation regime introduced in 2017. However, our consultation does ask about whether changes are needed to support more collaborative negotiations, including the possible introduction of Alternative Dispute Resolution, which could help disagreements about rents to be dealt with more quickly and cheaply and ensure the aims of the 2017 reforms are realised.

■ **Telecommunications: Standards**

Anthony Mangnall:

[3162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the findings of the Telecommunications Diversification Taskforce, what plans he has to create an international digital infrastructure recommendations and standards alliance.

Matt Warman:

Increasing UK representation and participation in the international standards setting environment is vitally important in promoting secure, open and interoperable standards. To achieve these objectives, the Government is working closely with industry, the NCSC, Ofcom and a wide range of international partners.

Through the UK's G7 Presidency, the Government led positive conversations on standards with international partners, and will continue to work closely with like-minded partners in order to forge a consensus on these issues.

The Telecommunications Diversification Taskforce has provided detailed recommendations to government as it takes forward this work, and we will set out next steps in due course.

EDUCATION

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding is allocated per pupil in (a) high and (b) primary schools in Wakefield constituency.

Nick Gibb:

The schools block funding allocated for schools for financial year 2021/22 for Wakefield local authority is £4,502.36 per primary pupil and £5,755.73 per secondary pupil.

Further information on school funding statistics can be found at the following link, for which the latest available figures are for financial year 2020/21: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-funding-statistics/2020-21#dataDownloads-1>.

■ Apprentices: Merseyside

Damien Moore:

[3145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to encourage the uptake of apprenticeships in (a) Southport and (b) Sefton Borough.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships provide people with the opportunity to earn and learn the skills needed to start an exciting career in a wide range of industries, everything from artificial intelligence, archaeology, data science, business management, and banking. We want more people to benefit from high quality apprenticeships. Since May 2010, there have been 8,940 apprenticeship starts in Southport (constituency) and 30,760 in Sefton (local authority).

We are supporting employers to offer new apprenticeship opportunities by increasing the incentive payment to £3,000 for every new apprentice hired between 1 April and 30 September 2021 as part of the government's Plan for Jobs. We continue to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to enable Kickstart placements to turn into apprenticeships where that is the right thing for the employer and the young person.

In addition, we are supporting the largest ever expansion of traineeships and working with employers to develop new occupational traineeships in rail, construction and engineering which will create a pathway for young people to progress into apprenticeships or other employment. The government confirmed an additional £126 million in the latest budget to fund a further 43,000 traineeship places in the 2021/22 academic year, and we have extended the £1,000 incentive payments for employers who offer traineeship work placement opportunities to July 2022.

To encourage more young people to consider apprenticeships, we are promoting apprenticeships in schools across the country through our Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge programme. This free service provides schools and teachers with resources and interventions to help better educate young people about apprenticeships. In the Skills for Jobs white paper, published in January, we announced that we will be introducing a 3 point plan to enforce the Baker Clause, our requirement that all maintained schools and academies provide opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to visit schools to talk to all year 8 to 13 pupils. This includes creating clear minimum legal requirements, specifying who is to be given access to which pupils and when. This is an important step towards real choice for every pupil.

■ Children: Disability

Navendu Mishra:

[4729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on the (a) development and (b) education of children with disabilities; and what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that children who have fallen behind are able to catch up.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families is a priority for this government, and their educational, physical and mental wellbeing remains central to our cross-government response to the COVID-19 outbreak. We know that children and young people with SEND are disproportionately affected by being out of education, including missing out on important social interaction with their peers. That is why we kept schools open for vulnerable children, including those with an education, health and care plan, during periods of national lockdown.

We have made available £1.7 billion in funding to support education recovery. In June 2020, we announced a £1 billion recovery package, including a National Tutoring Programme and a Catch-up Premium for this academic year. In February 2021, we committed to further funding of £700 million to fund summer schools, expansion of our tutoring programmes and a Recovery Premium for next academic year. Funding will support pupils across early years settings, schools and providers of 16-19 education.

Both special schools and alternative provision (AP) will be able to access funding to provide summer schools and the National Tutoring Programme. We also recognise the additional costs associated with offering provision to pupils in specialist settings. Eligible pupils in special schools, special units in mainstream primary and secondary schools and AP settings will attract a higher rate of funding for summer schools. We have also consistently prioritised children who attend specialist settings by providing additional uplifts both in the 2020 Catch-up Premium and in the 2021 Recovery Premium funding.

In addition to summer schools, a broader programme of summer enrichment activities, including the Holiday Activities and Food programme, will be running to support children and young people and their families.

We are committed to ensuring that the National Tutoring Programme is as inclusive as possible. When selecting Tuition Partners for this academic year, departmental officials worked with the Education Endowment Foundation to ensure that tuition providers had the relevant experience working with children who have SEND in both mainstream and specialist settings. We have 26 providers that are able to support students with SEND, and 17 of these also able to support students in special school settings.

■ Pupils and Students: Protective Clothing**Hilary Benn:**[\[3798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what advice he received from Public Health England prior to his decision that from 17 May face coverings for pupils and students in classrooms or communal areas will no longer be recommended.

Nick Gibb:

Following the Step 3 announcement on 10 May, the Department published updated guidance for schools, which included updated advice on face coverings. The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

As the guidance outlines, from 17 May face coverings are no longer recommended for pupils and students in classrooms or communal areas in schools. Face coverings are also no longer recommended for staff in classrooms. The Department recommends that in all schools face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations outside of classrooms where social distancing is not possible.

Ahead of Step 3, the Department worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) and the Cabinet Office to consider a range of evidence, balancing both health and educational considerations. This included the latest available education data, latest data analysis on case rates in secondary school age children and the broader COVID-19 epidemiological position, as well as stakeholder intelligence from schools and further education (FE) colleges on their experiences of wearing face coverings in classrooms and any perceived effect on teaching, education, and communication.

The epidemiological picture overall has continued to improve since the full reopening of schools and FE colleges on 8 March and cases overall have continued to decline in the UK. As the four tests have been met it was appropriate to remove the recommendation to wear face coverings in schools. This was supported by PHE.

The reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be advised for a temporary period in response to particular localised outbreaks, including variants of concern. In all cases, any educational drawbacks should be balanced with the benefits of managing transmission.

Where head teachers have concerns on the use of face coverings in response to a particular local outbreak or variant of concern, they should seek the advice of their local Director of Public Health who will advise on whether the reintroduction of face coverings for pupils, students or staff may be needed for a temporary period.

Our policy on face coverings and the system of controls is kept under review and is informed by the latest scientific and medical advice from PHE.

■ School Leaving: Merseyside**Damien Moore:****[3146]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of trends in the number of white working-class boys leaving school without qualifications in (a) Southport and (b) Sefton Borough.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held centrally in the form requested. There is no official definition for the term “working class” and it is not used by the Department for Education in formal statistics.

Young people can leave a school setting at age 16 or age 18. National statistics are published on the proportion of young people achieving level 2 qualifications (level 2 is 5 (or more) GCSEs at grades 9-4/A*-C or equivalent) by ages 16 to 19. Figures are published by pupil characteristics including free school meal (FSM) eligibility which can be used as an indicative measure for low income. Information provided is for those not achieving level 2 but that does not mean they left school with no qualifications.

In the Sefton local authority, the total proportion of 16 year olds not achieving level 2 is 37% in the 2019/20 academic year compared with 30% five years ago. Looking at those who were eligible for FSM, 65% had not achieved level 2 compared with 50% five years ago.

At age 18 in Sefton, the total proportion not achieving level 2 was 22% in 2019/20 compared with 15% five years ago. Looking at those who were eligible for FSM, 47% had not achieved level 2 compared with 30% five years ago.

The accompanying table shows a five year time series for both ages and includes gender and those not eligible for FSM. Comparable figures are not available for Southport or by ethnicity.

National estimates which show level 2 attainment by gender, FSM status and ethnicity are available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/level-2-and-3-attainment-by-young-people-aged-19/2019-20>. These detailed breakdowns are not published by local authority.

The Department remains committed to providing world class education, training and care for everyone, whatever their background, and taking the action needed to address disparities.

Attachments:

1. 1346_table
[PQ3146_table_showing_young_people_Sefton_not_achieving_level_two.xls]

■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

Janet Daby:

[3155]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing further funding for schools to deal with the costs of (a) insurance, (b) sick pay, (c) supply teachers and (d) other costs associated with staff sickness during the outbreak of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

School budgets are rising by £2.6 billion in the 2020-21 financial year and will increase by a further £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23, compared to 2019-20.

As part of the three-year increase to core funding – the biggest in a decade – schools have continued to receive their core funding throughout the COVID-19 outbreak,

regardless of any periods of reduced attendance. This will ensure they can continue to pay their staff and meet other regular financial commitments.

Workforce absence and community transmission rates have reduced since the autumn term when we introduced the COVID-19 Workforce Fund to support schools and colleges with high staff absences and significant financial pressures to remain open. We will continue to monitor the situation.

■ Student Wastage: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[2969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) completion and (b) drop out rates in universities in the last 12 months.

Michelle Donelan:

Official Statistics on student retention^[1] are published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as part of the UK Performance Indicators:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation>.

The latest statistics published by HESA refer to students entering higher education (HE) in the 2018/19 academic year and whether they continued in the following academic year (2019/20). Any impacts from the COVID-19 outbreak on students continuing their studies will not be apparent until early next year, when HESA will publish figures for 2019/20 students who entered HE in the 2019/20 academic year and whether they are continuing in the 2020/21 academic year.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, ad-hoc statistics have been published by the Student Loans Company (SLC) on withdrawal notifications received from HE providers. These statistics, which give a more timely indication of retention in HE, are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-in-year-student-withdrawal-notifications-academic-year-201819-to-202021-up-to-21022021>. These are in-year statistics on the number of notifications of student withdrawals provided to the SLC by HE providers for the academic years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. They cover withdrawals from 1 August until 21 February for each academic year. They show that the SLC has not seen an increase in student withdrawal notifications for the purposes of student finance this academic year, compared to the previous 2 years.

Whilst withdrawal notifications are lower than previous years, caution should be applied when drawing conclusions, as these are early-in-year figures based on information provided to the SLC from HE providers.

We have set up a Higher Education Taskforce, involving representatives from across the government and the HE sector. The taskforce meets regularly to explore the challenges currently facing the sector as it continues to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. We have utilised the taskforce to discuss the work HE providers are doing to support students, and prevent students from leaving their course before completion.

[1] Covering both (a) projected completion rates based on the latest progression patterns at each provider (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation/table-t5>) and (b) non-continuation rates defined as students leaving their higher education studies and not continuing following their year of entry (<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation/table-t3>).

■ Students: Fees and Charges

Chi Onwurah:

[2968]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding has been made available to universities to cover tuition fee reductions for (a) domestic and EU and (b) international students.

Michelle Donelan:

Universities and other higher education (HE) providers are autonomous and responsible for setting their own fees within maximum fee limits set by regulations, where applicable. The government has been clear that universities are expected to maintain quality and academic standards and the quantity of tuition should not drop.

The sector has put in significant resources and worked hard to provide and prepare learning materials for this academic year and there are some fantastic and innovative approaches to delivering high-quality online learning.

However, we have made an additional £85 million of student hardship funding available to HE providers in the 2020/21 academic year.

Providers have flexibility in how they distribute the funding to students, in a way that best prioritises those in greatest need. The funding can be distributed to a wide population of students, including postgraduates (whether taught or research) and international students.

This money is in addition to the £256 million of Student Premium funding HE providers are able draw on this academic year towards student hardship funds.

We know that not all students will face financial hardship. The current measures aim to target support for students in greatest need and the government continues to monitor the situation going forward to look at what impact this funding is having.

To ensure the HE student finance system remains financially sustainable, only those students who fall within the categories of eligible students in regulations qualify for home fee status and are subject to maximum fee limits for their UK courses. HE providers can charge higher fees for international students who are not eligible for home fee status. Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of fees will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between the provider and student.

The government has already announced that maximum fees in the 2021/22 academic year will remain at £9,250 for a standard full-time course. We also intend to freeze the maximum tuition fee caps for 2022/23, which will reduce debt levels for students

compared to allowing fee caps to increase with inflation and help to keep the cost of higher education under control. This will be the fifth year in succession that maximum fees have been frozen.

■ Students: Housing

Chi Onwurah:

[2967]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to secure rent rebates for students in privately managed halls of residence.

Michelle Donelan:

The government plays no role in the provision of student residential accommodation. Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. Whether a student is entitled to a refund or to an early release from their contract will depend on the specific contractual arrangements between them and their provider.

This has been a very difficult time for students. We welcome the decision from many universities and accommodation providers to offer rent rebates for students who needed to stay away from their term-time address, and we urge all large providers to join them and offer students partial refunds. We encourage universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear and have the interests of students at heart.

We recognise that in these exceptional circumstances some students may face financial hardship. The department has worked with the Office for Students to clarify that providers are able to use existing funds, worth around £256 million for this academic year, towards hardship support. The government has made an additional £85 million of student hardship funding available to higher education providers in the 2020/21 academic year.

If students have concerns about their accommodation fees, they should first raise their concerns with their accommodation provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, and their higher education provider is involved in the provision of the accommodation, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint. If a student needs help, organisations such as Citizens Advice offer a free service, providing information and support.

If a student thinks their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice as long as their provider is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/>, <https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and <https://www.rla.org.uk/about/nrla-code-of-practice.shtml>.

■ Students: Mental Health

Chi Onwurah:

[2965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on student mental health.

Michelle Donelan:

Student mental health is a key priority for this government and since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, I have stressed the importance of protecting student and staff wellbeing. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges due to the disruption and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. Universities are not only experts in their student population, but also best placed to identify the needs of their particular student body. We continue to work closely with the higher education sector to promote good practice.

While it is for higher education (HE) providers to determine what welfare and counselling services they need to provide to their students to offer that support, the government is proactive in promoting good practice in this area. We continue to work closely with Universities UK on embedding the Stepchange programme within the sector. Stepchange calls on HE leaders to adopt mental health as a strategic priority and take a whole-institution approach, embedding it across all policies, cultures, curricula and practice. The Stepchange programme relaunched in March 2020 as the Mentally Healthy Universities programme. Further information can be found here: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/stepchange-mhu.aspx>. The university Mental Health Charter, announced in June 2018, is backed by the government and led by the sector. The charter, developed in collaboration with students, staff and partner organisations, aims to drive up standards of practice, including leadership, early intervention and data collection. Further information about the charter can be accessed here: <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html>.

I have engaged with universities on this issue and have written to Vice Chancellors on numerous occasions during the past year, most recently last month, outlining that student welfare should remain a priority and have convened a working group of representatives from the HE and health sectors to specifically address the current and pressing issues that students are facing during the outbreak.

My hon. Friend, the Minister for Children and Families, and I have also convened a Mental Health in Education Action Group to drive action to mitigate the impact of the outbreak on the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff in nurseries, schools, colleges and universities.

We have worked with the Office for Students (OfS) to provide Student Space, a dedicated mental health and wellbeing platform for students, which has been funded by up to £3 million from the OfS in the 2020/21 academic year. We have also asked the OfS to allocate £15 million towards student mental health in 2021/22 through proposed reforms to Strategic Priorities Grant funding to help address the challenges to student mental health posed by the transition to university, given the increasing

demand for mental health services. This will target those students in greatest need of such services, including vulnerable groups and hard to reach students.

■ **Swimming: Children**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [3998]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of Swim England's recent findings that a quarter of a million children are unable to swim the length of a standard swimming pool on water safety risks on rivers and lakes over the summer period.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [4671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of primary school children's water safety education in the context of school and leisure centre closures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Water safety is a vital life skill, which is why it is a mandatory part of the curriculum for Physical Education at primary school. The Department has discussed the 'Impact of Coronavirus on school swimming and water safety' report with Swim England. We recognise that children have missed out on opportunities to learn to swim due to COVID-19 restrictions and we are working closely with Swim England and other swimming and water safety organisations to support pupils returning safely to swimming and promoting water safety education.

This includes an additional £10.1 million to improve use of school sport facilities, including swimming pools. Water safety education is a priority for the summer period to enable children to know how to be safe and in around water. This is why the Department has made new virtual water safety lessons available through Oak National Academy and will support the Royal Life Saving Society UK's Drowning Prevention Week 2021.

■ **Universities: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq: [3079]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the (a) scientific and (b) medical evidential basis for the decision to restrict face-to-face teaching in universities until 17 May 2021.

We have worked extremely closely with scientists and the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) to understand and model various scenarios to inform our plan to re-open the country without putting unsustainable pressure on the NHS. We have also examined economic and social data to get a balanced understanding of the impacts of carefully easing restrictions. The government has also carefully considered data on the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on ethnic minority communities, the vulnerable, the young, and low-income groups.

The government considered all the scientific advice and models that suggested that allowing additional indoor mixing at an earlier stage when prevalence was higher and fewer people had been vaccinated could result in significantly higher numbers of infections and that is why restrictions outdoors were eased before restrictions on most indoor activity. As the number of people vaccinated increased, we have been able to take steps to ease restrictions further.

A wealth of data, papers and evidence is being published at the same time as the roadmap, to ensure transparency on the information the government has had available to it in reaching its decisions. This includes the following information from Public Health England:

Information on vaccine effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccination

A surveillance report with a more detailed summary of the findings so far from Sarscov2 Immunity and Reinfection Evaluation (SIREN) and Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI)-Watch.

A technical paper on the SIREN analysis being published (as a pre-print) by the Lancet.

The papers from SAGE include:

Minutes from the last 4 SAGE meetings.

Children's Task and Finish Group paper: 'COVID-19 in higher education settings', 10 February 2021.

3 papers from Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M) with a summary of modelling on scenarios for easing restrictions, together with the supporting papers from modellers at Warwick University and Imperial College London.

A collection of papers from SPI-M on "relaxation of non-pharmaceutical interventions and the re-opening of schools", and the Scientific Pandemic Insights Group on Behaviours (SPI-B) (the behavioural experts' sub-group of SAGE) on return to campus for the spring term and the risk of increased transmission from student migration

The return of students was not considered in isolation but as part of the government's overall roadmap. All areas included in the roadmap (as well as higher education) are informed by advice from the scientific and medical experts. Additional papers published by SAGE in relation to Step 3 of the roadmap can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sage-meetings-may-2021> (opens in a new tab).

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Animal Welfare: Transport**

Neil Parish: [\[2954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that legislative changes on animal welfare in transport are informed by the most up-to-date science and technology.

Neil Parish: [\[2955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to (a) commission and (b) fund further research to assess animal welfare in transport using modern broiler genotypes and transport systems.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to improving the welfare standards of all animal journeys. We are continuously assessing the available scientific evidence on improving animal welfare during transport and are committed to commissioning new research where it is needed in order to develop the evidence base further.

We launched a Call for Evidence, in 2018, on controlling live exports for slaughter and improving animal welfare during transport and, that same year, commissioned Scotland's Rural University College and the University of Edinburgh to produce a systematic review of the evidence on welfare aspects of the transport of live animals.

The Government asked the then Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC, now Animal Welfare Committee) to provide an opinion on improving the welfare of animals during transport. FAWC considered the evidence obtained from the Call for Evidence; the report of the systematic review; as well as their engagement with stakeholders before submitting their opinion and recommendations.

We launched a consultation in England and Wales in 2020 on improvements to the domestic welfare in transport regime, informed by the recommendations from FAWC's report. We will shortly be publishing our response to the consultation and outlining how we will take reforms forward.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Agriculture

Kate Griffiths: [\[3168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of *Mycoplasma bovis* on the farming industry.

Victoria Prentis:

There is an ongoing assessment for the detection of, and disease due to, *Mycoplasma bovis* and other respiratory pathogens. This is conducted both by the network of veterinary investigation centres throughout the UK, and via samples sent by private veterinarians to Government laboratories and private laboratories.

Mycoplasma bovis is still considered to be a significant pathogen in bovine respiratory disease.

A survey is due to be published by the UK Ruminant Health and Welfare Group. This comprehensive survey of cattle farmers and cattle professionals (veterinarians and farm advisors) asked 530 cattle farmers to rank their disease concerns. *Mycoplasma bovis* was ranked 7th most important by professionals, 12th by dairy farmers and 9th by beef farmers.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has a dedicated and specialist *Mycoplasma* group at its Weybridge Laboratory. This group advises veterinarians in other countries about *Mycoplasma bovis* and other *Mycoplasmas*. Respiratory samples from across England and Wales are sent to this group and the testing monitors for other *Mycoplasmas*, including exotic *Mycoplasmas*. This includes *Mycoplasmas* that cause Contagious Bovine Pleuro-pneumonia, which is a notifiable disease.

The results from testing across the network of veterinary investigation centres and partner post-mortem providers in England, Wales and Scotland are collated by a Veterinary Investigation Diagnosis Analysis (VIDA) database. The VIDA results indicate an increase in GB incidents (as a percentage of diagnosable submissions) from 3.5% in 2016 to 5.5% in 2020. Disease trends are summarised in the APHA Quarterly Reports which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cattle-gb-disease-surveillance-and-emerging-threats-reports>.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Screening

Kate Griffiths:

[3169]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what testing facilities are available for *Mycoplasma Bovis* within the UK.

Victoria Prentis:

There are various testing facilities in the UK and more than one testing method. Post-mortem examination and sampling is the most effective way of testing for this pathogen, but blood samples and nasal or tracheal samples can be used in the live animal.

The testing facilities include:

1. Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) Veterinary Investigation Centres in England and Wales
2. APHA *Mycoplasma* department
3. Scotland's Rural College Veterinary Investigation Centres and laboratories in Scotland
4. Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Veterinary Investigation Centres and laboratories in Northern Ireland

5. APHA Partner Post-mortem Providers in England and Wales
6. Various private laboratories in UK for samples collected by private veterinarians on-farm

The GB network of testing facilities can be found here: <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/vet-gateway/surveillance/diagnostic/national-network.htm>.

■ Environment Protection: British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell:

[2913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding has been made available by his Department for environment projects in the UK Overseas Territories in each of the last five years.

Rebecca Pow:

The funding made available by Defra to environmental projects in the UK Overseas Territories through Darwin Plus and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund for each of the last five years is set out below.

YEAR	FUNDING (£M)
2016-7	3.1
2017-8	5.6
2018-9	3.8
2019-20	5.8
2020-21	5.7

■ Export Health Certificates

Gareth Thomas:

[2873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of official (a) vets and (b) inspectors available to certify export health certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The numbers of Official Veterinarians (OVs) authorised to carry out export certification under each Official Control Qualification (Veterinary) (OCQ(V)), as recorded by the Animal and Plant Health Agency on 19/05/21, are listed below. Note that an OV must hold the relevant OCQ to carry out export health certification for a particular commodity type, and that OVs may hold more than one qualification.

COURSE	ENGLAND	WALES	SCOTLAND	TOTAL
AX - Avian	155	6	34	195

COURSE	ENGLAND	WALES	SCOTLAND	TOTAL
Exports				
CA - Companion Animals	6257	458	648	7363
EQ - Equine Exports	509	21	21	551
EX - Exports General	212	29	41	282
FA - Farm Animal Exports	8	0	2	10
GX - Germinal Products Exports	100	8	12	120
PX - Product Exports	1518	176	224	1918
SX - Small Animal Exports	331	40	83	454
UX - Ungulate Exports	584	89	161	834

There are also 1505 Food Competent Certifying Officers working across Local Authorities who can certify some exports and therefore contribute towards certification capacity.

■ Farmers: Government Assistance

John Redwood:

[2851]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to bring forward his proposals to assist UK farmers in increasing food output and improving productivity.

Victoria Prentis:

In November 2020 we published the [Path to Sustainable Farming: An Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024](#). This document sets out our plans for how, in England, we will create a renewed agricultural sector, producing healthy food for consumption at home and abroad, where farms can be profitable and economically sustainable without subsidy whilst contributing significantly to environmental goals including addressing climate change.

In autumn 2021 we will launch the Farming Investment Fund, formed of two strands. The Farming Equipment and Technology Fund will support smaller investments from

a prescribed list of items; we are currently reviewing this to ensure it has an offer attractive to the horticulture sector. The Farming Transformation Fund will support more substantial investments in equipment, technology or infrastructure, including, on-farm reservoirs and related infrastructure, vital to the future success of the horticulture sector.

■ Food: Marketing

John Redwood:

[\[2852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help promote UK food at home and abroad.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is stepping up delivery of its manifesto commitment to build demand and promote British food and drink both home and abroad.

We are working with the sector to raise domestic and international awareness of the UK's growing reputation for high-quality food and drink produced to high standards of food safety, animal welfare and sustainability. This will provide a catalyst for growth for all regions of the UK and increase global recognition of the UK as an innovative food nation.

We are supporting the UK's farmers and growers to increase domestic production through the Agriculture Act 2020, which offers financial assistance for producers who are starting to grow fruit and vegetables or are seeking to improve their productivity.

By showcasing the UK's excellent food and drink, we will encourage consumers to explore more of our local and regional products, including iconic geographical indications (GIs), such as Welsh lamb and Cornish clotted cream.

We are refreshing public sector food procurement to place a greater emphasis on local, seasonal and sustainable produce. This will support local business and can play a key role in promoting healthy diets and reducing environmental impacts of food supply. A consultation on strengthening the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF) will be launched later this year.

We have supported the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), Seafish and other organisations as they develop consumer-facing marketing campaigns for the meat, dairy and seafood sectors. One example was our support for a campaign by VegPower that encouraged the public to buy local, seasonal vegetables. Additionally, we supported the Seafish 'Love Seafood' campaign to raise consumer awareness of fresh seafood caught in UK waters and connecting communities with local producers.

To support this range of domestic promotion initiatives we are also providing food and drink companies with advice and tools to build export capability. The Department for International Trade (DIT) recently launched their Open Doors campaign with a focus on the food and drink sector. This provides companies with access to online tutorials,

webinars, mentoring and specialist advice to help them capitalise on export opportunities across the world.

Defra works in tandem with the Department for International Trade to deliver the Food is GREAT campaign, which helps businesses to succeed in overseas markets by building global recognition of UK excellence in food and drink. Food is GREAT is a key element of the joint Defra and DIT agri-food 'bounce back' package of trade support and promotion measures announced last June to help support businesses that have been impacted by coronavirus.

The Food is GREAT campaign is focused on priority markets, including the USA, China, Japan and the UAE. Activity is being planned across all priority markets for the coming year, where we will work with UK businesses and UK overseas posts to promote the best of UK food and drink on the international stage.

■ **Pet Theft Task Force**

Luke Pollard: [3152]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the remit and terms of reference of the Pet Theft Task Force announced on 8 May 2021.

Luke Pollard: [3153]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish the membership of the Pet Theft Task Force.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government recognises the emotional trauma which the theft of a much-loved pet can cause, and the impact the issue is having on pet owners and families. As with all other crime, we believe that pet theft must be taken seriously, investigated and, where appropriate, taken through the courts and met with tough sentences.

The Government launched the pet theft taskforce on 8 May 2021. As part of that launch the taskforce's terms of reference were published and are available here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/pet-theft-taskforce-terms-of-reference. The terms of reference lay out the background to the taskforce's establishment as well as information on its objectives, or remit, and outcomes.

Membership of the Pet Theft Taskforce (Ministers) comprises the Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary, and Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. This group steers, and is informed by, the Pet Theft Taskforce (Officials) comprising officials from the three departments along with operational partners.

■ **Rodents: Trapping**

Elliot Colburn: [3172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to review the (a) sale and (b) use of rodent glue traps across the UK; and whether he has plans to (i) introduce an outright ban, (ii) prohibit public sale and use and (iii) regulate use by other operators of those traps.

Rebecca Pow:

The use of glue traps is being considered very closely as part of the Government's continued drive to maintain the highest animal welfare standards in the world.

We will look to restrict the use of glue traps as a means of pest control to help make sure rodents are despatched in a humane manner. Glue traps can cause immense suffering to rodents and other animals that inadvertently fall victim to their use.

Anyone using glue traps already has a responsibility under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to act within the law to ensure their activities do not cause any unnecessary suffering.

■ Timber: Imports**John Redwood:**[\[2850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to set targets for substituting domestic wood production for imports as the forest area is expanded in the UK.

Rebecca Pow:

By delivering our England Trees Action Plan we aim to at least treble planting rates in England, supporting our manifesto aim to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of the parliament.

Planting and establishing more trees and woodlands will play an important role in supporting the green economy, levelling up rural areas and creating thousands of new jobs. Using UK grown timber can reduce our carbon footprint from imports and reduce emissions by replacing carbon-intensive materials.

Our England Trees Action Plan includes measures to encourage both supply and demand for UK grown timber, including a new Forestry Innovation Fund which will provide financial support to develop innovative timber products, and use of procurement policies to increase public demand for sustainably sourced timber.

■ Timber: Production**John Redwood:**[\[2849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much of the planned additional woodland will be for sustainable wood production.

Rebecca Pow:

By delivering our England Trees Action Plan we aim to at least treble planting rates in England, supporting our manifesto commitment to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by the end of the parliament.

In England we will predominantly fund the establishment of native broadleaf woodlands at a large scale, but also support well-designed and managed majority conifer and mixed woodlands. Sustainable wood production can be carried out by land managers in all types of woodlands, in line with the UK Forestry Standard for sustainable forest management.

■ Water: Standards

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[3166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to improve water quality in shellfishing areas to meet class A standards.

Victoria Prentis:

A review of shellfish waters undertaken by the Food Standards Agency has resulted in 15 sites securing seasonal Class A status for between three and ten months of the year, and an additional 3 harvesting areas were upgraded to a year-round Class A status. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is also considering changes to the classification system to ensure that classifications are awarded in a proportionate and pragmatic way while continuing to ensure high levels of public health protection. The FSA's focus is on proposals that could impact harvesting areas that would allow more businesses to export live bivalve molluscs to the EU from Class A waters.

Longer term improvements to the quality of shellfish waters are set out in Environment Agency's Shellfish Action Plans. The EA assesses the reason for waters not achieving the microbial standard and develops a programme of appropriate measures to address the failures. These improvement measures are then taken forward by working with water companies and the agricultural sector in the relevant catchment.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[3110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions the Government has had with the US Administration on its decision to withdraw its armed forces from Afghanistan.

Nigel Adams:

The US and Taliban agreement of 29 February 2020 set out a timetable for all international troops to leave Afghanistan. This was expected to be 1 May 2021. The UK has been in regular contact with the US on many issues, including Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary discussed Afghanistan with US Secretary Blinken ahead of the US and NATO announcement on 14 April. We remain in close contact, including on our future approach. Most recently, Afghanistan was discussed by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary with Secretary of State Blinken on 4 May and 3 May respectively.

■ Albania: Coronavirus**Dr Matthew Offord:**[\[5188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what practical assistance his Department is providing to the residents of Camp Ashraf 3 in Albania in tackling the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

We have received no requests for assistance for the residents of Camp Ashraf 3. Albania has received Coronavirus vaccines through the COVAX facility as well as from donations from regional partners. Albania has also purchased vaccines itself.

■ Anoosheh Ashoori**Jim Shannon:**[\[2987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to progress the case of Anoosheh Ashoori.

James Cleverly:

We remain committed to securing the immediate and permanent release of Anoosheh Ashoori and arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran so that they can return to the UK and be reunited with their families. Our Embassy in Tehran continues to request consular access to Mr Ashoori and we have been supporting his family since being made aware of his detention. The Foreign Secretary regularly raises the UK's serious concerns about Iran's practice of detaining foreign and dual nationals directly with Foreign Minister Zarif, most recently on 3 April, and the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Rouhani, most recently on 10 March. The Ambassador in Tehran consistently raises the dual national detainees with the Iran authorities, most recently on 16 May. We remain in close contact with the family on this matter.

■ Armenia: Azerbaijan**Alex Sobel:**[\[5259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will support President Macron's call for Azerbaijan to withdraw forces which have breached the Armenian border in the Syunik Province.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is closely monitoring the situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border following an increase in tensions. At the OSCE Permanent Council on 20 May we welcomed the ongoing communication between the parties and urged them to de-escalate the situation peacefully.

■ Armenia: Azerbaijan

Feryal Clark:

[3192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the implications for his policies of the recent developments on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan; and what steps he is taking to call for regional peace between those countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is closely monitoring the situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border following an increase in tensions. We welcome the ongoing communication between the parties and urge them to use this opportunity to de-escalate the situation peacefully.

■ Colombia: Arrests

Ian Lavery:

[4608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports by human rights organisations in Colombia of arbitrary arrests during national strike protests which started in that country on 28 April 2021.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains concerned about reports of human rights violations in Colombia. The fundamental human right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed. Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since protests began. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to express our concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse.

We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any excessive use of force, and take appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints thoroughly investigated. We will continue to work closely with the UN Verification Mission, and the UN Office of the High Representative for Human Rights in Colombia, as well as the wider international community, in support of their efforts to reduce tensions and promote dialogue.

■ Colombia: Freedom of Association and Protest

Navendu Mishra:

[4735]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) the right to protest and (b) freedom of association is respected in Colombia.

Wendy Morton:

We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and that the right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed. Colombia is

a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since protests began. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to express our concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse.

We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any excessive use of force, and take appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints thoroughly investigated. We will continue to work closely with the UN Verification Mission, and the UN Office of the High Representative for Human Rights in Colombia, as well as the wider international community, in support of their efforts to reduce tensions and promote dialogue.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Alan Brown:

[\[3040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assistance consular services are providing to UK citizens abroad to help them access covid-19 vaccines.

Nigel Adams:

We are closely following other countries' plans to roll out vaccines. We are providing bespoke information through Travel Advice pages and 'Living In' guides on gov.uk to inform British nationals of healthcare options available to them and how they can receive a vaccine in the country where they live. The UK is playing a leading international role to ensure global access to COVID-19 vaccines. For example, we have contributed £548 million to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment to ensure that the 92 most vulnerable economies have access to COVID-19 vaccines and I am delighted that this is starting to deliver.

Munira Wilson:

[\[4045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what provisions his Department has made to pay for covid-19 vaccines for UK citizens who are temporarily abroad and have been offered a vaccination by that country's authorities.

Nigel Adams:

Wherever possible British nationals should aim to be vaccinated in the country where they live. The FCDO does not pay medical costs for British nationals abroad. We are monitoring carefully other countries' plans to roll out the vaccine and providing bespoke information through Travel Advice and 'Living in' guides on gov.uk to inform British nationals of healthcare options available to them. British nationals should keep up to date on the national vaccination roll out plan where they live, including on who is eligible.

■ Israel: Defence

Andrew Rosindell:

[2906]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the UK's policy on Israel's right to self-defence.

James Cleverly:

The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in his calls to Israeli Foreign Minister Ashkenazi on 11 and 16 May, and with Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh on 12 May. I spoke to the Israeli Ambassador, and to the Palestinian Head of Mission in London on 19 May, to urge them to de-escalate and restore calm. The UK is clear that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life.

■ Israel: Property Rights

Andrew Rosindell:

[2905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on ensuring that due process is followed when dealing with disputes over property rights in that region.

James Cleverly:

On 8 May I communicated our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions, which in all but the most exceptional cases are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

■ Jonathan Taylor

Kevin Hollinrake:

[4641]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the UK whistleblower Jonathan Taylor's (a) application to appeal the extradition ruling being refused by the Supreme Court in Croatia and (b) detention of more than ten months in Croatia, whether he has had discussions with his Monegasque counterparts on alternative ways of proceeding regarding Mr Taylor's situation.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has raised Mr Taylor's case. I spoke to the Monegasque Foreign Minister and the Croatian Secretary of State for European Affairs on 13 November and sought assurances that both authorities would treat Mr Taylor fairly and give full

consideration to the whistle-blowing activities Mr Taylor has reported. Monaco provided direct assurances to Croatia in January. On 12 and 13 April, our Ambassador in Croatia spoke to the Croatian authorities to understand the latest timelines for court action and to reiterate the importance of fair treatment.

On 22 April, I spoke again to the Croatian State Secretary for European Affairs and reiterated the assurances made in November.

Consular officials are in regular contact with the Croatian courts to ensure that we understand the process being followed.

■ **Mohammed al-Roken**

Peter Dowd:

[\[3011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had discussions with his Emirati counterpart on (a) the health of Mohammed al-Roken in response to the covid-19 pandemic and (b) his unconditional release upon completion of his full sentence on 17 July 2022.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of reports concerning the detention of Mohammed al-Roken. The UK urges all countries to comply with their human rights obligations. Our close relationship with the United Arab Emirates allows us to discuss important issues such as human rights. We consistently underline the importance of political freedoms globally. This includes respect for the right to peaceful protest, the rule of law, and freedom of speech, the press, and assembly. Where the UK has cause for concern, we raise these concerns at official and Ministerial level.

■ **Myanmar: Rohingya**

Sir Mike Penning:

[\[3818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the Rohingya population remaining in Rakhine province, Myanmar; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

The UK estimates there are around 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Rakhine State (126,000 of whom have been confined to camps since 2012): they face an increasingly dire situation. There have been fewer clashes in Rakhine since November 2020, but the conflict dynamics in Rakhine remain potentially volatile. The coup has made humanitarian operations difficult and contributed to food shortfalls. This comes on top of the challenges brought by COVID and conflict over the last year. We are in close contact with networks on the ground in Rakhine to monitor risks of atrocities, human rights violations and deterioration in the humanitarian and health situation in camps and villages.

We continue to regularly raise the challenges facing the Rohingya on the international stage, most recently in the UN Security Council Presidential Statement agreed on 10 March.

■ Myanmar: Sanctions

Carla Lockhart:

[\[4747\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of sanctions imposed as part of the Government response to the ongoing political and humanitarian situation in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is a longstanding supporter of sanctions on the Myanmar military. Since the start of the coup, under the UK autonomous Myanmar and Global Human Rights regimes we have sanctioned nine individuals and three entities relating to the military. Additionally the Myanmar regulations prohibit the provision of military related services, including the provision of technical assistance, to or for the benefit of the Tatmadaw. We work closely with partners to pressure those who have not implemented such systems. Our approach to sanctions is to pursue targeted sanctions, this ensures that we are designating high impact targets whilst remaining committed to the principle of 'do no harm' with sanctions, to ensure that any measures balance the risk of disproportionately affecting innocent people. By working with partners such as the EU, US and Canada to sanction military officers and military owned conglomerates we have been able to put pressure on economic interests and also send a signal to the international community that we oppose the actions of the military. We are exploring all options to put further pressure on their economic interests.

■ Nagorno Karabakh: Cultural Heritage

Feryal Clark:

[\[3190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the Government of Azerbaijan on reports of the (a) protection of Armenian cultural heritage sites in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and (b) cases of destruction of those sites by Azerbaijani forces; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

I have emphasised the importance of protecting all cultural heritage sites to both the Armenian and Azerbaijani Governments, including during my visit to the region in February. The UK Ambassador to Azerbaijan has also raised this issue with representatives of the Azerbaijani Government. We continue to underline our support for the efforts of UNESCO.

■ Overseas Aid: Mines Advisory Group

Layla Moran:

[\[5257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of reducing Official Development Assistance funding to the Mines Advisory Group on the people's lives in countries where that charity operates.

Nigel Adams:

The FCDO's aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against the challenging financial context of COVID-19. Officials considered any impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities and people from other protected groups, when developing advice to Ministers. The FCDO carried out a central Equalities Impact Assessment which looked at our bilateral country spending.

As the Foreign Secretary said at the International Development Committee on 22 April, the FCDO has been engaging with NGOs and others and will be listening to feedback on the plan set out. We are working closely with the Mines Advisory Group to allocate demining funding in a way that maximises impact for people affected by mines.

■ Overseas Aid: UK Partnerships for Health Systems**Layla Moran:**[\[5258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department made an assessment of the potential effect of suspending Official Development Assistance funding to the UK Partnerships for Health Systems programme on efforts to tackle the covid-19 pandemic in developing countries prior to that decision being taken.

Wendy Morton:

The aid budget has been allocated in accordance with UK strategic priorities against a challenging financial climate of COVID. Officials considered any impact on women and girls, the most marginalised and vulnerable, people with disabilities and people from other protected groups, when developing advice to Ministers.

■ Seas and Oceans: Treaties**Ben Lake:**[\[3100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) parliamentary and (b) public engagement on the UN Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction process to negotiate a treaty covering the high seas.

James Duddridge:

Further to my answer given on 21 May 2021 to questions 851 and 852, Lord Goldsmith, the Minister of State for the Pacific and the Environment, who leads on UK international ocean policy, regularly discusses the BBNJ Agreement in his engagement with parliamentarians and public stakeholders and in his speeches on biodiversity and ocean protection. The draft text is complex and technical and the UK delegation actively engages key stakeholders including in the NGO, marine science, academic and bio-industry community in the UK. The negotiations themselves take place at the United Nations in New York, are broadcast on UN TV and accredited

observer organisations can participate. UK and international environmental organisations are fully aware of the UK's role and objectives.

■ **Tunisia: Coronavirus**

Damien Moore:

[R] [\[3143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support the Government is providing to Tunisia in their covid-19 vaccine roll out.

James Cleverly:

The UK is committed to rapid equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. We are among the largest donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), committing £548 million which leveraged through match funding \$1 billion from other donors in 2020. This support to COVAX has been critical to it supplying COVID-19 vaccines to over 120 countries and economies.

Tunisia is supported by the COVAX AMC, which has so far delivered over 350,000 vaccines to Tunisia.

■ **Violence: Females**

Imran Ahmad Khan:

[\[4074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much his Department spent on ending violence against women and girls in 2020.

Wendy Morton:

The latest data on UK ODA spend was published in the Statistics on International Development: Provisional UK Aid Spend 2020 document on 8 April 2021. A full breakdown of 2020 spend by sector code (including violence against women and girls) will be published in autumn 2021.

2019 spend data shows that a total of £68.9 million of UK ODA was spent on violence against women and girls, £36.2 million of which was through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development.

■ **West Africa: Food Supply**

Kim Johnson:

[\[3197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to support communities facing acute food insecurity in West Africa.

James Duddridge:

In September 2020, the Foreign Secretary launched a Call to Action to Prevent Famine. The UK Government has since pledged £180 million to tackle food insecurity and famine risk, providing aid to more than seven million vulnerable people in some of the world's most dangerous places, including in West Africa. As the Integrated Review makes clear, the UK will continue to prioritise humanitarian preparedness and response, especially food security and famine prevention.

The UK Government is providing a substantial package of assistance to North East Nigeria, worth £400 million over five years (2017-2022), including food assistance for up to 1.5 million people. In the Sahel, we are spending up to £163 million between 2019-21 to respond to food insecurity and other acute humanitarian needs. This support targets the G5 Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. It includes support to over 640,000 people with food assistance through our support to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to the World Food Programme.

■ West Africa: Food Supply and Nutrition

Kim Johnson:

[\[3196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of food and nutrition insecurity situation in West Africa.

James Duddridge:

According to Integrated Phase Classification Food Security data, there are over 22.2 million people in West Africa and the Sahel who are experiencing a crisis level of food insecurity or worse. This includes 1.3 million people living at an emergency level of food insecurity, the majority of whom are in North East Nigeria. In November 2020, the UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, visited North East Nigeria where there is a risk of famine in some areas. In April 2021, I visited Nigeria and discussed the situation in the North East with humanitarian agencies and international organisations and partners. The UK Government is providing a substantial package of assistance to the North East, worth £400 million over five years (2017-2022), including food assistance for up to 1.5 million people

This year, the Sahel is facing the greatest number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in a decade. Recent food insecurity projections for the Sahel G5 countries, that is Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, are that between January and May 2021 some 6 million people will be in severe food insecurity. This is likely to increase to 8.7 million between June and August this year. We are spending up to £163 million between 2019-21 to respond to food insecurity and other acute humanitarian needs across the Sahel.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Borderline Substances Advisory Committee

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the (a) annual budget, (b) number of staff and (c) oversight and governance arrangements are of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances has adequate resources to support the specialist nutrition industry.

Jo Churchill:

The annual budget of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) for 2020/21 was £18,350. The ACBS comprises of fifteen clinicians and the secretariat function is provided by one member of staff. The ACBS is currently reviewing its procedures to improve and standardise submission quality and assessment, which will improve efficiency and effectiveness. We are satisfied that the ACBS has sufficient resources to do so.

The ACBS' function is overseen by a senior responsible officer within the Department and the Committee works within the Government's Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees.

■ Care Homes: Visits

Navendu Mishra:

[\[4733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that Government guidance on out-of-home visits which came into force on 4 May 2021 is adhered to by care homes.

Helen Whately:

We are in regular contact with care homes and providers in order to assess adherence to this guidance and ways in which this can be improved. If a resident or their family have concerns that the care home is not following visiting guidance appropriately then they can raise them with the home in the first instance. If the resident or family are still dissatisfied, the Care Quality Commission will investigate complaints.

■ Coronavirus

Layla Moran:

[\[4016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 179462 on Coronavirus, what the (a) status and (b) proposal detail of the work commissioned by NHSX is.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: Officials are currently exploring which existing apps allow patients to track 'long' COVID-19 symptoms and how the existing digital resources on 'Your COVID Recovery' may be improved.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Janet Daby:

[4026]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing public usage of (a) vitamins D and C to improve immune system responses and (b) other potential alternative methods to an annual vaccination to protect against covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) considered nutrition and immune function in relation to COVID-19 at its meeting in June 2020 and agreed that a scoping exercise indicated a lack of robust evidence to suggest that specific nutrients, such as vitamins C and D, can reduce the risk or severity of COVID-19.

At its meeting in March 2021, the SACN noted that there was currently no new evidence that would change current dietary advice in relation to immune function. The SACN continues to monitor research in this field, which would include any available evidence on nutrition and vaccine response in relation to COVID-19.

The Antiviral Taskforce has been set up with the aim of identifying an effective novel antiviral treatment to augment the current vaccine and therapeutic programmes. The programme would seek to make available an oral drug that would be able to be taken in an outpatient setting. The drug will target the virus at an early stage, preventing progression to more severe, or even critical, symptoms, and minimising the risk of 'long' COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Caroline Lucas:

[2944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the three eligibility factors for covid-19 vaccinations for young people under 16 who are clinically extremely vulnerable of severe neurodisabilities, recurrent respiratory infections and frequently stays in specialist residential settings, what discussions he has had with representatives of the JCVI on the effect of allowing vaccination in the event that the first two of those eligibility factors have been met and a decision in favour of vaccination has been made by the physician responsible for the patient; and if he will make a statement.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Given the very high risk of exposure to infection and outbreaks in residential settings, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that COVID-19 vaccination may be considered for children with severe neuro-disabilities with recurrent respiratory tract infections and who frequently spend time in specialised residential care settings for children with complex needs.

The JCVI's advice is that clinicians should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with a person with parental responsibility, who should be told about the position on safety data for the vaccine in children aged under 16 years old. However, the matter of whether to offer vaccination to an individual, whether a child or adult,

will ultimately be a decision for the physician responsible for the patient. The JCVI's advice to the Government is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-advice-on-priority-groups-for-covid-19-vaccination-30-december-2020>

Justin Madders:

[3932]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 vaccination appointments have been cancelled due to supply issues each month since January 2021 in (a) England and (b) Cheshire West and Chester.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This information is not held centrally. NHS England and NHS Improvement communicate any foreseen supply issues to vaccination sites in advance, so the availability of appointments corresponds to supply.

Justin Madders:

[3933]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average distance is that a person must travel to receive their (a) first and (b) second vaccination dose in England.

Nadhim Zahawi:

This information is not held centrally. However, 99% of the population are within 10 miles of a vaccination site.

■ Dementia: Drugs

Stephen Timms:

[593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 187127 on Dementia: Prescription Drugs, what steps the Government is taking to (a) assess the reasons for the recent increase in anti-psychotic prescriptions in dementia care and (b) reduce the number of anti-psychotic prescriptions being administered in dementia care; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to monitor the monthly data published by NHS Digital on the prescribing of anti-psychotic medication for people diagnosed with dementia and have regular conversations with regional clinical network leads and local services to understand the patterns in prescribing and potential reasons for trends being seen.

To aid reduction of unwarranted prescribing of antipsychotic medication, NHS England and NHS Improvement are promoting good practice in respect of prescribing anti-psychotic medication in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's guidance.

■ Disability**Marsha De Cordova:** [\[3148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that disabled people are able to live independently as part of their local communities.

Helen Whately:

In England, the Disabled Facilities Grant supports older and disabled people on low incomes, to adapt their homes to make suitable for their needs. We also provide funding to build specialised housing through the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund for older people and adults with learning and physical disabilities and mental ill-health.

In addition, we are working closely with the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit on a national strategy for disabled people, aimed at improving the lives of disabled people, removing barriers and extending opportunities. The strategy is expected to be published shortly.

■ Disability: Children**Navendu Mishra:** [\[4728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to (a) vital therapies and (b) essential health appointments for children with disabilities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

As part of COVID-19 recovery planning we are working with the Department for Education and NHS England and NHS Improvement to look at improving the provision of therapies to disabled children. NHS England and NHS Improvement published guidance entitled 'COVID-19 restoration of community health services for children and young people: second phase of NHS response in the community health restoration', updated on 31 July 2020. This makes clear that essential community services, including therapies such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy, must be prioritised for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged up to 25 years old and who have an Education Health and Care Plan in place or who are going through an assessment for one.

■ Gender Recognition: Clinics**Nadia Whittome:** [\[947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to establish additional NHS gender clinics to reduce waiting times.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: Three new clinics were established in 2020 in London, Manchester and Liverpool. A further pilot clinic being implemented in the East of England in summer 2021.

■ **Health Services: Autism and Learning Disability**

Helen Hayes:

[3068]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of his Department's ability to meet the Government's 2024 target of a 50 per cent reduction in in-patient beds for people with a learning disability/and or autism.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: The latest NHS Digital Assuring Transformation data as of April 2021 shows there were 2,040 people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist in patient settings in England. This is a net reduction of 30% on the inpatient number in March 2015.

The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has been established to drive further progress in reducing the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist in patient settings. The Board is monitoring progress to ensure the target is met.

Helen Hayes:

[3070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to remove financial incentives which can result in people with a learning disability and autistic people being admitted to in-patient units.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has been established to drive further progress in reducing the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist inpatient settings through the development of community-based support. A priority for the Board is examining issues with funding flows, including assessing any financial disincentives preventing progress.

Rosie Cooper:

[4562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of his Department's ability to meet the Government's 2024 target of a 50 per cent reduction in inpatient beds for people with a learning disability and/or autism.

Helen Whately:

The latest NHS Digital Assuring Transformation data, as at the end of April 2021, shows there were 2,040 people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist in patient settings in England. This is a net reduction of 30% on the inpatient number in March 2015.

The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has been established to drive further progress in reducing the number of people with a learning disability and autistic

people in specialist inpatient settings. The Board is monitoring progress to ensure the target is met.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[4564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that there are no financial incentives for people with a learning disability and/or autism to be admitted to inpatient units.

Helen Whately:

People should only be admitted to a mental health inpatient unit when there is a clinical need which cannot be treated in the community. The Building the Right Support Delivery Board has been established to drive further progress in reducing the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people in specialist inpatient settings through the development of community-based support. A priority for the Board is examining issues with funding flows, including assessing any financial disincentives preventing progress.

■ Health Services: Learning Disability

Helen Hayes:

[\[3072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure early intervention and prevention is at the centre of the cross departmental strategy on Transforming Care for people with a learning disability.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: The NHS Long Term Plan sets out our commitment to developing seven-day specialist multidisciplinary services, forensic services and crisis care to provide early intervention and reduce preventable admissions to inpatient care. Our work includes the delivery of community Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews; development of keyworkers for children and young people with the most complex needs; and a focus on the use of dynamic support systems to mitigate individuals' risk of crisis.

We are consulting through the Reforming the Mental Health Act white paper on the introduction of new duties on commissioners to ensure the adequate supply of community services for people with a learning disability and autistic people. These actions will help to increase early intervention and reduce preventable admissions.

Rosie Cooper:

[\[4566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) early intervention and (b) prevention are at the centre of the cross-organisational strategy on transforming care for people with a learning disability.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out our commitment to developing seven-day specialist multidisciplinary services, forensic services and crisis care to provide early intervention and reduce preventable admissions to inpatient care. Our work includes the delivery of community Care (Education) and Treatment Reviews; development of

keyworkers for children and young people with the most complex needs; and a focus on the use of dynamic support systems to mitigate individuals' risk of crisis.

We are consulting through the Reforming Mental Health Act white paper on the introduction of new duties on commissioners to ensure the adequate supply of community services for people with a learning disability and autistic people.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake: [3212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to record instances of covid-19 contracted in hospitals.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement collect data as part of a daily SITREP on the time between admission to hospital and first positive swab for COVID-19. Since October 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement have published relevant data relating to COVID-19 hospital activity which includes the numbers of people diagnosed in hospital with or admitted to hospital with COVID-19. This data covers the period from 1 August 2020. Data relating to the number of patients diagnosed in the community and subsequently admitted to hospital, or admitted to hospital and diagnosed with COVID within eight days after admission is also available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-hospital-activity/>

Given the incubation period of the virus and local differences in application of testing protocols, it is not possible to definitively determine the number of people who contracted the virus while in hospital in England to date.

■ Joint Replacements

Sarah Olney: [5226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many hospitals in England provide joint replacement treatment within the 18 week target time.

Edward Argar:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Kidney Diseases: Children

Dan Jarvis: [243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 186169 on Kidney Diseases: Young People, what plans his Department has to update the paediatric renal service specification.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: There are currently no plans to review the paediatric renal service specification.

■ Kidney Diseases: Health Services

Dan Jarvis:

[736]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 186168 on Kidney Diseases: Health Services, what processes are in place to ensure that the adult renal service specification is effective in meeting the mental health needs of people on dialysis.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]:

The service specification for haemodialysis acknowledges the significant impact that renal failure can have on an individual's mental health and advises that service providers should offer patients access to social worker advice and psychology services, as well as providing information about patient support groups.

There are monthly clinical quality review meetings with hospitals to discuss the quality standards, with all providers of specialised services asked to assess their service against the key requirements of service specifications on an annual basis. Trusts and regional commissioners will discuss where standards are not fully met to support local action, including standards around access to psychosocial support. The quality of specialised services is also assessed by regional teams who draw on information from different sources, including information from the Care Quality Commission.

Furthermore, NHS England and NHS Improvement specialised commissioning are undertaking a National Adult Renal Services Transformation Programme. The Programme has identified psychosocial support within renal services as a key theme for improvement. Further updates on this work will be made available as the programme develops.

■ Kidney Diseases: Young People

Dan Jarvis:

[244]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 29 April 2021 to Question 186169 on Kidney Diseases: Young People, what processes are in place to ensure that the paediatric renal service specification is effective in benefiting the mental health of young people on dialysis.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 May 2021]: NHS England and NHS Improvement's paediatric renal service specification sets out national standards for renal services, including the importance of mental health support for children. There are monthly clinical quality review meetings with hospitals on the quality standards, where providers of specialised services assess their service against the key requirements of the service specifications on an annual basis. Trusts and regional commissioners will discuss where standards are not fully met to support local action, including standards on mental health. The quality of specialised services is also assessed by regional teams.

■ Medical Records: Data Protection

Chi Onwurah: [\[3861\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) organisations with addresses outside the UK and (b) private sector organisations had access to NHS Digital data sets for the purposes of research and planning in each of the last five years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 24 May 2021]: This information is not held in the format requested.

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr John Baron: [\[5159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter dated 25 February 2021, with follow up letters of the 25 March 2021 and 25 April 2021 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay regarding constituent with reference JB31634.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 24 May 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [\[5167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 31 March 2021 on smear tests, reference ZA56134.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 25 May 2021.

Rosie Cooper: [\[5168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 1 April 2021 on vaccine passports, reference ZA56156.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 25 May 2021.

Robert Largin: [\[6522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak dated 15 February 2021, referenced RL18647.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 25 May 2021.

Robert Largin: [\[6523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to respond to the enquiry from the hon. Member for High Peak dated 29 March 2021, referenced RL19346.

Edward Argar:

We replied to the hon. Member on 25 May 2021.

■ **Mental Health Act 1983 Independent Review**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [3981]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish his plans to reform the Mental Health Act.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [3982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the findings of the consultation on Reforming the Mental Health Act.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

On 13 January, we published the white paper 'Reforming the Mental Health Act'.

The public consultation period on the white paper closed on 21 April. We are now analysing the consultation responses from the public and stakeholders. We will respond to the consultation this year, as part of our continuing work to develop a new Mental Health Bill.

■ **Mental Health Services: Telemedicine**

Rosie Cooper: [4568]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of digital exclusion on the delivery of remote NHS mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Imran Ahmad Khan MP) on 21 May 2021 to Question [540](#).

■ **Miscarriage**

Peter Gibson: [4034]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) physical and (b) mental effect of a second trimester miscarriage on an expectant mother.

Peter Gibson: [4037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the mental effect of a second trimester miscarriage on an expecting father.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have made no such assessment.

Peter Gibson:

[\[4035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of miscarriages that occur during the second trimester each year.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The information is not collected in the format requested. NHS Digital records most incidences of miscarriage in Hospital Episode Statistics, but this does not include data on the length of the gestation period.

■ **NHS England: Correspondence**

Rosie Cooper:

[\[5164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that NHS England respond to the letter from the hon. Member for West Lancashire to the Chief People Officer, dated 26 February 2021, on the NHS restructure, ref number MR/za55752.

Edward Argar:

NHS England has confirmed they have received this letter and are working to provide an answer as soon as possible.

■ **NHS: Digital Technology**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[4633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to roll out digital inclusion to assist people to access digitalised health services, including (a) repeat prescription services and (b) advice to reduce pressure on primary care.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 25 May 2021]: NHS England is supporting primary care to move towards a digital first approach, where patients can easily access the advice, support and treatment they need using digital and online tools, such as receiving advice, booking and cancelling appointments, having a consultation with a healthcare professional, receiving a referral and obtaining a prescription.

The digital first programme supports the delivery of access to primary care and helps patients manage their health. The NHS Long Term Plan commits that every patient will have the right to be offered digital-first primary care by 2023-24.

■ **NHS: Protective Clothing**

Bill Esterson:

[\[1305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish details of the contracts with Unispace Global Ltd to supply the NHS with personal protective equipment, including (a) when those contracts were awarded and (b) when they will expire.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 May 2021]: Seven contracts have been awarded by the Department to Unispace Global Ltd for the supply of personal protective equipment. The details of each contract are available at the following links:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/acd01950-7e8b-44e0-9a77-b91602f47268?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Contract award date 19 May 2020. Expiry date upon delivery of the last batch of goods.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/888e3921-ebe6-46ae-b695-984c62137cac?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Contract award date 10 June 2020. Expiry date upon delivery of the last batch of goods.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/a47d06a2-51e6-45bd-81c6-fc988a7b0712?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Contract award date 16 May 2020. Expiry date upon delivery of the last batch of goods.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/13751ae7-0d1a-4ec3-b0e6-ffae00e8e934>

Contract award date 29 April 2020. Expiry date is 7 August 2020.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/92a59e2d-aefc-4df6-b1a5-c15fb7f2b051?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Contract award date 22 April 2020. Expiry date 3 July 2020.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/5fcc1bb2-4c17-4a11-a8d3-ee73d0acd2ac?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Contract award date 16 June 2020. Expiry date upon delivery of the last batch of goods.

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/notice/67c96ea3-1ac5-49db-b055-372d0472588f?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

Contract award date 5 June 2020. Expiry date upon delivery of the last batch of goods.

■ **NHS: Recruitment****Mr Steve Baker:****[R] [4584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential contribution to increasing health output that might be achieved through the increased employment of medical secretaries and doctor's assistants in healthcare settings.

Helen Whately:

We have made no such assessment. It is a matter for individual health care providers to identify the most efficient mix of staff to deliver their services.

■ **Nutrition****Jim Shannon:**[\[3872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of eating a diet rich in fish, vegetables and olive oil on protecting the brain from tau proteins; and if his Department will undertake further research on that matter.

Jo Churchill:

The Department commissions research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The NIHR is not currently funding any specific relevant research but has supported the MedEx-UK trial looking at the Mediterranean diet and exercise, and dementia risk in adults in the United Kingdom.

In 2018, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition found some limited evidence that greater adherence to a Mediterranean dietary pattern may be associated with reduced risk of mild cognitive impairment and dementia. Their report is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-statement-on-diet-cognitive-impairment-and-dementia>

■ **Obesity****Zarah Sultana:**[\[4716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many eating disorder charities the Government consulted as part of the Tackling Obesity Strategy.

Jo Churchill:

We have engaged with the eating disorder charity, BEAT, in addition to other groups representing the views of people living with eating disorders.

■ **Steroid Drugs: Misuse****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[R\] \[4051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the harms caused by Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs.

Dr Luke Evans:[\[R\] \[4052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to record data on the number of users of Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs.

Jo Churchill:

No recent assessment has been made.

Public Health England (PHE) records the numbers of people who are in drug treatment reporting a problem with image and performance enhancing drugs, including anabolic steroids. These numbers are low and are included in the figures for 'other' drugs in PHE's annual reports on alcohol and drug treatment.

■ Sun and Sunbeds: Health Hazards

Carla Lockhart:

[4748]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to inform people of the dangers of (a) exposure to the sun and (b) the use of sunbeds.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) contributed to the sun safety message published on the National Health Service website which is available at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/>

PHE also publishes near real-time solar ultraviolet radiation index values from its measurement sites across the United Kingdom to inform people of the current levels in addition to guidance on when protection is needed. PHE discourages the use of sunbeds and has published guidance on the dangers from the use of sunbeds which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sunbeds-safety-advice/sunbeds-safety-advice>

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[3078]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of exempting (a) academics who undertake regular in-person work in the UK but live abroad and (b) other people who work in the UK but live abroad from covid-19 quarantine restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made of an exemption for academics who undertake regular in-person work in the United Kingdom but live abroad. However, an exemption already exists for people who live in England or Wales but who work in another country and who travel between England or Wales and their country of work at least once a week. In England, the work in the other country must be critical and not possible to be carried out remotely.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Finance****Chi Onwurah:****[5193]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2021 to Question 725 on asylum: housing, how the budget for weekly support payment for an asylum seeker is calculated; and how much is expected to be allocated to (a) food, (b) transport, (c) clothing and (d) cleaning products.

Kevin Foster:

The level of the cash allowance provided to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute in order to meet their essential living needs (the legal test) is reviewed annually, using a methodology in place since 2014 and which has been judged by the Court of Appeal to be rational and lawful.

The basic approach is to determine all essential needs and assess the amount of money the average asylum seeker needs to meet each of them. Those with needs over and above the level of the average person can apply for additional funds exceptionally.

Further detail about the methodology can be found in the reports published at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-on-review-of-cash-allowance-paid-to-asylum-seekers

■ Drugs: Misuse**Crispin Blunt:****[R] [5140]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government report entitled An evaluation of the Government's Drug Strategy 2010, whether the Government has developed an updated evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness and value for money of the Drugs Strategy 2017; and when she plans to publish the evaluation of that strategy.

Crispin Blunt:**[R] [5141]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government report entitled An evaluation of the Government's Drug Strategy 2010, which reported a lack of robust evidence as to whether capture and punishment serves as a deterrent for drug use, for what reason drug users continue to be criminalised given that lack of robust evidence.

Crispin Blunt:**[R] [5142]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Government report entitled An evaluation of the Government's Drug Strategy 2010 which reported the finding that drugs market violence is an unintended consequence of enforcing drug laws, for what reason that finding was not tackled in the Drug Strategy

2017; and what steps the Government is taking to (a) monitor and (b) evaluate the ongoing effects of enforcement on market violence in the UK.

Kit Malthouse:

No evaluation framework has been developed to assess the 2017 Drug Strategy. However, a number of initiatives that have been implemented under the 2017 Drug Strategy have been subject to assessment or evaluation, including;

- The UK Government appointed Dr Ed Day as the Government's Recovery Champion to provide national leadership around key aspects of the drug recovery agenda and advise the Government on where improvements can be made. His first annual report was published in January 2021, which includes an assessment of the current system. It can be found here; UK government Drug Recovery Champion annual report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- In 2019, Public Health England and the Home Office published a report on a deep dive to understand the rise in crack cocaine use in six areas of England. PHE publish investigative report on increasing crack use - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs continues to carry out in-depth reviews on issues relating to drugs and drug harms. Its website includes reviews on the ageing cohort of drug users, on custody to community transitions and on homelessness and drug use for example.
- Other projects within the 2017 Drug Strategy, such as the Holme House 'drug recovery prison' pilot and the Jobcentre Plus Individual Placement and Support (IPS) trial to support those with substance use dependence back into employment, are subject to ongoing evaluation.

On the question of punishment for people who break the law, including buying illicit drugs, the Government is unashamedly clear that drug use is unacceptable and users must face the consequences. Prison is one possible punishment, however the police have a range of powers at their disposal to deal with drug-related offences in a way that is proportionate to the circumstances of the offender and the public interest. They also have discretion to engage a first-time young offender with local services to assess their needs including the risk of harm. How police choose to pursue investigations is an operational decision for chief constables, but we are clear that we expect them to enforce the law.

Addressing drugs and drug harms is not something that law enforcement alone can do and we must ensure that we intervene early and effectively to reduce the demand for drugs. We therefore take a balanced approach which brings together police, health, community and global partners to tackle the illicit drug trade, protect the most vulnerable and help those with a drug dependency to recover and turn their lives around.

Violence and exploitation is an inherent part of the business model of organised criminal gangs who supply drugs, and it is important that we continue to address this threat. Law enforcement partners are therefore cracking down on criminals who

supply drugs, causing misery to families and communities. Violence Reduction Units and police forces work with local partners to understand and tackle the drivers of violence in their area. This year we have provided VRUs with £35.5m to continue this work, alongside an additional £30m of 'Grip' funding to the police force areas most affected by violent crime.

We know there is more to do to tackle drugs and the harms they cause, which is why the Home Office commissioned a major independent review, led by Dame Carol Black, to examine these issues. Part one of the Review was published in February 2020 and provided a detailed analysis of drug supply and demand. In July last year, DHSC announced the second part of the review led by Dame Carol to look at prevention, treatment and recovery which will be published later this year.

The Government continues to go further than the Drug Strategy 2017. In January, the Government announced a £148 million new investment to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs including;

- £80 million for drug treatment services right across England – representing the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years.
- £28 million for Project ADDER – a new intensive approach to tackling drug misuse, which combines targeted and tougher policing with diversionary schemes and enhanced treatment and recovery services.
- £40 million to tackle drugs supply and county lines and surge our activity against these ruthless gangs. This will allow us to expand and build upon the successful results of our £25 million county lines programme which since November 2019 has seen more than 3,400 people arrested, more than 550 lines closed, drugs with a street value of £9 million and £1.5 million cash seized, and more than 770 vulnerable people safeguarded.

Together the funding represents a comprehensive drive by the Government to build back safer from the pandemic by helping people break free from the scourge of drug use and cutting drug-fuelled crime and violence.

■ Drugs: Smuggling

Crispin Blunt:

[R] [\[5143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 29 September 2020 to Question 92900 on Drugs: Smuggling, what assessment her Department has made of the (a) short-term and (b) long-term effects of Operation VENETIC on the (i) availability, (ii) price and (iii) purity of drugs in the illegal drugs market since the date of that answer.

Kit Malthouse:

UK law enforcement continue to act on the significant volume of intelligence Operation VENETIC generated, with the National Crime Agency (NCA) acting as the lead organisation in the UK on this.

The Home Office has not made an assessment of the effects of Operation VENETIC on the illegal drugs market. The NCA has led a number of investigations under Operation VENETIC and publish regular press notices on the outcomes of these investigations. The NCA's 2021 National Strategic Assessment includes further information about the outcomes of activity following Operation VENETIC [file \(nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk\)](https://nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk)

■ Immigration: Au Pairs

Tulip Siddiq: [3083]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect on working parents who rely on au pairs for childcare of the decision not to grant a dedicated immigration route for au pairs from the EU.

Kevin Foster:

As has been the case since 2008, successive governments have decided the UK's immigration system should not offer a dedicated visa route for au pairs.

Those who wish to employ an au pair can either look to offer a package which makes it attractive to those with general rights to work in the UK, such as those who arrive under our Youth Mobility Schemes, or dependants of people already settled in the UK, or use the wide range of childcare options in the UK relied upon by most families.

■ Jews: Safety

Andrew Rosindell: [2904]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure the safety of the British Jewish community during periods of heightened tensions between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government is clear that any criminal activity, including the incitement of violence or racial hatred, is completely unacceptable. We have robust laws to tackle such criminal offences.

In April the Home Secretary committed to continuation of the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant for 2021-22. This £14m funding supports the provision of security guarding and other measures at key community sites such as schools, colleges, nurseries and synagogues across the country.

We also routinely work with the Community Security Trust (CST) to understand and respond to the security needs of the Jewish community. This is in addition to the extensive efforts by the police to keep the Jewish and all our communities safe.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Robert Largan:

[\[6518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to the letter of 12 November 2020 from the hon. Member for High Peak, reference RL14870.

Chris Philp:

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), MP Account Management Team responded on 25 May 2021.

■ **Windrush Lessons Learned Review**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[4684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has fully implemented all recommendations from the Independent Windrush Lessons Learned Review; and what assessment she has made of her Department's recent actions of writing to UK nationals incorrectly asking them to apply for settled status on complying with those recommendations.

Priti Patel:

I am committed to deliver lasting and meaningful change across the entire Home Office so that it represents all the communities it serves. Work continues at pace to implement all the recommendations in the Windrush Lessons Learned Review as well as wider cultural change in the department to fully address the findings of the report. We are putting people at the heart of the reforms we are making in the Department and Wendy Williams will return to the department to review progress in September when I am confident she will see significant progress in delivering her recommendations.

In line with the lessons learnt from Windrush, we have designed the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to ensure it is accessible to all those who are eligible and is focussed on providing an easy and user-friendly way for individuals to make an application.

This includes using every possible channel to encourage everyone who is eligible for the EUSS to apply. The Home Office is currently working with HMRC and DWP to send letters to EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who receive benefits, but it appears are yet to apply to the EUSS. These letters seek to encourage recipients to apply to the EUSS to protect their existing rights in the UK before the deadline of 30 June 2021.

In trying to reach as many people as possible, there may be a small number of instances where these letters are sent to recipients who are naturalised as a British citizen. The letter may also be received by a small number of individuals who have already applied to the EUSS, for example because they applied after the initial exercise with DWP or HMRC was completed, but before the letter was sent out. The letter makes clear that anyone who is a British citizen or already has EUSS status does not need to take any action.

As of 30 April 2021, 4.9m grants of status had been made. The Home Office urges anyone eligible for the EUSS to apply before the 30 June deadline to ensure their rights are protected following the end of the grace period.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Begging and Vagrancy

Layla Moran: [5256]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to bring forward proposals to repeal the Vagrancy Act 1824 in the 2021-22 parliamentary session.

Eddie Hughes:

This is a complex issue, which is why the Government strongly feels a review is the right course of action. We will update on our findings in due course.

■ Buildings: Repairs and Maintenance

Andrew Rosindell: [2902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with relevant stakeholders on who is financially liable for the cost of remediation work to make buildings safe where a building has been found not to meet the building regulations at the time it was built.

Christopher Pincher:

We have been clear that building owners and industry should make buildings safe without passing on costs to leaseholders. Where they have not stepped up, we have intervened by providing grant funding for the removal of unsafe cladding on all buildings over 18 metres. The total amount of this grant funding scheme represents a globally unprecedented investment of over £5 billion in building safety which will protect hundreds of thousands of leaseholders from the cost of replacing unsafe cladding on their homes.

Ministers regularly meet with relevant external stakeholders. Details of Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on the gov.uk website:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956236/Ministerial_meetings_July_to_Sept_2020.csv/preview.

■ Coastal Areas

Paul Girvan: [3101]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to increase economic activity in coastal communities.

Luke Hall:

We are committed to increasing economic activity in our coastal communities. Our coastal areas have already benefited from over £250 million through successful bids

into Town Deals and from the Future High Streets Fund. At Budget 2021, the Chancellor announced 7 Freeports in coastal areas, which will boost economic activity further in these communities. This is all in addition to the £6 million available through the Welcome Back Fund to support coastal areas; offering assistance of up to £100,000 to help address the unique challenges facing these areas as restrictions ease. Further support will be available through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which will help to level up and create opportunity across the UK in places most in need. Coastal places can also bid into the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund.

■ Housing: Construction

Peter Gibson:

[4033]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many houses have been built in Darlington in each of the last 20 years.

Christopher Pincher:

Estimates of building control reported new build dwelling completions for Darlington in each of the last 20 years, are shown in Live Table 253, at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>

These cover new build dwellings only and should be regarded as a leading indicator of overall housing supply.

The Department also publishes an annual release entitled 'Housing supply: net additional dwellings, England', which is the primary and most comprehensive measure of housing supply. This can be found at the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-net-supply-of-housing>

■ Neighbourhood Development Plans

Anthony Mangnall:

[3167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to strengthen the role of neighbourhood plans in planning decisions.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear about the important role that neighbourhood plans play in our plan-led system and neighbourhood plans continue to have real statutory weight in planning decisions. The Government is committed to retaining neighbourhood planning as an important part of the reformed planning system, and we will set out our decisions on the proposed way forward.

Mark Pritchard:

[3825]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to increase the importance of Neighbourhood Plans in the Planning Bill.

Christopher Pincher:

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear about the important role that neighbourhood plans play in our plan-led system and neighbourhood plans continue to have real statutory weight in planning decisions. The Government is committed to retaining neighbourhood planning as an important part of the reformed planning system, and we will set out our decisions on the proposed way forward.

■ Parks: Community Development**Stuart Anderson:**[\[4702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has plans to provide financial support to help community groups (a) create new pocket parks and (b) refurbish existing parks.

Luke Hall:

The Government recognises the value of parks and green spaces in providing vibrant and inclusive locations for communities to socialise, volunteer, work, and exercise. We have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic how important access to parks and green spaces are to local communities. We recognise that green spaces foster health, well-being, integration, and social engagement. There are no immediate plans to continue the Pocket Parks Scheme. However, as we move beyond the threat of COVID-19, we will explore how we can best support all urban parks and green spaces, taking into account the Government's environmental, social, and health priorities.

■ Private Rented Housing: Tenancy Agreements**Elliot Colburn:**[\[3178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the proportion of private landlords that are utilising (a) the Government's current model tenancy agreement and (b) previous versions of the model tenancy agreement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Model Tenancy Agreement is the Government's suggested contract for assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector. It is a publicly available template which landlords and tenants can choose to use to agree a tenancy, although they are not obligated to do so.

The Government does not collect data on the proportion of landlords using current or previous versions of the Model Tenancy Agreement.

■ Refuges: Females**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[4000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Minister for Women and Equalities on improving access to women's refuges.

Eddie Hughes:

The Department has been working closely with colleagues in other Government Departments, including the Government Equalities Office, to prepare for the implementation of the new duty.

Many local areas already provide services that ensure victims have somewhere safe to go. To support these services further we have introduced a new statutory duty on local authorities within the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to ensure that all victims, including children, have access to safety and support within safe accommodation when they need it.

■ Social Rented Housing: Overcrowding**Rachael Maskell:**[\[3043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to tackle local authorities who fail to address overcrowding in social housing.

Christopher Pincher:

Access to the social rented sector is managed at a local level within a national framework. By law, local authorities must frame their allocation schemes to ensure that people in housing need receive 'reasonable preference' (overall priority) for social housing. This includes people living in overcrowded, insanitary or unsuitable housing. Local authorities may also give 'additional preference' (high priority) to people in urgent housing need, and statutory guidance makes clear that this includes families in severe overcrowding which poses a serious health hazard.

My Department is committed to working together to tackle overcrowding and supporting vulnerable people to live in safe and decent homes.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Cotton: Xinjiang****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[5177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions he has had with the UK Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the effect of widespread forced labour in the Xinjiang cotton industry on the global cotton industry; and what steps he plans to take to raise that matter at the upcoming discussion on trade-related matters affecting cotton at the WTO.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom has taken a leading international role in holding China to account for its violations of rights and responsibilities in Xinjiang.

The Secretary of State for International Trade was in Geneva on 29th and 30th March where she met the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and they spoke about a range of International issues.

The United Kingdom is committed to ongoing discussions on cotton and trade related matters at the WTO. We recognise the importance of reform to the global cotton market, which will benefit the most vulnerable in particular.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[5178]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of widespread forced labour in the Xinjiang cotton industry on the global cotton industry; and what steps she plans to take to raise that matter at the (a) upcoming discussion on trade on trade-related matters affecting cotton and (b) other relevant forums of the World Trade Organization.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave her on 26th May (UIN: 5177).

■ Import Duties

Emily Thornberry:

[5162]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether UK firms that import components under the new tariff suspension scheme would be eligible for tariff preferences on their exports under UK trade deals that contain prohibitions on duty drawback and exemption.

Greg Hands:

The UK's tariff suspension regime applies to UK imports and is a reduction in the 'Most Favoured Nation' rate, the UK Global Tariff, for all businesses. Restrictions on duty drawback in preferential agreements do not apply to tariff suspensions because tariff suspensions apply to all imports, whether or not they are then used as inputs for subsequent exports to the Free Trade Agreement partner. Duty drawback restrictions that exist in free trade agreements may only apply to drawback mechanisms for which the drawback is contingent on subsequent export. As such, any business based in the UK or Crown Dependencies that makes use of a suspension will also be able to take advantage of the benefits of trade deals that the UK is party to.

Emily Thornberry:

[5163]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether UK importers will (a) automatically have duty suspended on any imported component covered by the new tariff suspension scheme or (b) be able to choose whether or not to have the duty suspended on a case-by-case basis.

Greg Hands:

Under the new tariff suspension scheme, UK and Crown Dependency importers can apply for tariff suspensions. The Government will assess these requests and decide whether to grant suspensions for specified goods based on a set of criteria and wider considerations.

All UK and Crown Dependency businesses can benefit from a suspension once it is granted, irrespective of whether that business applied for it, as long as it remains in force.

■ Trade Agreements

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

[\[5209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if the Government will make it its policy to refuse to negotiate trade deals with any country that has sanctioned hon. Members of the UK Parliament.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Trade underpins stable, open and prosperous global economies, promoting property rights and the rule of law.

We have no plans to negotiate a trade deal with China but, through our ambitious programme of trade negotiations, we will build relationships with other trading partners to break down barriers to trade, supporting growth in every corner of our country as we become a truly Global Britain.

The United Kingdom has long promoted her values globally. We are clear that more trade does not have to come at the expense of our values.

JUSTICE

■ Community Rehabilitation Companies: Contracts

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[2936\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that appropriate services are in place to manage risk of harm and address risk of offending during the last months of the CRC contracts before they terminate.

Alex Chalk:

Public protection remains our number one priority as we move closer to the termination of the CRC contracts and the unification of probation services. All CRCs are currently operating under their Exceptional Delivery Models, which were introduced in March 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The Exceptional Delivery Models are the vehicle through which CRCs are held to account by the Authority to ensure contracted front-line probation services, including addressing risk of re-offending, are delivered and will continue to do so up to CRC contract termination date. Offenders continue to be robustly managed in the community and contact is being maintained between Responsible Officers and offenders under their supervision to manage risk of harm.

■ MTC and Seetec: Probation

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[2940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's

Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, whether the transition of the unpaid work scheduling systems used by MTC and Seetec has completed.

Alex Chalk:

The Probation Reform Programme is working to ensure that the systems and tools used for unpaid work scheduling by staff in Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) owned by Seetec and MTC will continue to be available to those staff that use them. The necessary activity to ensure they are in place is due to be completed by the middle of June.

■ **Probation**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[2935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure that there is clear strategic oversight of resettlement services in each English region and Wales; and what assessment he has made of the potential merits of appointing regional heads of resettlement.

Alex Chalk:

As part of the HMPPS action plan following the HMIP thematic inspection on the preparations for the unification of probation services, each probation region will appoint a resettlement lead.

These roles will provide strategic leadership of resettlement work set out in new operating model for the unified Probation Service, and take the lead in working with relevant partners in the region (including prisons).

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[2938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, on what date each contract for day one rehabilitation support services commissioned through the Dynamic Framework in (a) education, (b) training and employment, (c) accommodation, (d) women's, (e) personal wellbeing, (f) discretionary dependency and recovery and (g) discretionary finance, benefit and debt services was finalised for (i) each English region and (ii) Wales.

Alex Chalk:

Contracts for delivery of Education, Training & Employment, Accommodation, Personal Wellbeing, and Women's services have been awarded in Wales and in 10 out of 11 probation regions through four waves of procurement activity over the last 9 months.

This initial range of services has been commissioned nationally. After probation services are unified on 26 June 2021, commissioning responsibility will move to a regional level and Regional Probation Directors will decide how and when they wish to commission Dependency & Recovery and Finance, Benefit & Debt services.

In Greater Manchester, we are jointly commissioning with the Combined Authority, and the suite of contracts will be awarded in the coming weeks.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[2939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure a consistent and effective approach to resettlement provision across England and Wales.

Alex Chalk:

Our Target Operating Model for probation services, published in February 2021, set out full details of the improved approach to resettlement work in the Probation Service that we will be building towards. Performance measures and internal assurance have been developed to ensure consistent delivery across Regions and highlight areas for improvement in delivery.

The Resettlement approach is based upon the principle of the Community probation practitioner responsible for managing people post release from prison, becoming responsible for pre-release activities. They will hold the single sentence plan including all resettlement planning, ensuring risk planning and victim issues are addressed within preparation for release.

■ Probation: Computer Software

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[2934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, what progress has been made on the development of an effective workload measurement tool for the unified probation service.

Alex Chalk:

The probation Workload Measurement Tool (WMT) will be available for full use by all probation staff from the point of unification on 26 June. It will include caseloads for all staff transferring into the Probation Service from Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), which will allow managers to understand workload across the whole unified service.

In readiness for this, the WMT has been updated with a refreshed methodology determining case complexity and intensity of staff involvement to represent probation's role to assess, protect and change to align with the aims of the unified Probation Service.

A new version of the WMT will be rolled out in 2021 to improve the speed and accuracy of workforce management, by integrating all the required information into one digital service. This will be based upon refreshed activity timings which will better reflect practice, expectations on staff and align to the unified operating model.

■ Probation: Finance**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[2937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, what steps he is taking to ensure there is good understanding of the criteria for applications to the regional outcomes and innovation fund.

Alex Chalk:

We published the criteria for the use of Regional Outcomes and Innovations Fund as part of the updated Target Operating Model for probation in February 2021. Central criteria have been set to support Regional Probation Directors to focus the Fund on the wider needs of offenders in their area, to ensure fair processes for awarding funding, and to support appropriate evaluation and maximum value for money from investments. Systems and dedicated staff will be in place in each region to enable them to make their decisions, and there will be central support and scrutiny from effective practice, commissioning, commercial and evaluation experts to oversee its use.

■ Probation: Public Appointments**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[2941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the report, A thematic review of work to prepare for the unification of probation services, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in May 2021, whether all regional Head of Community Integration posts have been filled.

Alex Chalk:

All of the Heads of Community Integration for probation regions will be in place by the point probation services are unified on 26 June 2021.

11 of the 13 posts have been filled with the remaining 2 scheduled to be filled before 26 June.

The successful candidates have been drawn from both the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) and from local authorities and health bodies. They are already receiving training to ensure they are able to deliver in these key new roles.

PRIME MINISTER**■ G7: Cornwall****Liam Byrne:** [\[2892\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what his priorities are for the 2021 G7 summit in Cornwall.

Boris Johnson:

As the most prominent grouping of democratic countries, the G7 has long been the catalyst for decisive international action to tackle the greatest challenges we face.

June's G7 Summit in Cornwall will mark the first face to face meeting of world leaders in almost two years and offers us a unique opportunity to agree concrete action to improve global health, tackle climate change and make the world fairer and more prosperous.

I look forward to meeting with my fellow leaders to discuss these issues as we all act to fight and defeat Covid and revive the global economy from its devastating impact.

■ Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform**Chris Grayling:**[\[2898\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, when he plans to publish the report of the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth, and Regulatory Reform.

Boris Johnson:

The Government will publish the report and set out its response in due course.

SCOTLAND**■ Union Connectivity Review****John Lamont:**[\[3988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent assessment he has made of the levels of co-operation of (a) the Scottish Government and (b) Transport Scotland in providing technical data to the Union Connectivity Review.

Mr Alister Jack:

Since the independent Union Connectivity Review (UCR) began in November 2020 it has published a call for evidence, which attracted 145 responses and has led sector specific roundtables with around 100 organisations. The UCR did not receive a submission from the Scottish Government or Transport Scotland. Sir Peter Hendy, who is leading the review, has spoken to Ministers in the Scottish and Welsh Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Fuels****Mike Kane:**[\[5197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to take steps to (a) establish a long-term price support mechanism for sustainable aviation fuels and (b) create a sustainable aviation fuel industry.

Mike Kane:

[\[5198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to hold a consultation on establishing a long-term price support mechanism for sustainable aviation fuels.

Robert Courts:

The Government believes that sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) have a crucial role to play in reaching our goal of net zero by 2050. We already provide strong support to the sector through the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) and our low carbon fuel industry competitions.

To further build on this existing support, as part of the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Government announced £15m for a new SAF industry competition, £3m to set up a SAF clearing house, and an intention to consult on a blending mandate to drive SAF uptake in the UK. This consultation is planned for the summer and will be complemented by supporting ambitions presented in the department's upcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan and Net Zero Aviation Consultation.

The Government will continue working with stakeholders through the Jet Zero Council SAF Delivery Group and other channels to explore what further policies might be needed to support the development of the sector, including demand-side measures or business models that address price risk.

■ Aviation: Passengers

Mike Kane:

[\[5199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department plans to update air passenger forecasts following the covid-19 pandemic.

Robert Courts:

The Department will look to publish new long-term aviation forecasts in due course. However, this is a period of great uncertainty and we need to observe a more settled recovery before we can begin to reflect this in any future forecasts.

■ Buses and Trains: Ventilation

Luke Pollard:

[\[4695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what improvements have been made to ventilation infrastructure on (a) buses and (b) trains since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport has published 'Safer Transport' guidance for operators, which helps transport organisations understand how to provide safer workplaces and services for themselves, their workers and passengers.

The Safer Transport guidance includes a section on 'Ventilation', which suggests ways in which transport operators could ensure that a fresh air supply is consistently flowing through vehicles.

■ c2c: Rolling Stock**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[4685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish an update on the delivery and rollout of c2c's Class 720 Bombardier Avenra EMUs.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The contract for the delivery and rollout of the Bombardier Class 720 EMUs is between the c2c (train operator), Porterbrook (rolling stock leasing company) and Alstom (manufacturer). It is anticipated that these units will be delivered to c2c in the first half of 2022. It is not yet known on what part of the c2c route these units will be deployed

■ Department for Transport and Network Rail: Consultants**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[4679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much (a) his Department and (b) Network Rail has spent on external consultants in each of the last five years on matters relating to the environment or climate change.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My Department uses external consultants to support the development and delivery of its policies and priorities, but we do not categorise expenditure according to 'environment or climate change'.

Over the last five years Network Rail expenditure on external consultants on matters relating to the environment or climate change is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SPEND (£)
2016-17	5,098,913.55
2017-18	3,376,649.06
2018-19	5,675,487.13
2019-20	7,239,941.90
2020-21	8,235,685.84

■ East West Rail**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[4009\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps have been taken to consult residents affected by the planned East West Rail Line between Cambridge and Oxford.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

East West Rail Company conducted a non-statutory consultation between January and March 2019. Over 3,500 people attended the supporting events, and 7,000

responded to the consultation. A range of promotional activities were used, including sending postcards to more than 120,000 households and businesses in the consultation zone, placing advertisements in local publications and issuing press releases to local and national publications.

East West Rail Company is currently undertaking a non-statutory public consultation on proposals for the alignment of the new section of the East West Rail route that would run from Bedford to Cambridge. The consultation also covers other improvements to the line from Oxford to Bedford.

To support this consultation, East West Rail Company has sent 270,000 summary documents to homes and businesses close to the proposed railway between Oxford and Cambridge as well as document packs to all MPs, Parish Councils and Ward and County Councillors within the consultation zone. It has also launched a set of consultation rooms, held a number of live chat events and public webinars open to the public, or hosted a number of meetings with local representatives. East West Rail Company has actively engaged with media and advertised the consultation in local community media – including radio and print – as well as social media.

■ Electric Vehicles: Accidents

Mark Pritchard:

[\[3824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish data for road traffic accidents involving e-scooters, electric bikes and electric skateboards on (a) public highways and (b) pavements in the last 12 months or the most recent period for which that data is available.

Rachel Maclean:

Data on personal injury road accidents is collected via the STATS19 system of accidents reported by the police.

Electric scooters and other micromobility vehicles are not currently one of the designated vehicle types collected in STATS19, and as such they would be classed as 'other' and can only be identified using a free text field in the STATS19 database.

Data for 2020 are currently being collated and validated. Subject to the data recorded in the free text field being of sufficient quality, we intend to publish data on e-scooters and other vehicle types which can be reliably identified from the free text field alongside the annual Reported Road Casualties Great Britain statistics publication in September 2021.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Justin Madders:

[\[3929\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the (a) regional distribution and (b) local authority breakdown is for successful applications for the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

As at 1 April 2021, the On-Street Residential Scheme (ORCS) has delivered 681 charging devices across 31 local authorities. Funding for a further 3,235 devices has been awarded to successful applicants with their installations yet to be completed. The regional distribution and local authority/council breakdown can be found in the attached table document.

Attachments:

1. Table of On-street Chargepoint Schemes by area [Table - On-street Chargepoint Schemes - Authority areas.docx]

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Electric Vehicles**Andrew Bridgen:**[\[4607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to encourage the development of electric powered HGVs.

Rachel Maclean:

The Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution announced that we are investing £20m this financial year in planning for zero emission road freight trials which will support UK industry to develop cost-effective, zero-emission HGVs and their refuelling infrastructure in the UK. These trials will advance R&D in the technologies of catenary electric, battery electric and hydrogen-powered HGVs, allowing us to begin the commercial roll-out of the appropriate new technologies before the end of the decade.

In addition, the recently announced plug-in truck grant reduces the purchase price of zero emission commercial vehicles for consumers. Grant rates for eligible trucks are set at 20% of the purchase price, with up to £25,000 of funding available for the largest HGVs. This grant should incentivise increased uptake in zero emission HGVs.

We will also be consulting on a date for phasing out the sale of new diesel heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), to drive innovation and development, and to increase the uptake of zero emission alternatives within the HGV sector.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Theatre**Giles Watling:**[\[3151\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU on UK hauliers supporting theatre productions that originate in the UK to undertake a continuous multinational tour in Europe.

Rachel Maclean:

Our assessment is that the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) ensures that the majority of haulage operations will continue as they did before the end of the transition period. Under the agreement, UK operators are limited to 2 movements within the EU before returning to the UK.

■ Network Rail: Job Description

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[4678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason Network Rail has revised the job descriptions of its Safety, Health and Environment Specialists, reducing their required level of professional qualification and broadening their responsibilities; and whether he has made an assessment of the effect of that matter on railway safety.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The qualifications required in the role have remained unchanged.

■ Network Rail: Vacancies

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[4011\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the current vacancy rate is within Network Rail as defined by its Target Operating Model.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

At Network Rail there are currently 279 positions that have the status vacancy.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[4677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the current vacancy rate is within the Governance Function at Network Rail as defined by its Target Operating Model.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

At Network Rail, in 'Legal and Corporate Services' there are 68 roles and 3 roles have the status vacancy.

■ Northern Rail Franchise: Standards

Damien Moore: [\[3138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to enhance rail performance between Southport and Manchester Piccadilly stations.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We are looking at a range of measures to increase rail performance across Manchester including the route between Southport to Manchester Piccadilly. This is part of the consultation on Manchester timetable changes which was held earlier this year and the responses are still being considered.

■ Rail Review

Damien Moore: [\[3142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Williams Rail Review.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The government committed to bringing forward vital sector-wide reforms and commissioned Keith Williams to carry out the first root and branch review of the rail industry in a generation. I am delighted to confirm that we published the Williams-

Shapps Plan for Rail on 20 May, which sets out how the Government will transform the railway. These reforms will create a more accountable, efficient and truly-passenger focused railway.

Link to the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-british-railways-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail>

■ **Railway Stations: Visual Impairment**

James Wild:

[6489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring Network Rail to install safety tactile edging at all railway station platforms by 2026.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have asked Network Rail to develop a programme to aim to install platform edge tactile strips on every platform in Great Britain.

I will make a further announcement in due course.

■ **Railways: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3106]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) South Western Railway and (b) other rail operators to increase the number of carriages on suburban routes to 10 carriages to ensure safe social distancing.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Customer numbers on South Western Railway services are currently at approximately 30% of pre-Covid levels and the service currently operated provides 85% of pre-Covid capacity. Some instances of overcrowding have been reported this year however it is individual carriages that are overcrowded rather than the whole train.

SWR are making onboard announcements asking passengers to use the whole train. The number of 10 car trains operated in the 'peak' has increased by over 10% since Monday 17th May.

In preparation for the easing of restrictions, operators have already increased provision to approximately 85 per cent of pre-pandemic service levels, targeting areas of high demand. Further changes will be made this year.

■ **Railways: Infrastructure**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the level of construction materials available to rail infrastructure projects.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The availability of construction materials is regularly reviewed by High Speed Two (HS2) Limited, Network Rail, and the Department for Transport. Our latest assessments do not currently predict an impact on the cost and schedule ranges, published in the HS2 March 2021 Parliamentary Report, or Network Rail's Control Period Budget.

■ **Railways: Parking****Rachael Maskell:**[\[4635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much revenue Network Rail has made from car parking charges in the last five years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail has made a total of £96.7m of revenue from car parking charges over the last five years. Revenue from car parks forms part of the income which is reinvested in the railways.

■ **Railways: Visual Impairment****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[4680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure the safety of blind and partially-sighted people while they use the railway network.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We have continued to support the Access for All programme that upgrades railway stations for disabled passengers, including those with visual impairments.

I have also asked Network Rail to develop a programme to aim to install platform edge tactile strips on every platform in Great Britain.

■ **Railways: Wales****Hywel Williams:**[\[4535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the Barnett consequential payment to the Welsh Government in the event that responsibility for rail in Wales was devolved in the same manner as in Scotland.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There are currently no plans for further devolution of the railway in Wales beyond the Core Valley lines which were devolved in March 2020. The Welsh and English railways are highly integrated. In the absence of a specific devolution proposal, it is difficult to make any meaningful assessment of a Barnett consequential.

Hywel Williams:[\[4536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding has been invested in the rail network in Wales in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

During this financial year (2021/2022), the third year of the current Network Rail Control Period (which runs from 2019 to 2024), planned spend on renewals in Wales is £226 million.

The past expenditure on renewals in Wales by year during this Control Period was £223 million in 2020/2021 and £185 million in 2019/2020.

While figures for expenditure on enhancements as a separate line item are not easily available given the nature of Network Rail funding and the different sources of funding for projects that are termed as 'enhancements', there was from FY18/19 to FY20/21 an estimated £143m invested in enhancements in Wales, predominantly in FY20/21.

Hywel Williams:[\[4537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the amount of funding that would be allocated to the Welsh rail system in the event that funding was allocated in proportion to (a) the number of passenger journeys, (b) the length of the rail network and (c) on a per capita basis.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

DfT has not made such an assessment. While these factors such as total track miles and passenger miles impact the cost base of the railway, overall the railway is not funded on this basis. Railway decisions are made on a range of operational and engineering needs as well as economic, commercial, social and environmental considerations. This is in addition to considering the impact of wider transport investments taken as a whole.

■ Taxis: Finance**Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[5179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Ministers and (b) officials at HM Treasury on the need for continued financial support for taxi drivers at risk of vehicle repossession.

Rachel Maclean:

Throughout the pandemic, Department for Transport ministers and officials have engaged regularly with other Government departments, including the Treasury, to discuss issues faced by owners, operators and drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs).

The majority of taxi and PHV drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Operators and drivers may also be eligible for other sources of support, including locally administered grant funding. An online support finder tool has been made available to help businesses and self-employed workers determine what support is available to them.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[5180]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with (a) Ministers and (b) officials at the Department for Transport on the need for continued financial support for taxi drivers at risk of vehicle repossession.

Rachel Maclean:

Throughout the pandemic, Department for Transport ministers and officials have engaged regularly with other Government departments, including the Treasury, and BEIS to discuss issues faced by owners, operators and drivers of taxis and private hire vehicles (PHVs).

The majority of taxi and PHV drivers are self-employed and can therefore apply for grants through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Operators and drivers may also be eligible for other sources of support, including locally administered grant funding. An online support finder tool has been made available to help businesses and self-employed workers determine what support is available to them.

■ Tonnage Tax

Simon Fell:

[4704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with relevant stakeholders on a refresh to the tonnage tax regime.

Robert Courts:

The Government is engaged in regular discussions with stakeholders at both Ministerial and official level. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the tonnage tax regime under review and regularly engages with relevant stakeholders. Any changes to the tax system are considered and announced by the Chancellor.

■ Trains: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[4013]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the rate of covid-19 transmission on trains where social distancing is (a) maintained and (b) not possible; and what steps he is taking to reduce the risk of covid-19 transmission to staff and passengers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is collaborating across the UK's research and innovation community, including with the Rail Safety and Standards Board, to build and assess a broad base of evidence to better understand transmission and interventions that help reduce transmission risk. This includes working with SAGE, industry and academia on the Transport Risk Assessment for COVID Knowledge (TRACK) project. This is an 18-month, £2 million UK Research and Innovation-funded project designed to address critical knowledge gaps around transmission of COVID19 on public transport,

including on rail. Outputs from this project will continue to help inform decisions and practices for mitigating risk of transmission in public transport.

We have issued comprehensive guidance to train operators on the steps they need to take to protect staff and passengers in line with Public Health England advice, as well as safer travel guidance for passengers, both of which are regularly reviewed and updated. We have been working closely with operators to ensure that there are appropriate procedures in place and clearly communicated to passengers. Passengers are urged to plan ahead and to follow safer travel guidance.

■ Trains: Hitachi

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[3114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the projected lifespan of Hitachi's Intercity Class 800 series trains have been shortened as a result of cracking.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In terms of the Department's IEP Trains, we have a contract with Agility for them to be available for service for another 24.5 years. We require Agility to meet that obligation.

The remaining life of the other Hitachi Trains that were impacted by this issue will be a matter for the relevant Rolling Stock Leading Company.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[3115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the Government has assessed whether it is entitled to compensation as a result of cracking within the Hitachi Intercity Class 800 series trains

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The agreements in place to use the affected trains contain provisions that protect the taxpayer.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[3116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has made an assessment of whether the cracking issue identified in the Hitachi Intercity Class 800 will potentially worsen over time.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Hitachi are investigating the cause of these cracks. It is therefore too early to say if this will worsen over time until the trains are modified to prevent this issue reoccurring, that is why there is a detailed inspection regime of each train, and if there is any evidence of any cracking that could impact of the safe operation of the train it will not be used for passenger service.

My expectation of Hitachi is that they will identify the cause and rectify to prevent reoccurrence.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[4005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the regime of welding the Hitachi Intercity Class 800 series trains is planned to take place; and whether that process will take place before a metallurgical analysis.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Hitachi, as the manufacturer and maintainer of the trains, is undertaking a thorough investigation into the causes of the cracking that was found. Its findings will be reviewed by all parties concerned and until that is complete, it is inappropriate to speculate on causes or on the solutions.

■ **Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3956\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether a UK national returning to the UK from a country on the Amber list under covid-19 travel restrictions is required to quarantine for 10 days at home.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the Government has placed Sweden on the Amber list under covid-19 travel restrictions.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will set out the criteria for countries being placed on the (a) Amber and (b) Red travel list under covid-19 travel restrictions; and for what reason travel to Amber list countries is allowed despite being strongly discouraged by the Government.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will set out the criteria required for countries within Europe to be moved to the Green travel list from the (a) Amber and (b) Red travel list under covid-19 travel restrictions.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance he plans to provide to travellers in Amber zone countries in the event that those countries are moved to the Red zone under covid-19 travel restrictions whilst those travellers are visiting those countries.

Robert Courts:

Individuals should not travel to countries or territories on the amber and red list.

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) produces risk assessments of countries and territories. This risk is based on factors such as the level of community transmission of variants of concern or variant under investigation, levels of testing, genomic sequencing and reporting. A summary of the JBC methodology has been published on GOV.UK, alongside key data that supports ministers' decisions.

Passengers arriving in England from amber-list countries are required to self-isolate in appropriate accommodation for 10 days, starting the day of their arrival in England.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[3962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the Government's policy is on whether tour operators should run holidays to countries classified as in the Amber zone under covid-19 travel restrictions.

Robert Courts:

We have made enormous progress this year in tackling the pandemic across Britain. That progress has been hard won and it is important that we don't risk undermining it now. International travel is now governed by a new traffic light system. Health measures at the border, after arrival, will vary depending on whether travelling from a green, amber or red country.

The government has made clear that given the virus is still spreading in many parts of the world, the public should not travel to amber and red countries, and instead should only travel to countries on the green list for leisure.

TREASURY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Peter Dowd:

[\[3902\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the status of the UK-China Bond Connect.

John Glen:

A UK-China Bond Connect does not exist, so no assessment has been made of its status.

Peter Dowd:

[\[3904\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish a list of UK companies who are currently participating in the UK-China Cooperation Fund.

John Glen:

The UK-China Cooperation Fund is a private sector initiative. Participation in the fund is an independent commercial matter for the companies concerned.

Peter Dowd:

[\[3905\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many British companies have issued shares on the Shanghai Stock Market as part of the London-Shanghai Stock Connect.

Peter Dowd:

[\[3906\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many Chinese companies have issued shares on the London Stock Exchange as part of the London-Shanghai Stock Connect.

John Glen:

The London-Shanghai Stock Connect is a commercial initiative. Information about the companies involved is publicly available, whether via the relevant exchanges, the companies listed, and third-party news and data providers.

Bank Services**Hywel Williams:****[2896]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions has he had with (a) bank and card issuers, (b) the Financial Conduct Authority, c) the British Bankers' Association and (d) the UK Cards Association on (i) subscription traps and (ii) supporting customers to cancel continuous payment authorisations.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to tackling subscriptions traps and other business practices that harm consumers. To that end, the Government has been working closely with regulators to ensure consumers can easily cancel unwanted subscription contracts and avoid facing unreasonable charges.

Regarding Continuous Payment Authorities (CPAs), the Payment Services Regulations regulate how CPAs are established, and the rights and obligations of payers, payees and payment service providers. In its published guidance on the regulations, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) states that consumers have the right to cancel CPAs by contacting their payment service provider at any time before the end of the business day before a payment is due to be made, and to obtain an immediate refund from their payment service provider if any future payments are debited from their account after they have revoked their consent.

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

Details of ministerial and permanent secretary meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-giftsand-overseas-travel>

Blackmore Bond: Insolvency**Justin Madders:****[3935]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he had with people who lost their life savings as a result of the collapse of Blackmore Bond Plc prior to making the decision not to establish a compensation scheme.

John Glen:

I am acutely aware of the situation at Blackmore Bond plc, and I am mindful that many individuals have lost money after investing in minibonds with the firm, which must be extremely distressing.

The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) is the compensation scheme of last resort for financial services. The FSCS is an independent non-governmental body that carries out its compensation function within rules set by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA), who are also independent of Government. Its scope is strictly limited and it can only pay compensation when a relevant regulated activity has been undertaken.

It is an important point of principle that the government does not step in to pay compensation in respect of failed financial services firms that fall outside of the FSCS. Doing so would create the wrong set of incentives for individuals and an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer.

However, as you will be aware, the government has taken the extraordinary step of establishing a compensation scheme for another failed minibond firm, London Capital & Finance (LCF). The government has considered the issues carefully, and the situation at LCF is unique and exceptional. While other minibond firms have failed, LCF is the only minibond firm which was authorised by the FCA and sold bonds in order to 'on-lend' to other companies. In particular, Blackmore Bond plc was not authorised by the FCA, and was not undertaking a regulated activity.

While I have not seen evidence that would indicate that the regulatory failings at the FCA were the primary cause of the losses incurred by LCF bondholders, they are a significant factor that the government has taken into account when deciding to establish this scheme.

■ Cryptocurrencies

John Spellar:

[3796]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 23 April 2021 to Question 180919 on Bitcoin: electricity, what his planned timescale is for providing a common definition for environmentally sustainable economy activities for (a) Bitcoin and (b) other crypto-currencies.

John Glen:

The Cryptoasset Taskforce, comprising HM Treasury, the Financial Conduct Authority, and the Bank of England, considers the impact of cryptoassets and assesses what, if any, regulation is required in response. The Government stands ready to respond to emerging risks or changes in the market and will continue to monitor developments in cryptoassets.

In November 2020, the Chancellor announced that the UK will implement a green taxonomy – a common framework for determining which activities can be defined as environmentally sustainable – which will improve understanding of the impact of firms' activities and investments on the environment and support our transition to a sustainable economy. More details on the green taxonomy will be announced in due course.

■ International Monetary System

Liam Byrne: [\[2893\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his policy is on the reallocation of the IMF's existing stock of Special Drawing Rights.

John Glen:

The IMF Special Drawing Right (SDR) is an international reserve asset designed to supplement the official reserves of IMF member countries. SDRs are allocated to members, including the UK, in proportion to their IMF quota shares. HMG therefore holds SDRs as part of the UK's international reserves.

The UK has previously used its SDRs to lend to the IMF's concessional financing facility, the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT). The UK also strongly supports work on a new SDR allocation to provide additional financing to low-income countries. As this year's G7 Chair, the UK will continue to work closely with the IMF and international partners on options for the further voluntary channelling of SDRs.

■ Mortgages: Applications

Ben Lake: [\[3099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with high street banks on the treatment of mortgage applications by people in receipt of support through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

John Glen:

Ministers and officials regularly meet with lenders to understand their lending policies. However, decisions concerning the pricing and availability of loans, including application requirements, remain commercial decision for lenders which the Government does not seek to intervene in.

For individuals applying for new credit, it remains important that lenders are able to carry out the proper checks to ensure that these individuals are not lent to in an unaffordable way, especially if, for example, a borrower's income has changed as a result of Covid-19.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recognises that lenders should have flexibility to decide what evidence of income they can accept from self-employed customers. Due to the wide variety of mortgage products available in the UK, self-employed borrowers may find it useful to contact a broker in order to find a lender that is prepared to lend based on the available evidence of income.

■ Veterinary Services: VAT

Dr James Davies: [\[3064\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of reducing the rate of VAT on (a) veterinary services and (b) animal medications as a means of promoting animal welfare.

Jesse Norman:

Under the VAT rules, veterinary medicines supplied to certain charities may be eligible for a zero rate of VAT. Otherwise, veterinary services and animal medications are subject to the standard rate of VAT.

Changing the rate of VAT on veterinary services and animal medication would come at a considerable cost to the Exchequer. The Government has no current plans to change the VAT treatment of such services and goods, but keeps all taxes under review

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[900680\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on the timeframe for publication of the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy 2021 to 2024.

Kemi Badenoch:

We will publish the new cross-government Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy this year. We are currently analysing over 180,000 responses to the first-ever Violence Against Women and Girls Call for Evidence we ran, which will help inform the Strategy.

This was a significant response and we are working closely with all government departments to ensure the development of the Strategy takes into account those views.

Theo Clarke:[\[900681\]](#)

What steps she is taking to support female entrepreneurs.

Jerome Mayhew:[\[900689\]](#)

What steps she is taking to support female entrepreneurs.

Kemi Badenoch:

Our Start Up Loans Company has a great track record, supporting female entrepreneurs with over 33,000 loans worth over £270.5 million since the scheme launched in 2012, to the end of April 2021. This represents 40% of the total amount lent. Over £4.5 million of these loans have been made since the start of April 2021. The scheme provides intensive support to new entrepreneurs, including low-cost government-backed loans and free mentoring.

In March, we announced an award of £50,000 each to the UK's top female innovators, as well as bespoke mentoring, to scale up and bring to market their innovations, and to help the UK recover from COVID-19 and tackle global challenges.

The Government has taken active measures, publishing the Investing in Women Code and working with industry through the actions agreed by the Rose Review. In response to the Rose Review recommendations, we set an ambition to increase the

number of female entrepreneurs by half by 2030, equivalent to nearly 600,000 additional female entrepreneurs.

The government-backed British Business Bank is part of HM Treasury's Women in Finance Charter, which asks financial services firms to commit to industry actions to prepare their female talent for leadership positions.

Sally-Ann Hart:

[900683]

What steps her Department is taking to tackle geographic inequality of opportunity.

Kemi Badenoch:

Tackling geographic inequality and Levelling Up across the whole country is a key ambition of this government.

To support this, in December the Minister for Women and Equalities announced the Equality Data Programme, to ensure that geographic and socio-economic inequality is taken into account, alongside other factors, when identifying barriers to opportunity.

Sponsorship of the Social Mobility Commission has now moved across to the Equality Hub and will play a crucial role in tackling regional inequalities.

Additionally, as part of our commitment to spreading opportunity the Cabinet Office will relocate to Glasgow and York as part of the Places for Growth programme.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[6471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department provides people who have become carers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department has provided significant additional support for carers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The role that unpaid carers play has perhaps been more important than ever over the last year or so. That is why we have focussed on ensuring carers do not inadvertently stop receiving Carer's Allowance because of changes to patterns of care. This includes allowing emotional support to count towards the 35 hours of care being provided by the carer as well as relaxing the rules around breaks in care. These changes aim to support carers whose role, in many cases, became harder due to the need to self-isolate or shield the person they care for. These provisions will be in place until the end of August 2021 providing unpaid carers receiving Carer's Allowance with some extra flexibility in the way they provide care.

As well as Carer's Allowance, carers have access to the full range of social security benefits. For example, carers on Universal Credit can receive around an additional £1,950 a year through the Carer Element. And due to the temporary Covid-19 uplift, around 300,000 carer households receiving Universal Credit benefitted from an

additional £1,040 during the 20/21 financial year. So this Government has chosen to focus extra support on those carers who need it most.

And very importantly the Department worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England to help identify unpaid carers who were eligible for a Covid vaccine as part of Priority Group 6. As a result, more than half a million carers receiving benefit received a letter inviting them to book an appointment for a vaccine.

■ Children: Maintenance

Damien Moore:

[\[3147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to enforce deduction from earning orders.

Guy Opperman:

When a payment has not been received from an employer through a Deduction from Earnings Order (DEO), the Child Maintenance Service receive an alert and takes prompt action to investigate.

Account Managers and enforcement colleagues engage with employers to ensure they understand the DEO process and legal implications of not implementing the order, which could result in prosecutions or fines.

We have also introduced a new on-line service specifically for employers to ensure money deducted through DEOs is promptly allocated and paid to customers.

■ Children: Poverty

Layla Moran:

[\[5254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the £20 uplift in universal credit on levels of child poverty in (a) England and (b) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency.

Will Quince:

No assessment has been made.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending an estimated £112 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2020/21. This included around £7.4 billion of Covid-related welfare policy measures.

We introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme providing funding to Local Authorities in England to help the most vulnerable children and families stay warm and well fed during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

As the economy recovers, our ambition is to help people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of

poverty. We are investing over £30 billion in our ambitious Plan for Jobs which is already delivering for people of all ages right across the country.

Layla Moran:

[5255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the levels of child poverty in (a) England and (b) Oxford West and Abingdon constituency.

Will Quince:

This Government is wholly committed to tackling poverty. Throughout the pandemic, our priority has been to support the most vulnerable including through spending an additional £7.4 billion to strengthen the welfare system, taking our total expenditure on welfare support for people of working age to an estimated £112 billion in 2020/21. Additionally, in December 2020 we introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme, providing funding to Local Authorities in England to enable them to support people with food and essential utility bills during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

National Statistics on the number and percentage of children in low income are published annually in the “Households Below Average Income” publication. Data for Oxford West and Abingdon is unavailable due to insufficient sample size.

Latest statistics for the levels of children who are in low income in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2020>, “children-hbai-timeseries-1994-95-2019-20-tables” in table 4.16ts (relative low income, before and after housing costs) and in table 4.22ts (absolute low income, before and after housing costs).

In the three years to 2019/20, the absolute child poverty rate, before housing costs, in England was 18%, down 3 percentage points since the three years to 2009/10

The Department now publishes supplementary official statistics on the number of children in low income families at constituency level. Children in Low Income Families data is published annually.

The latest figures on the number of children who are in low income in Oxford West and Abingdon and in England, covering 2019/20, can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2020/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-fye-2015-to-fye-2020>.

Due to methodological differences, the figures in these two publications are not comparable.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victims

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3995]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support victims of domestic violence to access (a) safe and secure housing and (b) financial support.

Will Quince:

The benefit system acts as a safety net for people who find themselves in need of financial support with living and housing costs for a variety of reasons. A range of Universal Credit measures are designed to support victims of domestic abuse, including special provisions for temporary accommodation, easements from work-related requirements, same day advances and signposting to expert third-party services.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government have introduced a new duty on local authorities, which aims to ensure that all domestic abuse victims, including children, have access to safety and support within safe accommodation when they need it. In addition, provisions within the Act will also ensure that all homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance.

■ Employment: Remote Working**Esther McVey:**[\[3850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential employment opportunities of remote working for (a) vulnerable, (b) disabled and (c) elderly people who might struggle to physically attend a workplace.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is aware of the employment opportunities which flexible working can help create for vulnerable, disabled, older workers and more generally for those who might struggle to attend a workplace.

The Government has committed to consult on making flexible working the default unless employers have good reasons not to. The consultation will consider flexible working in all its forms – it is not just about where people work, but also about when they work and the associated number of hours. The consultation will be launched in due course.

In March 2018, the Flexible Working Taskforce – a partnership across business groups, trade unions, charities, and government departments – was set up and ran for a period of 18 months to advise the Government on policies and proposals around flexible working. Earlier this year the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets wrote to the co-chair of the Taskforce, Peter Cheese, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), to commission a further 18 months' work from the Taskforce to help inform the Government's thinking as we develop the detail of new policies and navigate the impact of Covid-19 on future ways of working.

In recognition of the changes brought by the pandemic, Access to Work introduced a more flexible offer to support disabled people move into and remain in employment. The new flexible offer complements support provided by employers and contains a combination of support that can be tailored to meet the needs of new Covid-19 working arrangements, including for remote working.

■ Food Banks

Feryal Clark:

[3195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has met with food bank (a) providers and (b) user groups in developing her Department's food bank use reduction plans.

Will Quince:

Ministers and officials from across Government continue to engage on this issue with a range of stakeholders and charitable organisations including food bank providers.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, spending an estimated £112 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2020/21 including around £7.4 billion of Covid-related welfare policy measures.

We also introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme providing funding to Local Authorities in England to help the most vulnerable children and families stay warm and well fed during the coldest months. It will now run to June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

Food insecurity is an issue we take very seriously which is why we have published data on household food security from the Family Resources Survey for the first time, to get a better understanding of the lived experience of families.

As the economy recovers, our ambition is to help people move into and progress in work as quickly as possible based on clear evidence around the importance of employment, particularly where it is full-time, in substantially reducing the risks of poverty. We are investing over £30 billion in our ambitious Plan for Jobs which is already delivering for people of all ages right across the country.

■ Food Banks and Food Poverty: Enfield North

Feryal Clark:

[3193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) food poverty and (b) levels of food bank usage in Enfield North.

Will Quince:

We take the issue of food insecurity seriously, which is why we added internationally used food security questions to the Family Resources Survey in 19/20 and published the data in March this year. Food insecurity data from the Family Resources survey for 20/21 is not yet available. Data is not collected at constituency level.

This Government is wholly committed to supporting those on low incomes, including by increasing the living wage, and by spending an estimated £112 billion on welfare support for people of working age in 2020/21. This included around £7.4 billion of Covid-related welfare policy measures.

We introduced our Covid Winter Grant Scheme providing funding to Local Authorities in England to help the most vulnerable children and families stay warm and well fed

during the coldest months. It will now run until June as the Covid Local Support Grant, with a total investment of £269m.

We are investing up to £220m in the Holiday Activities and Food programme which has been expanded to every local authority across England this year. Children eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals will have the option to join a holiday club programme that provides healthy food and enriching activities during the summer, Christmas and Easter holidays in 2021. We also increased the value of Healthy Start Vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 in April.

Food banks are independent charitable organisations and there is no consistent and accurate measure of food bank usage at a constituency or national level.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Sir David Evennett:

[\[2200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many jobs have been made available through the Kickstart Scheme in (a) the London Borough of Bexley, (b) Greater London and (c) England as at 17 May 2021.

Mims Davies:

Delivering the Kickstart Scheme at pace has led to a limited data set which makes it harder to accurately present a snapshot of a smaller geographical area.

We are continuing to develop our data, which may help in sharing local authority level information in due course.

We are able to provide, however, that in the ONS defined region of London, as of 6 May 2021 around 22,740 jobs had been made available for young people to apply for and around 4,500 jobs started by young people on the Kickstart Scheme.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing Kickstart applications, referrals and starts, the data collected might be subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system which has been developed quickly. The management information presented here has not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics, but is provided in the interests of transparency. Work is ongoing to improve the quality of information available for the programme.

■ Pension Credit: Personal Savings

Navendu Mishra:

[\[4732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what incentives are in place for people in receipt of pension credit to continue saving when they reach the savings threshold of £10,000 and their entitlement reduces.

Guy Opperman:

Unlike working age income-related benefits, Pension Credit has no capital limit beyond which entitlement to the benefit ceases.

Pension Credit is an income-related benefit intended to provide a 'top-up' for pensioners on a low income. As with all income-related benefits, due regard is given to all of a person's financial resources when calculating an award. This ensures that taxpayer support is directed to those pensioners who are less well-off and need it most.

■ Pensions: Females

Kirsten Oswald: [\[3913\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the number of women who have had a pensions clawback deduction from their occupational pension before they reached state pension age in each year since 2011.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[3914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of women who are members of occupational pension schemes for which the scheme rules have not been adjusted to prevent pensions clawback being applied before a member reaches state pension age.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[3915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the effects on women of increases to the state pension age and clawback clauses in occupational pension schemes.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[3916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with (a) pension providers and (b) trade unions on the effects on women of increases to the state pension age and clawback clauses in occupational pension schemes.

Guy Opperman:

No such discussions on this specific subject have taken place with Cabinet colleagues, pension providers or trade unions.

The Government does not collect the specific data sought.

■ Post Office Card Account

Julian Sturdy: [\[3848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect on elderly people and people with mobility issues in towns and villages without bank branches of the discontinuation of the Post Office card system.

Guy Opperman:

The Department is committed to supporting the Department's customers to access their benefit and pension payments as we transform our payment exception services.

Access to a standard account through a bank, building society or credit union enables citizens to benefit from the wider range of financial services and to achieve greater financial inclusion.

The Post Office delivers every day banking services for a large number of banks and building societies to enable citizens with a standard account to withdraw cash, free of charge, deposit cash and cheques and make balance enquires at any Post Office counter including mobile Post Office branches.

The full range of every day personal banking services that the Post Office delivers from any Post Office branch, and for whom they deliver them, is available on the Post Office website <https://www.postoffice.co.uk/everydaybanking>.

The new payment exception service will ensure that customers can continue to access cash in their local area.

■ Social Security Benefits

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been (a) placed into financial hardship, (b) become destitute or (c) become homeless while subject to the benefit cap in (i) Slough and (ii) England.

Mims Davies:

This information is not available.

Getting our claimants back into work remains our primary concern and returning to employment will significantly increase the likelihood of a household not being affected by the cap.

■ Social Security Benefits: Domestic Abuse

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[3102]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the benefit cap policy on the ability of victims of domestic abuse to flee that abuse and secure alternative accommodation.

Mims Davies:

No assessment has been made.

The benefit system acts as a safety net for people who find themselves in need of financial support with living and housing costs for a variety of reasons. A range of Universal Credit (UC) measures are designed to support victims of domestic abuse, including special provisions for temporary accommodation, easements from work-related requirements, same day advances and signposting to expert third-party services. There is also help available for childcare costs for children of any age. Claimants can recover up to 85% of their eligible childcare costs through UC (or 70% of those costs through working tax credits)

Further assistance may be available through the Flexible Support Fund.

Under the Domestic Abuse Act, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government have introduced a new duty on local authorities, which aims to ensure that all domestic abuse victims, including children, have access to safety and support within safe accommodation when they need it. In addition, provisions within the Act will also ensure that all homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance.

■ Social Security Benefits: Lone Parents

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[3104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the proportion of England in which one parent families subject to the benefit cap with (a) two children, (b) three children, (c) four children, (d) five children would be unable to afford their rent and essential living costs.

Mims Davies:

No estimate has been made. The benefit cap provides a strong work incentive and fairness for hard-working taxpaying households and encourages people to move into work, where possible.

A range of Universal Credit (UC) measures are designed to support claimants, including one parent families such as easements from work-related requirements, same day advances and signposting to expert third-party services. There is also help available for childcare costs for children of any age. Claimants can recover up to 85% of their eligible childcare costs through UC (or 70% of those costs through working tax credits). Further assistance may be available through the Flexible Support Fund.

Housing Benefit paid to a UC claimant is exempt from the cap. Claimants can approach their local authority to be considered for a Discretionary Housing Payment. These can be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of UC who face a shortfall in meeting their rental costs.

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Justin Madders:

[\[3934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish the new scheme for Special Rules for Terminal Illness.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is committed to delivering an improved benefit system for claimants that are nearing the end of their lives and is working across Government to bring forward proposals following the evaluation. The Department remains committed to implementing the key areas identified in the evaluation and will announce the outcome in due course.

■ Unemployment

Colleen Fletcher:

[3009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent comparative assessment her Department has made of the (a) unemployment and (b) youth unemployment rates in (i) Coventry North East constituency and (ii) the UK; and what steps her Department is taking to reduce unemployment in that constituency.

Mims Davies:

The information requested is published and available at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>

Guidance for users can be found at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>

At the 2020 Spending Review, the Chancellor confirmed A Plan for Jobs, which placed DWP at the heart of providing significantly expanded employment support to people becoming newly unemployed and those falling in to long-term unemployment, investing over £30bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs.

■ Unemployment: Young People

Cat Smith:

[3022]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of youth unemployment on the level of national output in 2021.

Mims Davies:

No assessment of the potential effect of youth unemployment on the level of national output in 2021 has been made.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed to supporting everyone who has been affected by the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the labour market. We want everyone to be able to find a job, progress in work and thrive in the labour market, whoever they are and wherever they live.

Through Plan for Jobs, the government invested £30bn in measures to create, support and protect jobs. This included over £3bn investment in the Kickstart programme for young people and an additional 13,500 Work Coaches in our Jobcentres, as well as other measures focussed on boosting work search, skills and apprenticeships.

Cat Smith:

[3023]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the report by the Prince's Trust and Learning and Work Institute entitled Facing the future: employment prospects for young people after Coronavirus published in March 2021, if she will respond to the finding in that report that youth unemployment will have a fiscal cost of £2.5 billion in 2021.

Mims Davies:

We have reviewed the report to which the Honourable Lady refers. DWP has made no assessment of the fiscal cost of unemployment outlined in the report.

We recognise that younger people have been some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Our DWP Youth Offer provides the wrap-around support to help this group access so much of the positive provision stood up as part of the Plan for Jobs. Our Youth Employment Programme is complemented by joined-up local delivery through Youth Hubs, as well as specialist Youth Employability Coaches for those with complex needs. Our £2bn Kickstart programme is helping young people into jobs and opportunities which will enhance their future employment prospects and help the economy to recover.

■ Winter Fuel Payments

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[3814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many Winter Fuel Payments remain outstanding for 2020-21.

Guy Opperman:

None.

■ Winter Fuel Payments: Databases

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[3810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the new Winter Fuel Payments database (Seasonal Payment System) was chosen.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[3811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what risk assessments took place before the transfer to the new Winter Fuel Payments database (Seasonal Payment System).

Guy Opperman:

The decision to move to the Seasonal Payment System was based on a number of factors including best use of technology, commercial and operational considerations as we strive to deliver a modern and effective welfare system. Risk assessments took place before the start of the exercise.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[3812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether problems that may cause delays in Winter Fuel Payments were identified in relation to the new Seasonal Payment System; and what mitigation was put in place to avoid such delays.

Guy Opperman:

99.9% of customers were paid by the 23rd of December, with the remaining 0.1% paid by the 31st March which is the end of the winter fuel published timeframe. There are no outstanding annual Winter Fuel Payments for the winter 2020-21 exercise.

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[3813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many delayed Winter Fuel Payments were caused by incorrect address transfers in the new Seasonal Payment System.

Guy Opperman:

No payments were delayed due to data transfer between the systems.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

DEFENCE

■ Immigration Fees Public Consultation

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

[\[HCWS57\]](#)

The Secretary of State for Defence (The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP) and the Secretary of State for the Home Department (The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP):

There is a long and proud tradition of non-UK Service personnel serving in the British Armed Forces. Together with their British and Irish counterparts they defend the UK at home and abroad. The British Armed Forces are renowned and respected around the world and applications from non-UK personnel are always welcome and of a high calibre. The Ministry of Defence is a modern employer and embraces recruiting talent from all elements of society and the advantages of continuing to have non-UK Service personnel serving in the British Armed Forces and the diversity and skills they bring are hugely valued.

Non-UK Service personnel are exempt from immigration control during their Regular service in the Armed Forces. Many of these brave men and women who serve our country may wish to stay in the UK after their service and use the skills they have gained during their service to contribute positively to our society. In order to do so they must regularise their immigration status, however, some are deterred from applying to regularise their immigration status because of the costs of doing so. In order to assist those who wish to remain in the UK after their discharge, the Ministry of Defence and the Home Office have already agreed to extend the period that non-UK citizens who are members of the British Armed Forces can apply for settlement in the UK from ten weeks before their discharge to eighteen weeks before their discharge.

We are also announcing the launch of a public consultation on a draft policy proposal on the settlement fees which apply to non-UK Service personnel on leaving the Armed Forces. The draft policy proposal allows for government to waive settlement fees for non-UK Service personnel who meet certain criteria should they apply to remain in the UK at the end of their military service.

Currently, the Home Office charges a fee on each individual who wishes to regularise their immigration status by applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (or Enter) in the UK, more commonly known as settled status or settlement.

Under the draft policy proposal, the UK Government would waive the fee charged by the Home Office when the non-UK Service Person applies for Indefinite Leave to Remain (or Enter), if they have served in the Regular HM Armed Forces for at least twelve years and wish to settle in the UK following their service.

We are seeking public opinion on whether government waiving settlement fees for Service personnel is something which is right and appropriate to do, and also to invite input on the scope of the policy.

The public consultation has been published today (26 May 2021) and will run for six weeks.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Reporting contingent liabilities in relation to cancellation compensation for event organisers participating in phase two of the Events Research Programme**

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Oliver Dowden):

[HCWS58]

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of all members of this House to bring to their attention the Departmental Minute issued today that provides the House with notice of a series of small contingent liabilities created by my Department. This is in relation to a policy to compensate event organisers participating in phase two of the Events Research Programme in the event of their cancellation if public health concerns were to give rise.

The world-leading Events Research Programme ran its first phase of nine pilots (with some running multiple events) in April and May to inform decisions around the safe removal of social distancing at Step 4 of the Roadmap. A second phase of events will continue to build on existing evidence and collect additional data to inform organisers and consumers on the logistical and practical considerations of reopening events safely. The pilots cover a range of settings, venues, and activities so that findings will support the full reopening of similar settings across multiple sectors.

The government will provide compensation on a discretionary basis to event organisers should a pilot event be cancelled due to public health reasons.

This compensation will be capped at £300,000 per event and will cover costs incurred in relation to participation in the programme only (e.g. admission of spectators), recognising the fact that these events would have taken place in line with roadmap restrictions should the programme not exist. In the case of the Liverpool events, as these have been put on specifically as part of the programme, the government will compensate organisers in full should an event be cancelled, but this will be capped at £300,000 in total across the Liverpool events.

The government does not intend to cancel any event in the programme, however public safety comes first and therefore it is prudent to provide this assurance to the organisers assisting the government in reopening the economy.

A copy of the Departmental Minute will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.