



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 16 December 2016 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:31 P.M., 16 December 2016). 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

■ Companies, Partnerships and Groups (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2015

Bill Esterson:

[\[56786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to maintain in force the Companies, Partnerships and Groups (Accounts and Non-Financial Reporting) Regulations 2016 after the UK leaves the EU.

Margot James:

As our future relationship with the EU becomes more clear there will be an opportunity to examine whether certain aspects of company law are still appropriate and cost effective. Consequently we intend to keep the effect and purpose of company non-financial reporting requirements under review, including the requirements of the Companies, Partnerships and Groups (Accounts and Non-Financial Reporting) Regulations 2016.

The UK's company reporting regime is well regarded. We would expect that any review of this legislation would consider the possibility of burden reductions alongside the need to maintain the UK's reputation as a hub of global transparency.

■ Conditions of Employment: EU Law

Melanie Onn:

[\[57333\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to include provision in the Great Repeal Bill to transpose all EU case law affecting workers' rights into UK law.

Margot James:

The Government intends to bring all existing EU law in this area, including case law, under UK law at the point of exit through the Great Repeal Bill.

■ Databases: Standards

Richard Burden:

[\[57492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that appropriate data standards for (a) the automotive sector and (b) other industries are in place to ensure security.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Government published its new National Cyber Security Strategy on 1st November 2016. In it, the link between data security and our national prosperity was vividly highlighted.

The strategy makes it clear that Government is committed to building a secure Internet and sets out an objective for “the majority of online products and services coming into use [to] become ‘secure by default’ by 2021.”

In the case of connected and automated vehicles, Government believes they should be “secure by design”, both to ensure safety and the protection of data, which may include personal data. Government is working closely with industry and the relevant international bodies to achieve this as part of a much wider programme of activity to ensure public trust and acceptance of these technologies, which is vital to realising their significant potential benefits.

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

Clive Lewis:

[57515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to publish the gap in earnings between the (a) highest-paid and lowest-paid full-time employees in his Department and (b) highest-paid employees and average pay in his Department overall.

Margot James:

Government departments do not publish details of the salary of their highest to lowest paid employees.

The Office for National Statistics do, however, publish the salary ratio of highest to median earners for each Civil Service organization. These ratios are published annually as part of Civil Service Statistics and can be found on the Office for National Statistics website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/civilservicestatistics/2016>

Clive Lewis:

[57519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the average hourly earnings are of (a) female, (b) male, (c) BAME and (d) non-BAME employees of his Department.

Margot James:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) was created on 14 July 2016. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) were merged to create this new department.

The median salaries for male and females in the table below are published on the Office for National Statistics website every October. This relates to information as at 31 March 2016.

	BIS	DECC
Male	£39,630	£48,900
Female	£35,410	£36,160

The median salaries of BAME and non-BAME staff in the table below have been calculated using data as at October 2016. These figures reflect the different levels of seniority of the employees that have provided their ethnicity information. This information is declared by individual employees on a voluntary basis.

	BIS	DECC
BAME	£32,090	£36,142
Non-BAME	£48,192	£49,420

Please note; the information supplied is based on staff working 36 or 37 hours a week (dependent on contract and location).

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Staff

Clive Lewis:

[\[57514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether there is a representative of his Department's employees on its departmental board; and what plans he has to provide for additional stakeholder representation on that board.

Margot James:

Yes, employees are represented on the Department's board. The Permanent Secretary is a standing member of the Departmental Board, and meets with the Departmental Trade Unions as staff representatives.

There are several other ways in which the views of employees of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are currently already taken into account by the Departmental Board and its supporting committees.

The Board regularly discusses staff related matters, such as the Civil Service People Survey results which reflect the views of the Department's employees, including views on the transition programme to create a new Department.

The Department's governance structure includes a People and Operations Committee, chaired by the Directors General responsible for People, Corporate Services and the transition programme. This Committee has standing representation from the HR Director and staff diversity networks as full members. Recommendations from the Committee are routinely taken to the Department's Executive Committee for endorsement and approval.

The composition of the Departmental Board is determined by Cabinet Office and HMT's *Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good practice* (2011). Cabinet Office and HMT are currently in the process of refreshing this guidance to reflect current best practice.

The Board also has external Non-Executive Board Members (NEBMs) as standing members. NEBMs provide external challenge and scrutiny and offer wider stakeholder views to the Board.

■ Digital Technology

Richard Burden:

[57493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to promote literacy in digital skills within industries to help reduce the skills gap in digital manufacturing.

Mr Nick Hurd:

We are taking action across the digital skills pipeline – from reforming the computing science curriculum to establishing a National Institute for Coding. In schools, we've announced £67 million for the next 5 years to recruit and train an extra 2,500 maths and physics teachers and upskill 15,000 existing maths and physics teachers.

Higher Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships are helping bring on the technical skills that manufacturers need, and we have seen a 35.5% increase in apprenticeship starts in the Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies sector subject area since 2010/11.

There are 48 university technical colleges (UTCs) now open, providing high quality technical education for young people age 14-19, with a further 7 in development and a government commitment to establish a UTC within reach of every city.

■ Driverless Vehicles

Richard Burden:

[57491]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received on the use of data and cyber security for autonomous vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

Government believes connected and automated vehicles should be "secure by design". Government is working closely with industry and the relevant international bodies to achieve this as part of a much wider programme of activity to ensure public trust and acceptance of these technologies, which is vital to realising their significant potential benefits.

■ Energy Supply

Helen Jones:

[57069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the public investment needed to maintain the UK's energy capacity in the next 20 years.

Jesse Norman:

[Holding answer 15 December 2016]: Our current energy pipeline, published in the National Infrastructure Plan 2016 which includes investment to 2030, suggests that £18bn (or 9%) of total investment is to be publicly funded, £177bn is to be privately funded, whilst a final £12bn of energy investment will be jointly funded by the private and public sectors.

■ Energy: Industry

Nic Dakin:

[\[57425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to secure contingency funding for the continuation of compensation for the indirect costs of the Renewables Obligation and small scale Feed-in Tariffs for energy intensive industries beyond April 2017.

Jesse Norman:

We aim to introduce an exemption for Energy Intensive Industries from the indirect costs of the Renewables Obligation and small-scale Feed-in Tariffs from 1 April 2017. It is not currently necessary to allocate contingency funding for the continuation of compensation beyond April 2017.

■ Gratuities

Paula Sherriff:

[\[57543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to respond to the evidence received by his Department's inquiry into tips, gratuities and service charges by the end of 2016; and if he will make a statement.

Margot James:

The Government launched its consultation on tips, gratuities, service and cover charges to receive views on a range of actions to address issues associated with tipping practices. The Government's objective is to ensure workers receive all discretionary payments for service, except those deductions required under tax law. The consultation is now closed and the responses are being considered. The Government Response will be published in due course.

■ Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

Chi Onwurah:

[\[57486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for the implementation of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund; and how that fund will be funded.

Margot James:

Yes, employees are represented on the Department's board. The Permanent Secretary is a standing member of the Departmental Board, and meets with the Departmental Trade Unions as staff representatives.

There are several other ways in which the views of employees of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are currently already taken into account by the Departmental Board and its supporting committees.

The Board regularly discusses staff related matters, such as the Civil Service People Survey results which reflect the views of the Department's employees, including views on the transition programme to create a new Department.

The Department's governance structure includes a People and Operations Committee, chaired by the Directors General responsible for People, Corporate Services and the transition programme. This Committee has standing representation from the HR Director and staff diversity networks as full members. Recommendations from the Committee are routinely taken to the Department's Executive Committee for endorsement and approval.

The composition of the Departmental Board is determined by Cabinet Office and HMT's *Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good practice* (2011). Cabinet Office and HMT are currently in the process of refreshing this guidance to reflect current best practice.

The Board also has external Non-Executive Board Members (NEBMs) as standing members. NEBMs provide external challenge and scrutiny and offer wider stakeholder views to the Board.

■ Industry

Chi Onwurah:

[\[56788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to publish (a) his industrial strategy and (b) consultation on industrial strategy.

Mr Nick Hurd:

The Industrial Strategy is a critical part of the Government's ambition to build an economy that works for everyone. We are working with British industry, local leaders, innovators, employees and consumers to deliver a successful strategy and build the conditions for future success.

We've already taken real action to support industry, including the recent announcement of a £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund, and will start consulting on wider industrial strategy proposals shortly.

■ Living Wage: Wales

Jessica Morden:

[\[57443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people receive the national living wage in (a) Wales and (b) Newport East constituency.

Margot James:

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) estimates that 7.6% of employee jobs in Wales were paid up to 5p above (this is consistent with the Low Pay Commission's approach) the National Living Wage rate in April 2016.

1. Employee jobs are defined as those held by employees and not the self-employed. Figures exclude employees whose pay for the survey pay period was affected by absence.
2. ASHE is based on a 1% sample of jobs taken from HM Revenue and Customs' Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records. Consequently, individuals with more than one job may appear in the sample more than once. Activities of households as employers and extraterritorial organisations are excluded from this analysis.
3. Apprentices aged 25 and above in their second year are included.

We have not produced estimates for Newport East. However, ONS ASHE estimate that 10% of all employee jobs in Newport East Parliamentary Constituency were paid up to £7.20. This differs from BEIS' analysis as it covers all employee jobs and not only those that attract the National Living Wage.

Further information on ONS figures are available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkin/ghours/datasets/placeofworkbyparliamentaryconstituencyashetable9>

■ Manufacturing Industries: Trade Competitiveness

Nic Dakin:

[57426]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to expedite the Government's application to the European Commission to exempt energy intensive industries from the indirect costs of the Renewables Obligation and small scale Feed-in Tariffs and ensure legislation is in place by April 2017.

Jesse Norman:

We are engaging with the European Commission about our state aid pre-notification to move from compensation to exemption for the indirect cost of the Renewables Obligation (RO) and small-scale Feed-in Tariffs (FiT). We aim to introduce the exemption for Energy Intensive Industries (EIs) from 1 April 2017.

The Government continues to provide relief to those EIs most affected by the rising cost of electricity and has paid over £360m in compensation since August 2013.

■ Regulation: Codes of Practice

Chi Onwurah:

[57302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of whether the Regulators Code has met the objectives set for it in those sectors where it has been implemented.

Margot James:

The Regulators Code came into effect on 6 April 2014. It provides a clear framework for how regulators should undertake their duties.

Although no formal assessment has been made, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has taken extensive views from business and is working collaboratively with regulators to support the improvements expected by the Code. A reporting duty on the effect of the Code will be commenced in due course.

■ Renewable Energy

Callum McCaig:

[57448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what meetings he or Ministers of his Department had with representatives of the renewable energy industry on the forthcoming Contracts for Difference auction before that auction was announced.

Jesse Norman:

My rt. hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Ministers regularly meet with representatives of the renewable energy industry to discuss a variety of issues. All Ministerial meetings with external organisations are published quarterly on the gov.uk website at the following link:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/decc-ministerial-gifts-hospitality-meetings-and-travel

■ UK Research and Innovation

Chi Onwurah:

[57430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how UK Research and Innovation will be accountable to (a) Parliament, (b) universities, (c) industry and (d) the research councils.

Joseph Johnson:

The Higher Education and Research Bill and White Paper set out the high level framework for the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) governance and accountability system.

Subject to the will of Parliament, UKRI will incorporate the Research Councils and it is our policy intent for the Executive Chairs of these Councils – along with the CEO, CFO and other senior directors of UKRI – to sit together on an Executive Committee, which will facilitate engagement with the UKRI Board and cross-council working.

UKRI will be a Non-Departmental Public Body of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny as per good practice for such bodies and current practice with the Research Councils. The UKRI CEO will be accounting officer for the organisation and will be accountable for ensuring that UKRI operates within HM Treasury and Cabinet Office guidance. UKRI and its constituent Councils will draw on expertise from the business and research communities in identifying strategic opportunities, identifying opportunities for impact, partnership and alignment of activity.

■ Water Power

Robert Ffello: [\[57331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of sustainable, renewable energy which can be generated from a water mill.

Jesse Norman:

The level of electricity generation is dependent on the flow rate of the water and the difference in elevation between the intake and the outlet. Capacities for run of river plants tend to be below 2 Megawatts and more typically below 500 Kilowatts. Current UK hydro capacity is estimated at 1,750 Megawatts with further potential of around 1,000 Megawatts, mostly at small scale in remote locations.

Robert Ffello: [\[57332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many water mills there are in the UK in (a) total, (b) fully working condition, (c) need of repair and (d) need of full rebuilding.

Jesse Norman:

The Government does not keep data on water mills.

The majority of hydro capacity in Great Britain was installed in Scotland in the first hydro revolution in the 1950s, with a smaller amount installed in Wales. The majority of these installations are still operating. In 2015, it was estimated that there were 1,065 operational plants with a capacity of 1,750 Megawatts, generating 6 Terawatt hours (equivalent to 1.8% of UK electricity supply)[1].

The Government does not monitor the condition of existing hydro power plants in the UK. It is a business decision for companies to determine when to carry out repairs and refurbishments.

[1] www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-renewable-statistics

■ Wind Power

Callum McCaig: [\[57518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 4 November 2016 to Question 50624, what the reason is for the discrepancy between figures given for the cost of onshore wind in the 2020s in his Department's Hinkley Point C Value for Money Assessment, published on 29 September 2016, with a cost of £49-90/MWh and Electricity Generation Costs report, published on 9 November 2016, with costs of £47-76/MWh in 2020 and £46-74/MWh in 2025.

Jesse Norman:

The Electricity Generation Cost report outlines the 'levelised cost' of onshore wind. The levelised cost is a guide to the overall costs for the lifetime of an onshore wind project; by contrast, the cost estimates in the Hinkley Point C value for money assessment are 'Strike Price Comparators' which are not equivalent to levelised cost.

In the value for money assessment, to make the levelised cost more comparable to the HPC Strike Price under the CfD contract, several adjustments were made: these included accounting for the lost generation from the transmission system, the cost of land and the relative difference in system balancing costs of onshore wind compared to nuclear. In addition, the running hours of onshore wind have been taken from a specific scenario where onshore wind was pursued in the absence of the HPC project.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet Office: Pay

Jake Berry: [56981]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the highest-paid and lowest-paid full-time employee in his Department.

Jake Berry: [56995]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the highest-paid and lowest-paid full-time employee in 10 Downing Street.

Jake Berry: [57025]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the pay of full-time staff in the highest pay grade in his Department and average full-time pay in that Department.

Jake Berry: [57039]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the pay of full-time staff in the highest pay grade in 10 Downing Street and average full-time pay in that Department.

Ben Gummer:

The Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office and is included in this reply.

Government departments do not publish details of the salary of their highest to lowest paid employees.

The Office for National Statistics do, however, publish the salary ratio of highest to median earners for each Civil Service organization. These ratios are published annually as part of Civil Service Statistics and can be found on the Office for National Statistics website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/civilservicestatistics/2016>

■ Cabinet Office: Staff

Jake Berry: [57003]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans his Department has to include worker representation on its departmental board.

Jake Berry: [57017]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans 10 Downing Street has to include worker representation on its departmental board.

Ben Gummer:

I refer the Hon. Member to the oral statement on the Corporate Governance Green Paper of 29 November 2016, Official Report, Column 1408.

TREASURY

■ Child Care Tax Credit

Tulip Siddiq: [57328]

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse has been of the childcare element of working tax credits in each year since 2010.

Jane Ellison:

The cost of the childcare element of working tax credits from 2010-11 onwards is available from Table 3.2 from HM Revenue and Customs' Child and Working Tax Credits statistics: finalised annual awards National Statistics publications, available at : <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/personal-tax-credits-statistics>

These have been summarised in the table below :

Annualised entitlement of childcare element (in £ million)

YEAR	SINGLES	COUPLES	TOTAL
2010-11	957	591	1,548
2011-12	758	459	1,217
2012-13	705	416	1,121
2013-14	760	407	1,167
2014-15	793	401	1,194

■ Children: Day Care

Tulip Siddiq: [57329]

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many families have registered a tax-free childcare account in anticipation of that scheme opening in 2017.

Mr David Gauke:

Tax-Free Childcare will be gradually rolled out to parents from early 2017. There is no requirement for parents to pre-register for a Tax-Free Childcare account.

■ **Construction: Self-employed**

Michelle Thomson:

[\[56633\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps are being taken to prevent cases of false self-employment in the construction industry.

Jane Ellison:

The Government introduced legislation in Finance Act 2014 to tackle false self-employment arising through intermediaries. Where there is control over the worker, as a result of the legislation, an intermediary has to operate PAYE and pay National Insurance Contributions. It was estimated that this would lead to 200,000 workers being correctly treated as employed.

Since April 2015, intermediaries also have to submit a quarterly electronic return if they have made payments to a worker without deductions under PAYE. The first returns were made to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in July and November 2015, and HMRC is using the information to tackle false self-employment through intermediaries.

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Trade Competitiveness**

Nic Dakin:

[\[57427\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide contingency funding for the continuation of compensation for the indirect costs of the Renewables Obligation and small scale Feed-in Tariffs for energy intensive industries beyond April 2017.

Mr David Gauke:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him today by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Industry and Energy to Question (57425).

■ **Migrant Workers**

John Penrose:

[\[56709\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the effect on (a) per capita GDP and (b) overall productivity of changes in the migrant share of the adult population.

Simon Kirby:

As noted in the 2012 report by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC), the empirical literature suggests that the impact of migration on aggregate productivity may be mixed and heavily dependent on the type of migrant coming to the UK. Migrants may increase productivity either through a simple 'batting average' effect if they work in higher productivity roles relative to the average for non-migrants, or through increasing the productivity of UK workers through greater specialisation and knowledge transfer. In this report, the MAC established the key role played by skilled migrants in raising

productivity. Further, the 2014 MAC report, 'Migrants in low-skilled work', found low skilled migrants have a neutral impact on UK-born employment rates, GDP per head and productivity.

■ Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme: Northern Ireland

Mr David Anderson: [\[57482\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether there will be an overspend on the Northern Ireland block grant from the Renewable Heating Incentive over the lifetime of the scheme.

Mr David Gauke:

The Treasury sets an allocation related to the costs of the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme in the Northern Ireland Executive's Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget, proportionate to the budgets set in AME for the departments which manage the schemes in Great Britain. Any costs in excess of this AME budget are managed by the Northern Ireland Executive from its block grant or other sources of funding available to it.

■ Sports: Clubs

Oliver Dowden: [\[56712\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many amateur sports clubs have lost their community amateur sports club status since 2002.

Jane Ellison:

Since 2002, 1,172 sports clubs have been deregistered as community amateur sports clubs.

■ Tax Evasion

Richard Fuller: [\[56499\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many tax avoidance cases HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has settled prior to litigation in each of the last five years; and how many of those cases were settled (a) wholly or (b) in part in HMRC's favour.

Jane Ellison:

HM Revenue and Customs settles thousands of enquiries every year, including enquiries into tax avoidance, in line with the Litigation and Settlement Strategy. This is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litigation-and-settlement-strategy-lss>.

Detailed records of avoidance cases taken to litigation are maintained, however, not in a format that enables the information requested to be provided.

■ Taxation: Rebates

John Mann: [\[56743\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much the Government has had to pay in tax rebates since the 2012 Franked Investment Income judgment.

Jane Ellison:

Two judgments in the Franked Investment Income Group Litigation Order case were handed down in 2012, by the UK Supreme Court on 23 May and by the Court of Justice of the European Union on 13 November. Since those decisions, HM Revenue and Customs has made payments of £1,490,455,098 less tax withheld under the restitution interest provisions introduced by Finance (No.2) Act 2015 of £324,402,752, a net sum of £1,166,052,346.

■ **Telecommunications: Finance**

Alan Brown:

[\[57319\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to table 2.1, line 10 of the Autumn Statement 2016, how the funding for telecoms will be allocated across the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Mr David Gauke:

The Autumn Statement 2016 announced over £1 billion to be invested in digital communications. This includes £400 million for a new Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund, with investment decisions to be made by an independent fund manager on a commercial basis. Details about how local areas can access funding for 5G trials and local fibre rollout will be set out in due course.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ **Accommodation Agencies**

Dr Andrew Murrison:

[\[56542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that private letting agencies do not (a) transfer costs to landlords and (b) redefine tenant fees.

Gavin Barwell:

The Government is keen to see tenants receiving a good service from their landlord and letting agent and that is why we announced in the Autumn Statement a ban on letting agent fees paid by tenants in England. This will support better competition in the market and bring down overall costs. Tenants will be better able to search around for properties that suit their budget and there will be no hidden costs. This may be preferable to tenants being hit with upfront charges that can be difficult for them to afford. The Government will consult in the New Year on the detail of how best to implement a ban.

■ **Coastal Areas: Economic Growth**

Caroline Ansell:

[\[56483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on coastal communities of the recommendations contained in the New Economics Foundation's Blue New Deal Action Plan, published in November 2016.

Andrew Percy:

I refer my hon Friend to the answer given to question 56130 by my hon Friend the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility on the 8th December 2016.

Alex Cunningham:[\[56580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department's policies of the recommendations of the New Economics Foundation's Blue New Deal Action Plan, published in November 2016; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Percy:

I refer the hon Member to the Answer given to question 56130 by my hon Friend the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility on the 8th December 2016.

■ Coastal Areas: Regeneration**Caroline Ansell:**[\[56482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support sustainable economic regeneration in coastal communities; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Percy:

The Government has provided £1.18 million to help establish 118 Coastal Community Teams along the English coast to empower local communities to drive forward sustainable economic development and regeneration in coastal towns. Every team has prepared an Economic Plan setting out both short term and longer term priorities to promote jobs and growth. I will shortly be announcing more than 20 new Coastal Community Teams.

We are also supporting coastal communities across the UK to deliver sustainable growth and jobs through the Coastal Communities Fund. By 2017 the Fund will have invested £125 million in over 200 projects UK-wide, including £92 million invested in England. This is helping to create or safeguard over 18,000 jobs and attract over £200 million in public/ private sector co-funding.

We have identified at least a further £90 million to support more Coastal Community Fund projects between 2017 and 2021. We expect to announce the successful projects from the latest competitive bidding round (Round 4) by Spring 2017.

The Local Growth Fund is also providing support to coastal communities in England through Growth Deal funding for coastal Local Enterprise Partnerships. Growth Deals for the third round of funding are still being finalised and will be announced in the new year.

■ Community Relations

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[56682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what the British values are, as referred to in the Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration, published on 5 December 2016.

Mr Marcus Jones:

As the then Home Secretary explained in her speech of 23rd March 2015, British values – such as regard for the rule of law, participation in and acceptance of democracy, equality, free speech and respect for minorities – are supported by the overwhelming majority of British people. They are sustained by our most important local and national institutions. And they are the means by which we have made our multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society succeed.

■ Council Tax: Arrears

Catherine West:

[\[57392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether his Department holds information on the number of times that bailiffs have been used in cases of council tax arrears in each of the last five years.

Mr Marcus Jones:

The Department does not hold this information.

Catherine West:

[\[57490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of households in council tax arrears in each of the last five years.

Mr Marcus Jones:

This is a matter for local authorities.

■ Housing: Construction

Alan Brown:

[\[57320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the potential role of timber-framed construction in the Government's plans to increase housebuilding.

Alan Brown:

[\[57321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with representatives of the UK timber and wood panel industries on the role UK wood products could play in housebuilding.

Alan Brown:

[\[57445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what proportion of newly built homes of timber-frame construction have been built in each of the last five years.

Gavin Barwell:

The vast majority of new homes in England are built using traditional brick-and-mortar methods. In its Housing Market Report in October, the National House Building Council stated that timber frame's market share at registration in each of the last five years was as follows:

2011: 13% 2012: 10% 2013: 9% 2014: 8% 2015: 9%

To increase housing supply, we need a diversified housing market where all firms embrace innovation to become more productive and deliver a better product to the consumer. It is not for government to endorse one building technique or material, including timber frame, over another, as long as building standards are met.

Instead, we are encouraging market diversification and promoting the use of modern methods of construction through our housing and planning programmes, including Affordable Homes 2016-21, Build to Rent and Housing Zones, and through our National Planning Practice Guidance.

In October, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government launched the Home Building Fund, which aims to provide further support to builders using modern methods of construction, in addition to custom builders, small and medium-sized builders, and new entrants to the market.

The Secretary of State and I often meet developers and housebuilders, including those who build homes using traditional methods and those who use modern methods of construction, as well as visiting offsite factories and developments where modern methods of construction are used.

■ Housing: Older People**Mr Mark Prisk:**[\[56754\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health on the health benefits of retirement housing and its potential in reducing local authority adult social care bills.

Mr Marcus Jones:

Ministers and officials from both departments meet when necessary to discuss a range of issues of interest to both departments.

Older people have a wide range of different housing needs, ranging from suitable and appropriately located market housing through to residential institutions and we are clear in the National Planning Policy Framework that councils should plan for a mix of housing, based on the needs of different groups in the community, including older people. We strengthened planning guidance last year to reinforce our expectations.

Housing is an important element to people's health and wellbeing and provision of suitable housing can and does play a role within the wider integration of health and social care to which we are committed.

■ Local Government Finance

Jim McMahon:

[\[57143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2016 to Question 52707, on local government finance, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the £150 million transition grant in achieving its aims.

Mr Marcus Jones:

The explanatory note on the method of allocation of the Transition Grant for 2016/17 makes clear that the grant is being provided to authorities to ease the change from a system based on central government grant to one in which local sources determine a council's revenue by compensating them in direct proportion to the difference between the old methodology and new methodology. The allocations are in exact proportion to this difference and so the grant achieves its aim.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Football: Voluntary Work

Diana Johnson:

[\[57150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will estimate the number of volunteers in the football industry who work unsupervised with children.

Tracey Crouch:

There are around 22,000 youth teams across England. The vast majority rely, entirely or mainly, on volunteers to run these teams and the vast majority of these volunteers have nothing but the best interests of the children, and the game, at heart.

All team officials, coaches, managers, welfare officers and referees are considered in regulated activity and have an enhanced check with the Disclosure and Barring Service 's children's barred list. The Football Association completes around 55,000 checks every year on such regulated activity. All coaches, whether qualified or with an assistant status, are considered in regulated activity.

■ Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures Review

Alison Thewliss:

[\[57400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to publish the results of the call for evidence on the Review of Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[57401\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 October 2016 to Question 47027, when she expects to publish the Triennial Review of Stakes and Prizes for gambling machines.

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[\[57524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of (a) limiting the amount that can be bet on fixed-odds betting terminals and (b) increasing the restrictions on gambling advertisements on television and the internet.

Tracey Crouch:

A review of gaming machines and social responsibility measures (previously called the Triennial Review) began with a 6 week call for evidence on 24 October, closing on 4 December. As part of this, we sought evidence on Fixed-Odds Betting Terminals and gambling advertising. The review generated a lot of interest from the general public, as well as from a variety of interest groups, local authorities, trade bodies and industry. We are now looking in depth at the evidence and aim to publish our findings and any proposals in spring 2017.

■ Small Businesses: Cybercrime

Chi Onwurah:

[\[57370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 October 2016 to Quesiton 48089, what progress has been made in signing up small and medium-sized businesses to the cyber essentials programme; and what estimate she has made of the number of such businesses to be signed up in 2017.

Matt Hancock:

At the end of November 2016, 4,792 Cyber Essentials certificates had been awarded, of which it is estimated 3,682 have been awarded to small and medium sized businesses, 77% of the total. The number of certificates issued to enterprises in each category is estimated at: micro 1,237; small 1,350; medium 1,095; and large 1,110.

The Government, including the National Cyber Security Centre, is working on a range of measures to drive further and faster adoption of the scheme, including strengthening the existing requirement for Government suppliers which handle sensitive data or provide certain ICT products and services to hold a Cyber Essentials certificate. As such, we expect the rate of adoption to increase significantly throughout the coming year.

■ Tourism: Marketing

Mr Mark Williams:

[\[56843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how much has been spent promoting British tourism in (a) Europe, (b) Asia, (c) North America and (d) total in (i) 2016, (ii) 2015 and (iii) 2014.

Tracey Crouch:

The below table from Visit Britain, which contains spending figures on Tourism for the aforementioned periods. The increase in funding during Financial Year 15/16 can be attributed to the inclusion of the North and South West Growth Funds.

	EUROPE	ASIA	NORTH AMERICA	TOTAL OVERSEAS INVESTMENT
2014/15 Actuals	7,912,466	8,769,694	7,714,661	25,641,070
2015/16 Actuals	10,016,595	9,555,699	9,154,013	29,574,545
2016/17 Forecast	6,053,255	7,923,478	6,659,807	20,961,784

DEFENCE

■ Defence: Procurement

Jim Shannon:

[\[57465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure equality of opportunity for construction firms in Northern Ireland to apply for defence contracts.

Jim Shannon:

[\[57467\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions his Department has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on steps to ensure equality of opportunity for companies in Northern Ireland to bid for defence procurement contracts.

Harriett Baldwin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly engages with devolved administrations and with industry, including companies from Northern Ireland, such as through the Defence Suppliers Forum. Companies in Northern Ireland are afforded the same opportunities to bid for, and to be awarded defence contracts, as companies in other parts of the UK or overseas.

Future tender and contract opportunities with a value of over £10,000, and the timetables for them, are advertised through Defence Contracts On-line, which can be found at the link MOD-DCO at www.contracts.mod.uk and on the Government's Contracts Finder portal, at the link Contracts Finder at www.gov.uk.

■ Iraq: Armed Conflict

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[\[57540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the safety of civilians in Mosul.

Mike Penning:

The Government continues to work closely with partners and allies supporting the Iraqi-led campaign to drive out Daesh from Mosul, stressing the requirement to protect civilians and minimise suffering. The UK has recently committed £90 million of humanitarian assistance for Iraq with a particular focus on Mosul, taking its total

commitment to £169.5 million since June 2014. A substantial element of this new assistance is supporting partners responding to the situation in Mosul. Regarding the UK's contribution to the coalition air campaign, the Ministry of Defence takes all feasible precautions to minimise the risk of civilian casualties through strict targeting procedures, as we do when conducting any form of military operation.

■ Iron and Steel: Procurement

Nic Dakin: [57449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if his Department will report on the proportion of UK steel that has been procured through contracts in the last 12 months.

Harriett Baldwin:

Defence requirements for steel are in the main sourced by our prime contractors taking into account cost, time and quality. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not therefore hold a complete central record of the origin of steel used in defence projects over the past 12 months. UK suppliers have, however, made a significant contribution to the supply of steel for defence, including some 88% of the structural steel for the new Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers.

Moving forward, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will collate data about Government steel use and compliance with the updated procurement policy, including defence. The MOD has submitted an initial return for the period February to July 2016, which has been passed to the Steel Council. This will be updated regularly.

The Government has also now published its future pipeline for steel requirements, which will enable UK steel manufacturers to better plan and bid for Government contracts. The pipeline, together with the updated procurement policy, is published on gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-1116-procuring-steel-in-major-projects-revised-guidance>.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Douglas Chapman: [57049]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department expects testing on the Autonomous Logistics Information System version 2.0.2 for the F35B Lightning II to be completed.

Harriett Baldwin:

Testing for Autonomous Logistics Information System version 2.0.2 is expected to be complete by February 2017.

Douglas Chapman: [57050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department expects testing on the F35B Lightning II's gun pod to be completed.

Harriett Baldwin:

Testing and certification of the F-35B Lightning's gun pod, for use on UK aircraft, is expected to be completed as part of the next Block upgrade programme, Block 4.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[57051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the F35B Lightning II's progress in flight sciences testing in 2016.

Harriett Baldwin:

The flight sciences test programme is making good progress and the F-35B programme remains on track to deliver initial operating capability for the UK by the end of 2018.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[57052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the likelihood that the F35B Lightning II will achieve full Block 3F combat capability within the current timetable.

Harriett Baldwin:

Block 3F is the capability standard that the UK will use to declare initial operating capability for the UK F-35B. This remains on schedule for the end of 2018.

■ Middle East: Military Intervention

Jim Shannon:

[\[57464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what effect staffing levels in the RAF are having on UK commitments in Iraq and Syria.

Mike Penning:

Staffing levels in the RAF are not affecting the UK commitments in Iraq and Syria. The RAF has sufficient personnel to meet its operational requirements.

■ Ministry of Defence: Staff

Jake Berry:

[\[57006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has to include worker representation on its departmental board.

Sir Michael Fallon:

I refer the Hon. Member to the oral statement on the Corporate Governance Green Paper of 29 November 2016, Official Report, Column 1408.

Attachments:

1. Oral Statement on Corporate Governance
[20161129_Oral_Statement_on_Corporate_Governance.docx]

■ Type 26 Frigates

Nic Dakin: [\[57444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to ensure the maximum UK steel content in Type 26 frigates currently being procured.

Harriett Baldwin:

The steel supplier for the Type 26 programme is being selected by BAE Systems through open competition. UK suppliers will have every opportunity to compete for this work.

In line with Government guidelines on steel procurement for major projects, early market engagement has already taken place for the Type 26 steel requirement. A number of companies, including UK suppliers, have expressed an interest and formal bids are expected early in 2017.

■ Veterans: Unemployment

Chris Elmore: [\[56922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the level of unemployment of former armed service personnel.

Mark Lancaster:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 17 October 2016 to Question 46795 to the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Kirsten Oswald).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-10-07/46795/>

Attachments:

1. 46795 - WQnA extract on Veterans Employment
[20161017_46795_Veterans_Employment.docx]

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices

Steve McCabe: [\[56579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 24 October 2016 to Question 49486, on apprentices, what plans she has to provide extra support for ex-offenders.

Robert Halfon:

We are committed to making sure that apprenticeships are as accessible as possible, to all people, from all backgrounds.

Delivering more apprenticeships, of better quality, will ensure that more people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to progress. Ex-offenders are given anonymity so apprentice job applicants do not need to tell potential employers about spent convictions or cautions.

Where eligible, ex-offenders can benefit from the extra payments announced in October for 16-18 year olds and 19-24 year olds formerly in care or with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Employers and providers will receive a payment of £1,000 to support additional costs associated with these apprentices. Additionally, the Government will make an additional payment to providers for training an apprentice who lives in an area amongst the 27% most deprived. We are also trialling a two year project worth £2 million per year tailoring Access to Work support to apprentices with mental health problems in the workplace from which some ex-offenders could benefit.

■ **Department for Education: Equal Pay**

Jake Berry:

[\[56600\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans her Department has to publish information on the gender pay gap among its employees.

Caroline Dineneage:

The Department for Education is planning to undertake gender pay gap analysis using salary data from 31 March 2017 and will be publishing the information as soon as possible afterwards.

■ **Department for Education: Third Sector**

Michael Gove:

[\[56625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria her Department uses to allocate funding to the voluntary and charitable sector; and if she will publish those criteria and any scoring system that they support.

Caroline Dineneage:

The Department's grant and procurement policy are aligned and adhere to the recently published Government Grant Standards and the Commercial Operating Standards. Both determine that the Department will compete by default - including in relation to VCSE organisations. All commercial approaches contribute to achieving the departmental objectives for education, children's services, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England, and equalities and are underpinned by the following principles:

- Best value for government;
- Accountable management of outcomes/outputs;
- Providing sufficient information about the tender / grant opportunity to the; market to enable interested bidders to apply
- Impartially assessing each bid / application against the same criteria;
- Selecting the winning bidder on merit by reference to set criteria; and
- Active contract and grant management.

Specific criteria are determined in relation to what is being procured or granted but support the principles above. In all cases, VCSE providers will need to respond to the

Department's selection and award criteria provided in the relevant documentation which is published on Contracts Finder or on Funding Central.

There is no specified scoring system as this is in part determined by the criteria, but a common system used for the majority of competitions is:

Score 5: excellent evidence

Score 4: strong evidence

Score 3: good evidence (often used as the minimal acceptable score)

Score 2: partial evidence

Score 1: poor evidence

Score 0: no evidence/question not answered.

Michael Gove: [56626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which voluntary and charitable sector organisations are funded by her Department; how much each such organisation received in 2015-16; and how much each such organisation is due to receive in 2016-17.

Caroline Dineneage:

The Department does not hold the information centrally in the form requested.

Organisations receiving funding are not categorised by sector and this could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

■ Pre-school Education: Standards

Lucy Powell: [57327]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of children attending (a) maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in schools, (b) private, voluntary or independent nursery settings and (c) childminders achieved (i) a good level of development, (ii) at least the expected level of development and (iii) below the expected level of development measured according to the early years foundation stage for the latest year in which data is available.

Caroline Dineneage:

On 20 October, the Department published the early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) results for the 2015 to 2016 academic year, at national and local authority level. The EYFSP results are available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results-2015-to-2016.

The proportion of children achieving each level of development at the various types of settings is not readily available and could be compiled only at a disproportionate cost.

Lucy Powell: [57487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of early years settings including maintained nursery schools, nursery classes, private, voluntary or independent nursery settings and child-minders are rated (a) outstanding, (b) good, (c) requires improvement and

(d) inadequate (i) nationally, (ii) in each region of England and (iii) in each local authority area.

Caroline Dinenage:

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw. I have asked him to write to you and a copy of his reply will be placed in the libraries of the House.

■ Schools: Asbestos

Rachel Reeves:

[\[57279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she expects the findings from the Education Funding Agency's 2016 data collection on asbestos management in schools to be published.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is intending to publish the findings from the Education Funding Agency data collection on asbestos management in schools as early as possible in the new year.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animals: Licensing

Angela Smith:

[\[56617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's consultation on the review of animal establishments licensing in England, which closed on 12 March 2016, when she plans to publish draft regulations on the licensing of animal establishments, and if she will make a statement.

George Eustice:

The Government proposes to publish a next steps document shortly which will set out our proposals for the animal establishments licensing review, following analysis of the 1,700 responses to the consultation.

■ Biodiversity: British Overseas Territories

Stephen Gethins:

[\[57100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to match EU funding for biodiversity projects in the UK Overseas Territories after the UK leaves the EU.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The UK will continue to have all the rights, obligations and benefits that membership brings, including receiving EU funding, until the UK leaves the EU. This includes funding for OTs.

The UK has committed to fully involving Gibraltar and the Overseas Territories as we prepare for negotiations to leave the EU, to ensure their priorities are taken into account. Leaving the EU means we will want to take our own decisions about how to deliver the policy objectives previously targeted by EU funding. Over the coming months,

we will consult closely with stakeholders, including the governments of the Overseas Territories, to review all EU funding schemes in the round and ensure that any ongoing funding commitments best serve the UK's national interest, while ensuring appropriate investor certainty.

■ Coastal Areas: Economic Growth

Alex Cunningham: [\[56581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of the recommendations of the New Economics Foundation's Blue New Deal Action Plan, published in November 2016; and if she will make a statement.

George Eustice:

Defra officials have participated in several workshops held by the New Economics Foundation to discuss the Blue New Deal. It is a useful piece of work which is being considered alongside other research and evidence.

■ Deer: Imports

Angela Smith: [\[56615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many reindeer imported into the UK in the last five years have survived for longer than two years; and if she will make a statement.

Angela Smith: [\[56616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many reindeer in how many consignments and from which countries have been imported into the UK in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

George Eustice:

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are not able to provide any data regarding the number of imports from non-EU countries, as these are covered by a commodity code in TRACES which will not allow us to break the species down as far as reindeer for third country imports.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) does not hold data on how long reindeer survive after they are imported into the UK. Reindeer are protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. It is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering and for keepers to fail to ensure their needs are met to the extent required by good practice. Defra has a welfare Code for farmed deer which offers guidance on their health and welfare, some of which would also be applicable to reindeer.

See the table below:

YEAR	COUNTRY FROM	COUNT OF CONSIGNMENTS	SUM OF QUANTITIES
2011	Denmark	1	2
	Finland	4	125
	Sweden	2	43
2011 Total		7	170
2012	Finland	3	59
2012 Total		3	59
2013	Finland	6	97
	Norway	1	12
	Sweden	1	86
2013 Total		8	195
2014	Finland	4	72
	Sweden	7	148
2014 Total		11	220
2015	Finland	3	62
	Norway	1	16
	Sweden	4	96
2015 Total		8	174
Grand Total		37	818

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Pay

Jake Berry:

[\[56986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the highest-paid and lowest-paid full-time employee in her Department.

George Eustice:

Government departments do not publish details of the salary of their highest to lowest paid employees.

The Office for National Statistics do, however, publish the salary ratio of highest to median earners for each Civil Service organisation. These ratios are published annually as part of Civil Service Statistics and can be found on the Office for National Statistics website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/civilservicestatistics/2016>

■ Dogs: Sales

Justin Tomlinson: [57520]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to her Department's consultation, Animal welfare: reviewing animal establishments licensing in England, published in December 2015, what the evidential basis was for the conclusion that a ban on third party sales of puppies would lead to the creation of an illegal market.

George Eustice:

The Government consulted on changes to the regulations on the breeding and sale of dogs earlier this year. While the Government did not propose a ban on third party sales, some responses were received in relation to this matter. Evidence was also presented to the recent EFRA Committee inquiry by Blue Cross, and The Dogs Trust on the annual demand for puppies and the risks of applying such a ban.

■ Fishing Catches: Prices

Mr Charles Walker: [56503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a maximum price for bass landed as allowable by catch which is linked to the price on the dock of pollock with that price calculated over the average price paid for pollock over the immediate three-month period; and if she will make a statement.

George Eustice:

The Government believes that the setting of prices in the fishing sector is a commercial matter to be resolved by private negotiation which should take place within the parameters set by competition law. The market must determine prices. Sea bass catches are being restricted through ongoing fisheries measures agreed at EU level to address the currently reduced biomass and rebuild the stock. This is a Government priority to support both recreational and commercial interests in this important stock. Overall, EU levels of catch are successfully reducing.

For 2017, a small bass catch for fixed nets at 80% less than this year was agreed at EU level – representing an estimated 88% reduction of all UK netting bass catches from the 2011-13 baseline figure. Overall, in 2017, UK bass commercial catches are estimated to be reduced by 60% from the former baseline average.

■ Flood Control: Lancaster

David Morris:

[\[57535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department received applications for flood defence funding from (a) Lancaster City Council, (b) Lancashire County Council and (c) the Environment Agency relating to the council district area of Lancaster City Council (i) between December 2015 and March 2016, (ii) between April 2016 and July 2016, (iii) between August 2016 and November 2016 and (iv) in December 2016.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The table below summarises the number of applications the department has received from Lancaster City Council, Lancashire County Council and the Environment Agency in partnership with Lancaster City Council since December 2015.

APPLICANT	(A) LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL	(B) LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL	(C) ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL)
Timescale			
(i) December 2015 – March 2016	No application	No application	No application
(ii) April 2016 – July 2016	No application	4 applications	1 application
(iii) August 2016 – November 2016	No application	No application	1 application
(iv) December 2016	No application	No application	No application

■ Food: Waste Disposal

Rachael Maskell:

[\[57436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will take steps to increase the number of local authorities providing food waste collections.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Local councils should make decisions on waste and recycling services including the provision of food waste collection, taking into account local circumstances, and providing the service that local people want. The Government's aim is to prevent food waste in the first place. When food waste is unavoidable the Government wants to increase the amount that is recycled. Our delivery partner, the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) published guidance in spring 2016 on how local authorities can improve participation in food waste collection services. WRAP and the food waste industry also published a Food Waste Recycling Action Plan in July this year. This Action

Plan sets out 16 practical steps which industry and local authorities can take to make food waste recycling easier and more cost effective.

■ **Pet Animals Act 1951: Enforcement**

Justin Tomlinson: [\[57318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department takes to monitor the enforcement of the Pet Animals Act 1951 by local authorities.

George Eustice:

We are currently reviewing the laws on the selling of pet animals with the aim of replacing the Pet Animals Act 1951 with regulations made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. The purpose of the new regulations will be to ensure that it is easier for local authorities to enforce and to improve animal welfare.

■ **Recycling**

Rachael Maskell: [\[57434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of household waste she estimates will be recycled in each of the next three years.

Rachael Maskell: [\[57437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate she has made of the UK rate of recovery from non-hazardous construction and demolition waste for each of the next three years.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra does not forecast estimates of the proportion of household waste that will be recycled or the rate of recovery from non-hazardous construction and demolition waste in the UK in future years.

■ **Sheep Dipping: Health Hazards**

Jessica Morden: [\[57300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2016 to Question 55615, if she will provide to the Sheep Dip Sufferers Support Group the minutes of the meeting the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food held with it on 19 November 2015.

George Eustice:

The note of the meeting is that to which I referred in my previous response.

The Sheep Dip Sufferers Support Group was provided with the note taken, which they then published on their web site. This is still available at:

<http://www.sheepdipsufferers.uk/campaigning/Summary%20of%20meeting.pdf>

■ Water Power

Robert Flello:

[57330]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the use of water mills to generate electricity.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

No specific discussions have occurred at Ministerial level on the use of water mills to generate electricity. However officials from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Environment Agency cooperate closely to ensure that small-scale hydropower is exploited in a sustainable way so as to minimise environmental and other impacts.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

■ Dementia: Research

Mark Durkan:

[57303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, if the Government will support free movement for EU nationals who contribute to dementia research in the UK when the UK leaves the EU.

Mark Durkan:

[57541]

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, if he will take steps in the negotiations on the UK leaving the EU to maintain labour mobility for EU nationals who contribute to dementia research after the UK leaves the EU.

Mr Robin Walker:

As a government we recognise the contribution that our world-class research base makes to our economy and wellbeing. We will always welcome those with the skills, the drive and the expertise to make a positive contribution. If we are to win in the global marketplace, we must win the global battle for talent.

We place huge value on maintaining the UK's unique arrangements with Ireland and the friendly, cooperative relationship we have built of recent years. The open border for people and businesses has served us well and no-one wants to see a return to the borders of the past. There is a very strong commitment from the Irish Government, the Northern Ireland Executive as well as ourselves to see that this does not happen.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE■ **Basuki Tjahaja Purnama**

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[57511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the Indonesian government on the trial of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, the Governor of Jakarta.

Alok Sharma:

The Government of Indonesia has confirmed that Governor Purnama will be prosecuted in accordance with Indonesian law. The UK Government remains a keen supporter of human rights in Indonesia, and it will be important that Governor Purnama's trial is conducted to international standards and that his rights are respected in accordance with the rule of law. Our Embassy in Jakarta will continue to monitor the situation closely

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Fines**

Patrick Grady: [\[56089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2016 to Question 54666, how many fines have been issued to those caught damaging buildings in the British Indian Ocean Territory for each year in the last 30 years for which records are available; and what the (a) individual and (b) total amount of such fines was in each such year.

Sir Alan Duncan:

Records of fines in the Territory only date back to 2013. There have been no fines issued for the damage of property during this time. In 2014 a building on Diego Garcia was damaged. The perpetrators paid for the repairs and so were not prosecuted.

■ **British Indian Ocean Territory: Piracy**

Patrick Grady: [\[56091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the risk of piracy in the waters of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Sir Alan Duncan:

While there have been no attacks around the waters of the British Indian Ocean Territory, piracy is a significant threat in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean, and has occurred as far as 1,000 nautical miles from the coast of Somalia. We undertake regular assessments of potential criminal activity in the territorial waters of the British Indian Ocean Territory in order to ensure that we retain an appropriate level of capability.

■ British Indian Ocean Territory: Sure

Patrick Grady:

[\[56090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 December 2016 to Question 54664, when the contract between Sure telecoms and the British Indian Ocean Territory Administration was agreed; when that contract will next be tendered for; and what the value is of that contract.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The licence to own and operate internal communications services from Diego Garcia was granted to Cable & Wireless in 1982 (subsequently Batelco / Sure in 2013, following a corporate split of Cable & Wireless, then purchased by Batelco) and provides a five year notice of termination. The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) Commissioner served notice of termination to Sure in March 2014, after which the BIOT Administration will be reprocurring the licence. The value of the licence is commercially sensitive.

■ Cameroon: Courts

Rob Marris:

[\[57389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the government of Cameroon on French-speaking judges presiding in courts in the English-speaking north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The British High Commission in Yaoundé is following the situation closely and has called for restraint and encouraged dialogue. The High Commissioner chaired a meeting with the US, French, Canadians and the EU on 1 December to discuss this matter. The UK supports the independent investigation by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms into the violence and deaths in Bamenda. The UK believes that all parties have a responsibility to uphold and protect the peace and stability of Cameroon and that legal and peaceful means should be used to voice any grievances. The violence has abated and we hope for a swift and peaceful resolution of this matter.

■ Cameroon: Demonstrations

Rob Marris:

[\[57362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the government of Cameroon on finding a peaceful and satisfactory solution to end protests by teachers and lawyers in the north-west and south-west English-speaking regions of Cameroon.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The British High Commission in Yaoundé is following the situation closely and has called for restraint and encouraged dialogue. The High Commissioner chaired a meeting with the US, French, Canadians and the EU on 1 December to discuss this matter. The UK supports the independent investigation by the National Commission for Human Rights

and Freedoms into the violence and deaths in Bamenda. The UK believes that all parties have a responsibility to uphold and protect the peace and stability of Cameroon and that legal and peaceful means should be used to voice any grievances. The violence has abated and we hope for a swift and peaceful resolution of this matter.

Rob Marris: [\[57390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Cameroon on reported injuries and deaths of protestors during strikes by teachers and lawyers in December 2016 in the north-west and south-west English-speaking regions of Cameroon.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The British High Commission in Yaoundé is following the situation closely and has called for restraint and encouraged dialogue. The High Commissioner chaired a meeting with the US, French, Canadians and the EU on 1 December to discuss this matter. The UK supports the independent investigation by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms into the violence and deaths in Bamenda. The UK believes that all parties have a responsibility to uphold and protect the peace and stability of Cameroon and that legal and peaceful means should be used to voice any grievances. The violence has abated and we hope for a swift and peaceful resolution of this matter.

■ Cameroon: Strikes

Rob Marris: [\[57363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the government of Cameroon on reported use of force by security forces during strikes by teachers and lawyers in the north-west and south-west English-speaking regions of Cameroon.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The British High Commission in Yaoundé is following the situation closely and has called for restraint and encouraged dialogue. The High Commissioner chaired a meeting with the US, French, Canadians and the EU on 1 December to discuss this matter. The UK supports the independent investigation by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms into the violence and deaths in Bamenda. The UK believes that all parties have a responsibility to uphold and protect the peace and stability of Cameroon and that legal and peaceful means should be used to voice any grievances. The violence has abated and we hope for a swift and peaceful resolution of this matter.

Rob Marris: [\[57388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the government of Cameroon on strikes by teachers and lawyers in the north-west and south-west English-speaking regions of Cameroon.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The British High Commission in Yaoundé is following the situation closely and has called for restraint and encouraged dialogue. The High Commissioner chaired a meeting with

the US, French, Canadians and the EU on 1 December to discuss this matter. The UK supports the independent investigation by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms into the violence and deaths in Bamenda. The UK believes that all parties have a responsibility to uphold and protect the peace and stability of Cameroon and that legal and peaceful means should be used to voice any grievances. The violence has abated and we hope for a swift and peaceful resolution of this matter.

■ Egypt: Bombings

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[57510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Egyptian government on the recent Coptic church bomb attack in Cairo.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

Following the bombing of the El-Boutrosiya Church in Cairo, the Prime Minister wrote a letter to the Egyptian President to convey her condolences to the victims families, as well as to the Egyptian people. Additionally, the Foreign Secretary spoke to the Egyptian Foreign Minister to express his sympathy and reiterate the UK's resolve to stand united with Egypt in defence of its people's right to live together in peace.

The British Government continues to collaborate with the Egyptian Government on a wide range of issues, including security and counter-terrorism.

■ Gambia: Elections

Catherine West:

[57361]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has contacted (a) President Yahya Jammeh and (b) his counterpart in the government of the Gambia since the recent general election in that country.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The UK welcomes the successful conduct of the elections in The Gambia on 1 December, and congratulates the Gambian people on the orderly and legitimate expression of their desire for change. As the Minister responsible for Africa, I spoke directly to the President-elect, Mr Adama Barrow, last week, to congratulate him on his victory and to offer the UK's support. But we are deeply concerned by President Jammeh's recent rejection of the elections' clear and legitimate result and strongly condemn any attempt to disrupt the peaceful, constitutional transfer of power. We welcome the clear, unified statement of the UN Security Council on 10 December calling for the results to be respected, as well as the efforts of the Economic Community Of West African States to impress on President Jammeh the need to respect the will of the people and ensure a peaceful handover of power to President-elect Barrow.

Catherine West:

[57394]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of (a) the security situation and (b) state of democracy in the Gambia following reports that Gambian security forces have taken over electoral commission headquarters and have prevented employees from entering.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

Reports that Gambian security forces loyal to President Jammeh have taken over the offices of Independent Election Commission (IEC) are a real cause for concern. Tensions remain high following President Jammeh's legal challenge to the Supreme Court to annul the election results and the increased military checkpoints on the streets. We have urged all regional and international partners to continue to impress on Mr Jammeh that he must respect the will of the people and ensure a peaceful handover of power to President-elect Barrow and the incoming Government.

Catherine West:[\[57395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has discussed the outcome of the Gambian general election with the (a) UK's permanent representative, (b) Chinese Ambassador, (c) US Ambassador, (d) Russian Ambassador and (e) French Ambassador to the UN.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

We welcome the clear, unified statement of the UN Security Council on 10 December calling for the Gambian election results to be respected, as well as the efforts of Economic Community Of West African States to impress on President Jammeh the need to respect the will of the people and ensure a peaceful handover of power to President-elect Barrow. The UK is working with all international partners at the UN to ensure the democratic will of the Gambian people is enacted in a peaceful manner. The UK's permanent representative to the UN is engaged on the current situation in The Gambia.

Iran: Civil Liberties**Jim Shannon:**[\[56850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the level of freedom of (a) religion and belief and (b) association in Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The human rights situation in Iran remains of serious concern. Members of religious minorities continue to face severe restrictions. The same is true for freedom of association. The latest report of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran highlights the insufficient protections on the independence of political, professional and labour groups and in particular notes serious concern regarding the targeting, arrest and prosecution of labour union activists.

The UK calls on Iran to cease harassment of all religious minorities and to fulfil its international and domestic obligations to allow rights and freedoms to which all its citizens are entitled.

Mohamed Ramadan**Mark Durkan:**[\[57546\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations his Department has received on the death sentence of Mohammed Ramadan in Bahrain.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our Embassy in Bahrain continue to closely monitor Mohammed Ramadan's case. We also continue to encourage the Government of Bahrain to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments. We have raised concerns both in public and in private, by having frank discussions including at the most senior levels. The Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) was very clear during her recent visit that we want to see Gulf states embed international norms and see through essential reforms.

■ South Korea: Corruption**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[56708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the South Korean authorities on transparency in dealing with allegations of corruption.

Alok Sharma:

Discussions on transparency and corruption have formed part of our bilateral dialogue with the Republic of Korea. The Kim Young Ran Law, introduced earlier this year in South Korea and aimed at curbing excesses of hospitality and gift-giving, used the UK's Bribery Act as a reference. This followed collaboration between the UK and the Korean authorities, including Korea's Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC). Future plans include the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Serious Fraud Office and Korea's Supreme Prosecutor's Office on enhancing cooperation. Projects aimed at helping businesses and media stakeholders in Korea tackle corruption are also using British anti-corruption standards as guidance.

■ South Korea: Dogs**Oliver Dowden:**[\[56710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the South Korean government on dog meat trade in that country.

Alok Sharma:

We will continue to raise this issue with the South Korean government and I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham), on 20 September 2016 to Question 46043.

Oliver Dowden:[\[56711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made recent representations to the South Korean government on implications of the South Korean dog meat trade for countries due to participate in the next Winter Olympics.

Alok Sharma:

I raised the issue of South Korea's dog meat trade with the South Korean Ambassador on 12 September. As I said during the Westminster Hall debate on the dog meat trade in South Korea on 12 September, high-profile global events such as the Olympic Games

can be a catalyst for positive change. The South Korean government will be aware that the high profile of the Winter Games could cast a spotlight on issues such as the dog meat trade.

HEALTH

■ Agri-Food Technology Council

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[57117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what meetings he, Ministerial colleagues and officials of his Department have had with the Agri-Food Technology Council since 18 August 2016.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[57118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what meetings he, Ministerial colleagues and officials of his Department have had with the Food Innovation Network since 18 August 2016.

Nicola Blackwood:

Ministers and officials from the Department have not met with the Agri-Food Technology Leadership Council or Food Innovation Network since 18 August 2016. We will however continue to work with these groups and other stakeholders in the delivery of the Childhood Obesity Strategy.

■ Anaemia

Oliver Colvile: [\[57135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the causes of regional variation in rates of iron deficiency and anaemia.

Oliver Colvile: [\[57136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans his Department has to address regional variation in iron deficiency.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England (PHE) has assessed the prevalence of iron deficiency in the United Kingdom as a whole and in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as part of the National Diet and Nutrition Survey. The results indicate little difference between the UK countries. Numbers are too small to permit a more detailed regional analysis and no further assessment has been made.

PHE provides public-facing advice on how to achieve the dietary recommendations for iron as part of its general advice on a healthy balanced diet, as set out in the Eatwell Guide.

Oliver Colvile:

[57142]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of expanding the accessibility and availability of intravenous iron services to treat patients with iron deficiency before that condition develops into anaemia.

Nicola Blackwood:

It is for local National Health Service organisations to develop their own policy to treat patients with iron deficiency or iron deficiency anaemia, based on their clinical needs.

■ Blood: Contamination

Diana Johnson:

[57253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many cases of litigation related to people affected by contaminated blood and the related support scheme his Department is involved in resolving.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Department is currently involved in two cases of litigation related to people affected by infected National Health Service supplied blood or blood products. It would not be appropriate to comment further on these cases.

■ Breast Cancer: Drugs

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[56864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 30 November 2016 to Question 54228, whether he intends to respond to the finding of Breast Cancer Now that three in four UK Breast cancer oncologists are unable to prescribe bisphosphonates due to funding issues and the lack of a clear commissioning pathway.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Manual for Prescribed Specialised Services 2016/17 describes which elements of specialised services are commissioned by NHS England and which by clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). For specialist cancer services, the Manual makes clear that CCGs are responsible for commissioning adjuvant drug treatments, for example, drugs affecting bone metabolism including bisphosphonates. The Manual is available at:

www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2016/06/pss-manual-may16.pdf

Decisions about the commissioning and funding of bisphosphonates for the treatment and prevention of secondary breast cancer are taken by local CCGs which are best placed to know what local need exists.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments

Jim Shannon:

[56852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the £20 million budget cap on the number of available cancer treatments.

Nicola Blackwood:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has advised that, along with NHS England, it is consulting on a proposal to apply a budget impact threshold test of £20 million per year to new NICE-appraised drugs and medical technologies (devices and diagnostics).

Subject to the outcome of consultation, this test would not be applied retrospectively and therefore would not have an impact on any cancer treatments already positively appraised by NICE.

■ **Care Homes: Disability**

David Morris: [\[57538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what guidelines he provides to local authorities on the commissioning of 24-hour care places for adults with severe disabilities.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to meet a person's eligible needs. Where a person requires 24 hour care local authorities should arrange services to meet those needs having regard to best practice guidance for example developed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

■ **Care Homes: Vaccination**

Diana Johnson: [\[57167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 28 November 2016 to Question 54057, how many vaccinations were provided to care home staff (a) in 2015-16 and (b) to date in 2016-17; and what proportion of vaccines issued in each of those years that number represents.

Nicola Blackwood:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ **Cereal Products: Sugar**

Jim Shannon: [\[57458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, whether his Department has had discussions with breakfast cereal manufacturers on the levels of sugar in their products.

Nicola Blackwood:

To inform work on childhood obesity and gather technical information on sugar reduction, Public Health England (PHE) met with 40 different food companies in May and June 2016. This included major breakfast food manufacturers. Following the publication of the Government's Childhood Obesity Plan in August, a further meeting was held with major breakfast cereal manufacturers and retailers; this focused solely on breakfast cereals.

Summaries of the meetings and PHE's proposals will be publicly available on Gov.uk in January 2017.

■ Cervical Cancer: Screening

Paula Sherriff: [\[56799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, whether the new cervical screening database will be ready in time for the rollout of HPV primary screening.

Paula Sherriff: [\[56801\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to improve cervical screening coverage.

Nicola Blackwood:

NHS England is working with primary care support providers to develop a new cervical screening call and recall system. We expect the new cervical screening call and recall system to be introduced by April 2019. In addition, NHS England is working closely with Public Health England to align implementation plans for human papillomavirus (HPV) primary screening. We expect HPV screening to be rolled out from April 2019.

NHS England closely monitors the coverage rates for cervical screening in all age groups and is committed to improving coverage. Local NHS England commissioners analyse coverage rates within their area and work with healthcare professionals to improve coverage. This includes sharing and implementing best practice such as cervical screening guides for general practitioner practices or targeting practices with low coverage rates. At a national level NHS England is working with Public Health England to make evidence based improvements such as improving invitation letters to patients to encourage more to attend their cervical screening appointment.

NHS England is working in partnership with Cancer Research UK and Macmillan Cancer Support on the ACE (Accelerate, Coordinate, Evaluate) Programme aiming to generate knowledge about effective approaches to achieve earlier diagnosis. A number of ACE test sites are evaluating approaches to increase screening rates in a range of groups, including black and ethnic minority women, women with learning disabilities and women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

■ Dental Services

Steve McCabe: [\[57424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many dentist surgeries there are in each region and; and how many dentist surgeries have closed since 2010.

Nicola Blackwood:

We do not hold the data requested.

■ Dental Services: Children

Steve McCabe: [\[57423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what proportion of children are registered to a dentist; and what estimate his Department has made of the average frequency with which children visited a dentist in the last 12 months.

Steve McCabe: [57501]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what proportion of people in each region of England are registered with a dentist.

Nicola Blackwood:

Information is not available in the format requested.

■ **Dental Services: Costs**

Steve McCabe: [57428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the effect of the cost of dentistry services on the number of people who seek to treat their own dental problems.

David Mowat:

The Department does not hold this information.

■ **Dental Services: Waiting Lists**

Steve McCabe: [57429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what the average waiting time was for dental treatment at dental hospitals in the last 12 months.

Nicola Blackwood:

We do not routinely collect this information.

■ **Department of Health: Equal Pay**

Jake Berry: [56604]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans his Department has to publish information on the gender pay gap among its employees.

David Mowat:

The Department has reported mean and median gender pay gap data since 2008 as part of the annual release of Civil Service Statistics by the Office for National Statistics.

The latest gender pay gap data (published in October earlier this year) can be found on the Office for National Statistics website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/civilservicestatistics/2016>

In October 2015, the then Prime Minister announced that new gender pay gap reporting measures being introduced across the private and voluntary sector from April 2017 would be extended to also apply across the public sector. The Department is actively working to ensure the gender pay gap data reported in future fully mirror these new requirements.

The Civil Service has a comprehensive plan to become the most inclusive employer in the United Kingdom. This is called the Talent Action Plan and was refreshed in March 2016. The plan commits the Civil Service to a number of actions with the aim of removing

barriers faced by underrepresented groups, including women, from succeeding. The plan sets out the ambition under key themes which includes recruitment and selection, talent and progression, inclusive culture and social mobility.

Key actions include ensuring single gender panels in recruitment and shortlists are now by exception only (as committed in the first publication of the Talent Action Plan) and committing the Civil Service to reviewing the way in which talent is defined and identified to ensure more inclusive ways to identify potential are developed.

■ Diets: Monitoring

Jim Shannon:

[57469]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department takes to monitor the potential effect of novel dietary regimes on those adopting them.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England monitors the diet and nutritional status of the United Kingdom population through the National Diet and Nutrition Survey to identify new or changing dietary issues and support its public-facing advice on how to achieve a healthy balanced diet, as set out in the Eatwell Guide.

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition can also assess the effect of a particular dietary regime on the health of those adopting it if this was considered important and if there was sufficient scientific evidence to form the basis of an evidence review.

■ Diseases

Jim Shannon:

[56703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients do not face delays in obtaining access to treatments for rare and ultra-rare diseases.

Nicola Blackwood:

The UK Strategy for Rare Diseases, published in November 2013, contains 51 high level commitments which comprise a long term strategic vision for improving the lives of all those with rare diseases and conditions. The UK Strategy includes commitments to deliver effective interventions, treatments and support to patients quickly, equitably and sustainably. All four countries of the United Kingdom have agreed to implement the strategy by 2020.

We are committed to ensuring that patients with rare and ultra-rare diseases in England are able to access effective treatments.

This is why we launched the Accelerated Access Review to make recommendations to Government on speeding up access for National Health Service patients to innovative and cost effective new medicines, diagnostics and medical technologies. The Review was published on 24 October 2016 and further information is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/news/getting-patients-quicker-access-to-innovative-healthcare

The Government will respond to the review in due course.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has recommended a number of treatments for rare and ultra-rare diseases through its Highly Specialised Technologies evaluation.

In addition, NHS England has made a number of treatments available for such conditions through its specialised commissioning procedure.

Jim Shannon:

[\[56704\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that proposed delays to NICE's process for highly specialised technologies will not delay access to treatments for rare and ultra-rare diseases.

Nicola Blackwood:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has advised that the proposed arrangements are intended to both speed up access to effective treatment and provide clarity about the level of cost effectiveness below which funding will be made available, automatically and without delay, for highly specialised technologies that receive positive recommendations from NICE speeding up access to the latest drugs.

Those products that have a value proposition of above £100,000 per quality-adjusted life year (QALY) would be provided with a further opportunity to be considered for use in the National Health Service, through NHS England's annual process for deciding which new treatments and services will be routinely commissioned.

Furthermore, the proposed changes are intended to clarify NICE's existing responsibility to determine the period within which funding for recommended products needs to be made available by commissioners of services. This clarity should allow companies and commissioners to work on commercial arrangements in advance of and in parallel with the development of NICE technology appraisal and highly specialised technology guidance. In circumstances where this may not be possible, specific requests from commissioners to vary the timescale for the funding requirement will be considered by NICE.

■ Drinks: Sugar

Jim Shannon:

[\[57456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for his policies of recent trends in consumption of sugary drinks by children; and if he will make a statement.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England (PHE) monitors the purchase and consumption of sugary drinks by children on an ongoing basis through the National Diet and Nutrition Survey and other data sources.

PHE's evidence on reducing sugar consumption, published in October 2015 ¹, identified a number of measures that could be implemented to reduce the amount of sugar in the diet, including the contribution that soft drinks make to children's intakes. A number of these are already in progress such as the soft drinks industry levy (which is the

responsibility of HM Treasury), PHE's sugar reduction programme, public awareness raising through PHE's Change4Life campaign and the significant programme of actions in the Childhood Obesity Plan.

It is unlikely that a single action alone would be effective but a combination of these and other factors are likely to improve diet and reduce sugar consumption.

Note :

[1]

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470179/Sugar_reduction_The_evidence_for_action.pdf

■ Electroconvulsive Therapy

Luciana Berger: [57531]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many people have received electroconvulsive therapy in each year since 2010 for each mental health condition.

Luciana Berger: [57532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many people have received electroconvulsive therapy who were considered incapacitated, without their consent, in each year since 2010.

Nicola Blackwood:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Exercise: Pre-school Education

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [57087]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what meetings he and his ministerial colleagues have had with (a) the Chief Medical Officer, (b) officials and Ministers from other Departments and (c) external stakeholders on updating the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework to make specific reference to physical activity.

Nicola Blackwood:

Work on updating the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework is being led by the Department of Education with input from Department of Health officials. There have been no separate meetings with Ministers in the Department of Health about this matter.

■ Folic Acid: Flour

Frank Field: [57393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on mothers' health of compulsory folic acid in flour; and if he will make a statement.

Nicola Blackwood:

It is the Government's recommendation that women who are either planning to get pregnant or are pregnant, whatever their age, should take a 400 microgram folic acid supplement before and during the early days of pregnancy for the health and

development of the unborn baby. One option for increasing folic acid intake that was considered was mandatory fortification of flour, but the Government decided that mandatory fortification is not the right way forward and therefore has no plans to introduce it for England.

■ Food: Sugar

Keith Vaz:

[\[56919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2016 to Question 55157, how his Department plans to ensure that progress will be regularly and transparently monitored on the food industry's reduction of sugar in its products; who will be responsible for conducting such monitoring; and how and at what frequency the public will be made aware of the outcome of such monitoring.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England (PHE) is responsible for the structured, transparent monitoring of the sugar reduction programme. Interim reports will be published every six months and a more comprehensive audit of progress will be provided at 18 and 36 months after publication of the targets in March 2017. Information will be made available on the GOV.UK website so that external bodies and members of the public can view and scrutinise the data.

■ Health Education

Jim Shannon:

[\[57459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department has taken to encourage people between the ages of 45 and 55 to keep fit and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England launched One You, the new campaign for adult health, on 7 March 2016. The campaign was developed to energise and engage millions of adults - including 45 to 55 year olds - to make and sustain changes to improve their own health.

The campaign focuses on promoting eating well, quitting smoking, physical activity and reducing alcohol consumption as well as sleeping better and reducing stress.

One You provides information, advice and online tools, including the 'How Are You' health quiz, One You website, email programme, and a suite of mobile apps. The overarching aim of One You is to reduce unhealthy behaviours as well as prompt uptake of healthier behaviours.

■ Joint Replacements

Rachael Maskell:

[\[56742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what research his Department has conducted on the ability of people awaiting joint replacement surgery to participate in exercise.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Department recently announced a record £816 million of funding for ground-breaking health research. The Department welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including joint replacement surgery. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

Successful applications in the past related to joint replacement have included: "Occupational advice initiated prior to planned surgery for lower limb joint replacement" (£567,975.72), and "An investigation of knee joint functioning in people with and without knee osteoarthritis" (£2,270,873).

■ Medical Records

Justin Madders: [\[57484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2016 to Question 53369 on Capita, if he will make an estimate of the number of medical records that are currently missing.

David Mowat:

I refer the hon. Member to the Answer that I gave on 14 December 2016 to Question [56394](#).

■ Medical Records: Disclosure of Information

Chi Onwurah: [\[56846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what guidance his Department issues to NHS Trusts on making payments to third parties in connection with data sharing agreements; and whether any such guidance has been issued to the Royal Free Hospital.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Department has not issued any guidance covering payments to third parties in connection with data sharing agreements, and has not issued any specific advice to the Royal Free Hospital. Any arrangements local National Health Service organisations enter into with third parties to manage data on their behalf, whether for research or any other purposes, must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

■ Mental Health Services

Luciana Berger: [\[57529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 6 December 2016 to Question 55911, what information NHS Digital holds on the number of appointments conducted (a) in person, (b) by telephone and (c) other consultation media in the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme.

Nicola Blackwood:

A supplementary analysis based on the consultation medium given was published by NHS Digital on 2 November 2016 at:

<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/media/22786/iapt-supp-info-app-ther-cmed-2015-16/xls/iapt-supp-info-app-ther-cmed-2015-16.xlsx>

NHS Digital has collected information on the consultation medium (e.g. telephone) on the entirety of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies data collection since April 2012.

Luciana Berger: [57533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2016 to Question 56048, what proportion of referrals ended had a valid mental health care cluster recorded; and how many referrals ended that were recorded under each mental health cluster code, in the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme, in each clinical commissioning group, in 2015-16.

Nicola Blackwood:

This information is not available in the format requested.

■ Mental Health Services: Ethnic Groups**Norman Lamb:** [57336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, with reference to the recommendations of NHS England's Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, what progress has been made on the development of a patient and carers race equality standard.

Nicola Blackwood:

We welcomed the recommendation in the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health to appoint a national Equalities Champion with a specific remit to tackle mental health inequalities across the health system and through cross-Government action. We are working with our stakeholders to progress this recommendation.

We will consider how best to address a range of equality issues in mental health, including giving consideration to the recommendation of the Independent Commission on Acute Adult Psychiatric Care, established and supported by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, that a Patients and Carers Race Equality Standard should be piloted in mental health.

■ NHS Trusts: Private Patients**Justin Madders:** [57479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 5 December 2016 to Question 55033, if he will make an estimate of the level of outstanding fees from private patients.

Nicola Blackwood:

We are informed by NHS Improvement that National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts do not specifically disclose the amount owed from private patients at the year end.

However trusts provide NHS Improvement with data on revenue and losses in their accounts. This data for 2015/16 suggests that 99.5% of total private patient revenue billed was collected in due course.

Any surplus generated from the treatment of private patients is reinvested by the provider for the benefit of NHS patients.

■ NHS: Sustainable Development

Justin Madders:

[\[57483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 9 December 2016 to Question 55994, how many sustainability and transformation plans contain proposals to reduce the number of qualified nurses; and what estimate he has made of the number of nursing places that will be reduced under those plans.

David Mowat:

Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) have been drawn up by 44 local leadership coalitions. Each area will now be engaging and, where required, formally consulting on their proposals with communities, staff, unions, and other stakeholders.

Although most STPs contain proposals to develop and reshape their local workforce, the proposals are at too early a stage to provide definitive numbers on the effect on specific staff groups. Work to assess this impact is ongoing.

■ Nurses: Training

Neil Coyle:

[\[57488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the move from bursaries to student loans on the volume of applications for nursing courses at universities.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The Government's Economic Impact Assessment found that nursing is consistently one of the most popular courses on University Central Administration Service (fifth), with 57,000 applicants for around 20,000 nursing places in 2015.

The Economic Impact Assessment also set out that a maximum £9,000 tuition fee for other subjects at higher education institutions was introduced in 2012. Between 2012 and 2014 the number of English domiciled applicants to enter full-time undergraduate courses in the United Kingdom increased by 7.5% (from 454,000 in 2012 to 487,870 in 2014).¹

The Economic Impact Assessment can be found on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changing-how-healthcare-education-is-funded>

The Government is committed to monitoring, in detail, data regarding application rates, diversity statistics and workforce supply following the implementation of the reforms.

¹ Based on data provided by UCAS to the RCN for "The Fragile Frontline" (2015) - http://royalnursing.3cdn.net/9808b89b8bfd137533_krm6b9wz7.pdf

Neil Coyle: [57489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the move from bursaries to student loans for nursing courses on the volume of applications for such courses made by mature students.

Nicola Blackwood:

A preliminary Equality Analysis was published alongside the public consultation document on the 7 April 2016. The Government published a consultation response and revised Equality Analysis on the 21 July 2016. These documents provide the assessment of the potential effect of the replacement of National Health Service bursaries by student loans for all the protected characteristics of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010).

The Equality Analysis can be found on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changing-how-healthcare-education-is-funded>

The Government is committed to monitoring, in detail, data regarding application rates, diversity statistics and workforce supply following the implementation of the reforms.

■ Nutrition: Health Education

Mr George Howarth: [56970]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps he plans to take to ensure that the dairy sector is consulted ahead of future revisions of the Eatwell Guide.

Nicola Blackwood:

Government policy on nutrition is based on advice from expert groups, including the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, and keeps its advice under review.

The approach considered the most objective and robust by an external reference group to inform the sizes of the Eatwell Guide food group segments, including the dairy and alternatives, ensured all government dietary recommendations were met.

Public Health England has no plans to revise the Eatwell Guide, but if it were to review the model in light of changes to dietary recommendations, then it would engage with all relevant stakeholders, including the dairy sector.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[57116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what meetings he, Ministerial colleagues and officials of his Department have had with Public Health England to discuss the nutrient profile model since 18 August 2016.

Nicola Blackwood:

The nutrient profile model has been discussed at various formal and informal meetings since 18 August. Officials attended Public Health England's nutrient profiling model Reference Group and Expert Group meetings on 12 September and 7 November. Details about these meetings is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/review-of-the-nutrient-profiling-model

Ian Lavery:

[57123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps he is taking to (a) increase the amount of healthy food and (b) improve the quality of dietary advice accessible to people on low incomes.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England (PHE) promotes healthy eating messages to the wider population and is delivered through our social marketing campaign, Change4Life, which targets lower income families. Evidence-based messages are also provided via the NHS Choices website, including promotion of 5 A DAY messages and the Eatwell Guide, the nation's healthy eating model. The guide and its messages were tested with lower socio-economic groups during development.

The Government supports a range of initiatives to provide a 'nutritional safety net' including the Healthy Start scheme which provides vouchers that can be spent on milk, fruit, vegetables and infant formula milk to more than half a million pregnant women and children under four years old in very low income and disadvantaged families, the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme and free school meal entitlement for all infant children.

As set out in the Childhood Obesity Plan, PHE is working to reduce sugar consumption, which includes measures to reduce sugar within the top food categories that contribute the most to children's sugar intakes. This programme will support wider efforts to reduce intakes across the population.

■ Patients' Rights: Medical Treatments

Pauline Latham:

[57204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what his policy is on ensuring that patients have the right set out in the NHS Constitution to access any NICE-approved treatments that are clinically appropriate for them.

Nicola Blackwood:

National Health Service patients' right in the NHS Constitution to drugs and treatments recommended in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) technology appraisal and highly specialised technology guidance, where clinically appropriate, is

underpinned by the legal requirement for NHS commissioners to fund such treatments, normally within three months of NICE issuing its final guidance.

■ **Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust**

Chi Onwurah: [\[56847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what discussions Ministers or officials in his Department have had with the Royal Free Hospital on safeguarding the confidentiality of patient information.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Government takes the issue of confidentiality of patient information very seriously and any sharing of information between organisations must be authorised and appropriate. The National Health Service has robust processes in place to protect people's confidential information.

■ **School Meals: Pre-school Education**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[56938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, with reference to the Childhood Obesity Plan, page 10, published in August 2016, what progress has been made on the development of revised menus for early years settings which are due to be completed by December 2016.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[57089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, when he expects Public Health England to publish revised voluntary food guidelines for early years settings.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[57090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what meetings (a) officials and Ministers from his Department and (b) Public Health England officials have had with the Children's Food Trust on revising menus for early years settings.

Nicola Blackwood:

In June 2016, Public Health England (PHE) commissioned the Children's Food Trust (CFT) to develop a series of menus for early years settings in England. Good progress has been made and it is anticipated that the menus will be delivered to PHE by the end of December 2016 for final consideration. The Government plans to publish the menus and run an accompanying awareness campaign in 2017.

An External Reference Group was convened to inform the development of menus, comprising representatives from early years providers and the health sector, and relevant expert bodies. The CFT are providing the Secretariat to this group. This group met five times between June and December 2016. Officials from PHE and the Department attended these meetings. In addition a number of informal meetings between the CFT and PHE officials also took place between June and December to help facilitate the process.

■ Smoking

Bob Blackman:

[57098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans his Department has to help to encourage the spread of best practice for stop smoking services.

Nicola Blackwood:

A number of measures are in place to support the National Health Service and local public health services to help stop people smoking.

Public Health England (PHE) will continue to commission the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training to provide free online training, briefings and service reviews to support commissioning and delivery of stop smoking services.

PHE will review and update the CLear tobacco control tool, which provides a self-assessment and peer review model for local areas to reflect on and develop their local tobacco control programmes, including stop smoking services.

PHE has also developed a Menu of Preventative Interventions to support local Sustainability and Transformation Plans, including actions to treat tobacco dependence among patients who smoke.

The new national alcohol and tobacco CQUIN (Commissioning for Quality and Innovation) indicator will support the NHS to record the smoking status of all inpatients and to offer smokers medication and referral.

PHE will continue to support local authorities to review the effectiveness of stop smoking interventions, particularly where they want to commission new quitting support models.

Bob Blackman:

[57310]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will make it his policy to require local authorities to provide stop smoking services.

Nicola Blackwood:

The most recent data show that smoking rates among adults and young people are at their lowest ever level. This has been achieved through the implementation of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy, one element of which is the provision of evidence-based stop smoking services. Smoking rates vary considerably across the country and it is right that local councils have the flexibility to consider how best to respond to the unique needs of their local population.

■ Social Services

David Morris:

[57537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate levels of a wide range of adult social care is available in each local authority area.

Nicola Blackwood:

Local councils are responsible for ensuring adequate provision of social care services for eligible users and carers in their area.

However, social care is a key priority for this Government, and we are giving councils access to further funding to manage social care pressures in their local area across the next few years:

- Next year councils will be able to raise the precept by up to 3%, and 3% the year after (2018/19). This could raise £200 million in additional funding for adult social care in 2017/18 and over £400 million in 2018/19.

- The Government is also providing an additional £240 million to fund adult social care through the Adult Social Care Support Grant, funded by reforms to the New Homes Bonus.

These new changes provide access to an additional £450 million for social care next year, following calls from the sector that funding was most needed in 2017/18.

Taken together with the funding announced in the autumn 2015 Spending Review, this means that local government will have access to the funding it needs to increase social care spending every year in this Parliament. The spending review gave councils the flexibility to introduce a 2% social care precept for adult social care, and access to additional funding for adult social care worth £1.5 billion by 2019/20 through the Better Care Fund, starting in April 2017.

■ Surgery: Vale of York**Rachael Maskell:**[\[56738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will instruct the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group to end its policy on postponing surgery for patients who smoke or have a BMI over 30.

Rachael Maskell:[\[56741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what representations he has received on the decision of the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group's policy to postpone surgery for patients who smoke or have a BMI over 30.

Mr Philip Dunne:

It is for individual clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to make commissioning decisions based on the needs of patients in their area, and interact with stakeholders regarding those decisions.

This does not and cannot mean blanket bans on particular patients, such as smokers, getting operations, which would be inconsistent with the NHS Constitution. However, major surgery poses much higher risks for severely overweight patients who smoke. So local general practitioner-led CCGs are entirely right to ensure these patients first get support to lose weight and try to stop smoking before their operation. Reducing obesity and cutting smoking is of long-term benefit to patient health.

■ Tobacco

Bob Blackman: [\[56935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 25 August 2016 to Question 43383, when he plans to publish the next Tobacco Control Plan.

Nicola Blackwood:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 6 December 2016 to Question [55414](#).

■ Tuberculosis: Vaccination

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[57420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, for what reasons TB vaccinations are not available on the NHS to children in all London boroughs; and what the requirements are for boroughs to provide TB vaccinations by the NHS.

Nicola Blackwood:

The implementation of the 2014 strategy to move to universal offer of Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccination for all babies up to the age of one year in London has been interrupted by a global shortage of the BCG vaccine since April 2015. Public Health England has successfully secured an alternative unlicensed supply of BCG vaccine for the United Kingdom from a different manufacturer. As stocks remain restricted, NHS England has produced a protocol for delivery to those in the following priority groups:

- All infants (aged 0 to 12 months) with a parent or grandparent who was born in a country where the annual incidence of tuberculosis (TB) is 40/100,000 or greater.
- All infants (aged 0 to 12 months) living in areas of the UK where the annual incidence of TB is 40/100,000 or greater.

■ UKactive

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[57102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many times he, Ministerial colleagues and officials of his Department have met with UKActive since 18 August 2016.

Nicola Blackwood:

Since 18 August, officials have met with ukactive and have spoken to events organised by them on five different occasions. There has not been a ministerial meeting with ukactive during that period.

■ WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Philip Davies: [\[57616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how much funding his Department plans to provide to the secretariat of the World Health Organisation framework convention on tobacco control in each of the next 10 years.

Nicola Blackwood:

The budget for the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control's secretariat and consequently the Assessed Contributions of Parties is set biannually at the Conference of the Parties (COP). As a direct result of pressure from the European Union at COP 7 it was agreed the budget would be subject to zero nominal growth over the coming two years so the United Kingdom contributions will remain unchanged over this period at \$300,000 annually.

HOME OFFICE■ **Travel Restrictions: USA**

Tulip Siddiq: [\[56429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussion she or her Department has had with the (a) incoming and (b) outgoing US administrations on the possibility of banning certain groups of British citizens from travel to the US.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

It is for the United States Government to determine what rules it puts in place for entry across its borders. The most recent changes the US made were in December 2015 and we have been in close contact with the US Administration with regard to the implications of those changes for UK citizens throughout their implementation.

■ **Visas**

Greg Mulholland: [\[56480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many visa applications were processed by UK Visas and Immigration in the last five years; and what proportion of those applications were rejected the first time each such application was submitted.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

The available information is published in the Home Office's quarterly 'Immigration Statistics, July - September 2016', (visa data tables volume 1) table vi_01_q, available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2016/list-of-tables#visas>

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT■ **Developing Countries: Crimes of Violence**

Thangam Debbonaire: [\[56297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support her Department has provided to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women in each year since 2010.

James Wharton:

The UK has supported the Fund since 2014 providing £2 million in 2014, £2.25 million in 2015 and £3.75 million in 2016. This support helps to fund local organisations across

the world to tackle violence against women, improve access to services such as legal assistance and healthcare, and strengthen laws that protect women and girls.

■ **Developing Countries: HIV Infection**

Ms Harriet Harman:

[57365]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if her Department will undertake a review of its HIV programmes to assess the progress made on the Government's global strategy on HIV and AIDS.

James Wharton:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I provided on 7 November to Question numbers 51481 and 51482.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Business: West Midlands**

Mr Jim Cunningham:

[56636]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many representatives of businesses in the West Midlands he has met since his Department was created; and if he will make a statement.

Mark Garnier:

Ministers constantly meet with businesses and representatives from across the UK, including the West Midlands, and will continue to do so.

The export of goods increased last quarter in the West Midlands by 17.8% compared to the same quarter the previous year, which was the second highest increase across all English regions. The count of exporters also rose by 3.4% to 11, 801 in the same period.

■ **Department for International Trade: Consultants**

Mr David Lammy:

[56642]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many third party (a) consultants and (b) consulting companies have been commissioned by his Department since it was established; and what the cost to the public purse of such commissioning has been.

Greg Hands:

The Prime Minister announced the creation of the Department for International Trade (DIT) on the 14th July 2016.

I refer the hon Member for Tottenham to the answer I gave to the hon Member for Hornsey and Wood Green on 17 October, UIN47214, for details of the consulting companies the Department has made use of since it was established.

Since that answer was provided, UK Export Finance (UKEF) has used SFW Ltd for consultancy services for an "Electronic Document Management" review (£15,736k) and ANSEC IA Ltd for an "Information Assurance" review (£22,900). UKEF's costs are on-

going service delivery costs which are not connected with machinery of government changes.

DIT and UK Export Finance will be publishing Workforce Management Information, which details the number and cost of non-payroll staff, those classed as contingent labour consultants and consultancy on:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?keywords=Workforce+Management+Information&publication_filter_option=transparency-data&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=all&official_document_status=all&world_locations%5B%5D=all&from_date=&to_date=

Mr David Lammy:

[56644]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many third party (a) consultants and (b) consultancy companies his Department plans to commission; and what the cost to the public purse of such commissioning will be in (i) 2017, (ii) 2018, (iii) 2019 and (iv) 2020.

Greg Hands:

The Prime Minister announced the creation of the Department for International Trade on the 13 July 2016. The budget for the new Department is being finalised and will be set out in the Supplementary Estimate.

We are currently establishing whether we need to call upon external support as part of the internal planning round for the 17/18 Financial Year.

■ Department for International Trade: Equal Pay

Jake Berry:

[56607]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans his Department has to publish information on the gender pay gap among its employees.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has a statutory requirement to publish information on the gender pay gap amongst its employees under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties, Gender Pay Gap Information and Public Authorities) Regulations 2016, which come into force on 6 April 2017.

The information will be published no later than 4 April 2018 as required by the Regulations. DIT and UK Export Finance will publish their information separately on their respective gov.uk sites.

■ Department for International Trade: North of England

Diana Johnson:

[56794]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to page 21 of the Northern Powerhouse Strategy, published in November 2016, when his Department plans to put in place sector and infrastructure and regeneration specialists in the north of England; and in which areas such specialists will be located.

Mark Garnier:

We have recruited four sector specialists who are located across the North of England and are focussing on the prime and enabling sectors identified in the Independent Economic Review conducted by Transport for the North. A fifth specialist will join the team in February. Two property and infrastructure specialist have been recruited and are in place in the North of England. A recruitment exercise is underway to fill a third, recently vacant, position.

■ **Fisheries: Norway****Melanie Onn:**[\[56430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether he discussed the future of the UK fishing industry with the Norwegian Foreign Minister during his recent visit to the UK.

Greg Hands:

I refer the hon Member for Great Grimsby to the answer I gave her on 12 December, UIN: 56446.

■ **Trade Agreements****Mr Jim Cunningham:**[\[56637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many specialist trade negotiators are employed by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The Department for International Trade already has a strong and capable trade policy team, which has more than doubled in size since 23 June and is continuing to grow. Over the coming months, we will be developing the Trade Policy team, to build the world class negotiating strengths needed, to deliver the best outcomes for the UK. They will have the depth and breadth of expertise to handle the full range of sectoral and cross-cutting issues that arise in trade agreements, supported by analysts and lawyers. We will continue to hire the brightest and best talent from within the UK civil service and, in time, will look to enhance our team, by drawing on expertise from elsewhere.

■ **World Trade Organisation****Mr Jim Cunningham:**[\[56584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many civil servants in his Department are working full-time with the World Trade Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

In the Department for International Trade, there are nine civil servants working full-time on matters related to the World Trade Organisation. They are supported by officials working in other Departments, including the Department for Exiting the European Union, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

JUSTICE**■ Administration of Justice**

Carolyn Harris: [\[56494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment she has made of the effect of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 on access to justice for the most vulnerable people in society.

Sir Oliver Heald:

The operation of the legal aid scheme is continually monitored by both the Ministry of Justice and the Legal Aid Agency, with legal aid statistics published on a quarterly basis. In addition to this, we are committed to reviewing Parts 1 and 2 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 by April 2018. The timing of this review will be announced in due course.

■ Harassment: Court Orders

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[56513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many restraining orders were imposed as a result of stalking and harassment in England and Wales in 2014 and 2015.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[56514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many restraining orders imposed in England and Wales in 2014 and 2015 explicitly restricted online contact.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[56515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many restraining orders imposed in England and Wales in 2014 and 2015 restricted contact through the use of legal processes.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[56620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate her Department has made of how frequently perpetrators of harassment or stalking seek indirectly to contact their victim through (a) civil and (b) family court action.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The Government is clear that stalking and harassment, which cause misery for victims, are totally unacceptable. The fixated nature of stalking may result in a prolonged campaign sometimes lasting many years. So we are determined to do everything possible to protect all victims of stalking and stop perpetrators at the earliest opportunity – even before the stage at which a perpetrator might be prosecuted. That is why, following a public consultation, we have recently announced that there will be a new civil stalking protection order, to support victims of stalking at an earlier stage and address the perpetrator's behaviours before they become entrenched.

The number of restraining orders imposed as result of stalking and harassment in England and Wales, 2014 and 2015 can be viewed in the table. Information on the

specific restrictions included in a restraining order is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Nor do we hold data on how frequently perpetrators of these crimes seek to contact their victims through action in the civil or family courts. The courts do have powers to deal with unmeritorious claims and applications. The court may strike out the action as an abuse of process or issue an order restricting the litigant's ability to continue with further applications or claims, either of its own motion or on request by a party to the proceedings.

■ Offences against Children

Kevin Hollinrake:

[56756]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if she will bring forward legislative proposals to fully implement section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 relating to sexual communication with a child.

Sir Oliver Heald:

The Government is committed to commencing and implementing section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 and will do so as soon as possible.

■ Offenders: Employment

Alex Chalk:

[R] [56433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps the Government is taking to incentivise employers to recruit ex-offenders.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

We want prisons to be places of hard work and high ambition, with incentives for prisoners to learn. We also want prison staff to prioritise education and employment opportunities. We are giving governors greater control over their budgets to bring in education and employment schemes that deliver real results. More private sector companies now employ ex-offenders than ever before, but we are keen to increase the number of employers who can provide valuable vocational work for offenders in prison, and who are able to offer them employment on release.

■ Prison Service: Staff

Gordon Henderson:

[56466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prison officers are employed in England and Wales.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

Full information on staffing in prisons in England and Wales is published in the NOMS Quarterly Workforce Bulletin available on the gov.uk website.

■ Prisons: Smuggling**Jim McMahon:**[\[57129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the effectiveness of searches of (a) prison staff and (b) visitors when entering prisons on reducing the number of prohibited items being brought into prisons.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

NOMS' national policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are effective in dealing with threats to prisons, including the importation of prohibited items.

We are planning to boost our searching capability within prisons and are examining options for better equipped and more widely deployed searching teams at national, regional and local levels. We are also investing in improved intelligence capabilities at all levels to enable searching and other security activities to be targeted more effectively.

NORTHERN IRELAND**■ Independent Reporting Commission****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[57509\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he expects the Independent Reporting Commission on paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland to begin its work; and how many full-time personnel he expects it to comprise initially.

James Brokenshire:

Commissioners to the Independent Reporting Commission have been appointed by the UK Government, the Government of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive. They will begin their preparatory work in January 2017. The Commission will become fully operational when the Treaty signed in September between the UK Government and the Government of Ireland, and supporting legislation in Ireland, is in place. The UK Government is providing up to £3 million over four years under the Fresh Start Agreement to establish and run the Commission. It is anticipated that the Commission will comprise up to four support staff.

■ Northern Ireland Office: Staff**Helen Whately:**[\[57137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what measures his Department has in place to support those of its staff who have mental health problems.

James Brokenshire:

The Northern Ireland Office is able to access a number of services, including welfare support and employee assistance programmes, through our links with the Ministry of Justice. Specific support for staff who have mental health issues include:

- An independent Employee Assistance Provision that provides confidential counselling sessions for employees, 24 hour telephone support, coaching for managers, mediation and group counselling;
- Access to an internet Wellbeing Zone which contains wellbeing advice, fact sheets and videos on managing stress, healthy eating and healthy lifestyle choices. This is also part of our Employee Assistance Provision;
- An Occupational Health provider that offers medical advice for managers supporting employees with mental health issues;
- An attendance management system that is aligned with our wellbeing strategy and encourages proactive interventions for employees with mental health issues including prompt Occupational Health referrals with a view to ensuring that supportive measures and reasonable adjustments are identified and implemented promptly;
- An individual Stress Assessment process; and
- Toolkits for managers which recognise the links between musculoskeletal illnesses and mental health conditions.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Yemen: Military Intervention

Keith Vaz:

[\[56583\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what discussions she has had with King Salman on her visit to the Gulf in December 2016 on the situation in Yemen; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs Theresa May:

I discussed a range of issues with King Salman related to the Gulf Region. The UK Government has been clear that we want to see a durable ceasefire and the resumption of peace talks because a political solution is the best way to bring long-term stability to Yemen.

SCOTLAND

■ Scotland Office: Staff

Jake Berry:

[\[57018\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what plans his Department has to include worker representation on its departmental board.

David Mundell:

I refer the hon Member to the oral statement on the Corporate Governance Green Paper of 29 November 2016, Official Report, Column 1408.

TRANSPORT■ **Large Goods Vehicles**

Pat Glass: [\[57431\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the evaluation of the longer semi-trailer trial: annual report 2015, published in August 2016, whether the information supplied by haulage operators on minor injuries and damage to street furniture arising from longer semi-trailers has been independently verified.

Pat Glass: [\[57442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the evaluation of the longer semi-trailer trial; annual report 2015, published in August 2016, what independent research has been carried out on the crashes and incidents affecting longer semi-trailers that were logged in the September 2016 trial report.

Mr John Hayes:

The entire trial evaluation is being carried out by an independent consultant, Risk Solutions which collects the data, liaise with the operators and analyse the results before reporting to the Department for Transport. The annual reports produced by Risk Solutions are published by the Department without further editing. Risk Solutions maintains its independence strongly, reviews major departmental statements regarding the trial and results and challenges wording or claims strongly if they are not fully supported by the evidence.

All injuries reported by the operators, including minor/slight injuries, are checked against the national STATS19 data, which is collated from submissions by police forces. Risk Solutions has details of a very small number of incidents involving very minor injuries reported by the operator or by the injured party, but where the police did not attend and the injured party did not attend hospital. These are incidents which, had they involved standard trailers, would not have been reported or counted in any official data, but have been included in the LST trial injury statistics.

Studying incidents where there is no injury (and hence no police report) is challenging since there is no national standard process or format for recording such events. Any study of such incidents for longer semi-trailers (LSTs) requires that there also be a comparative dataset for non-injury incidents involving other long, articulated HGVs. Risk Solutions engaged with a small sample of operators to analyse their in-house data on all incidents to see whether LSTs were over or under-represented in the data. The results from that exercise are explained in the latest annual report. Risk Solutions are currently engaging with a larger sample of operators to expand this dataset and anticipate publishing those results in the next annual report.

Pat Glass: [\[57433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the evaluation of the longer semi-trailer trial: annual report 2015, published in August 2016, what roads are being used by longer semi-trailers; and what the mileage is of such trailers on minor and urban roads.

Mr John Hayes:

The original trial terms of reference and operator undertaking issued in 2011 did not place a requirement on participating companies to track the exact movements of each Longer Semi Trailer (LST) or to log routes taken. When the trial started in 2012 GPS tracking was a new technology and to have placed such a tracking requirement on the operators would have been considered an unreasonable burden on the industry and would probably have excluded smaller operators from participating, limiting the coverage and value of the trial.

The expectation across the industry has always been that compared with other long articulated HGVs, LSTs would be likely to operate a greater proportion of their journeys on major roads, performing trunking duties. This is supported by the leg type use charts in the Annual Report, but is not 'proven'.

During 2015, DfT and Risk Solutions looked into the options for studying LST routing by road types including sampling of the part of the fleet that is fitted with trailer GPS, backfitting the entire fleet (or those not currently fitted) with trailer GPS, or modelling the 'likely' routing of LSTs using the origin and destination data already provided in the trial data submissions. Modelling the likely route was chosen because it would effectively provide an insight into the balance of road types used by LSTs at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer, while minimising the additional burden on the industry.

After a feasibility study in late 2015, the trial data requirement was adjusted to make journey start/end postcodes a requested item for 2016-P1 (Jan-May) and mandatory thereafter. Operators have responded well to this requirement and Risk Solutions have start/end postcode data for more than 90% of all LST journeys) to date in 2016.

■ Network Rail: Industrial Disputes

Andy McDonald: [\[57313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2016 to Question 55987, on what dates (a) his and (b) predecessor departments received force majeure claims from train operating companies in relation to industrial action by Network Rail employees since 2000-01 to date; and what the outcome was in each such case.

Andy McDonald: [\[57314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2016 to Question 55987, on what dates (a) his and (b) predecessor departments received force majeure claims from train operating companies in relation to an act of God since January 1996; and what the outcome was in each such case.

Andy McDonald: [\[57315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2016 to Question 55987, on what dates (a) his and (b) predecessor departments received force majeure claims from train operating companies in relation to civil emergency since January 1996; and what the outcome was in each such case.

Andy McDonald: [\[57316\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2016 to Question 55987, on what dates (a) his and (b) predecessor departments received force majeure claims from train operating companies in relation to suicide or attempted suicide since January 1996; and what the outcome was in each such case.

Andy McDonald: [\[57317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 December 2016 to Question 55987, on what dates (a) his and (b) predecessor departments received force majeure claims from train operating companies in relation to rolling stock safety since January 1996; and what the outcome was in each such case.

Paul Maynard:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Railways

Justin Madders: [\[57337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of the Growth Track 360 proposals on rail improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Maynard:

I welcome the publication of the North Wales and Mersey Dee Rail Task Force's 'Growth Track 360' prospectus, which sets out an ambitious programme of desirable improvements to rail infrastructure in North Wales and across the border into the North West of England. My officials have met with representatives from the Task Force to advise them on a suitable approach to developing their initial proposals. I now look to the Task Force to take forward prioritisation of the most promising options for enhancing the railways in North Wales against clear local and regional objectives, and to identify possible funding.

■ Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Diana Johnson:

[57163]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2016 to Question 56154, which local authorities have received funding allocated in the Autumn Statement 2016 from the Pothole Action Fund; and how much each such local authority has received.

Andrew Jones:

On Monday 28 November the Secretary of State for Transport announced further details of the additional funding announced in the 2016 Autumn Statement. The roads funding package document sets out the further roads funding that the government is committed to delivering in this Parliament and includes a full breakdown by local authority of the 2017/18 allocations of the Pothole Action Fund.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-roads-funding-package>

■ Rolling Stock

Dr Sarah Wollaston:

[56866]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the economic effect on the (a) South West region and (b) UK of the lack of new rolling stock available to train companies; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Maynard:

The Government and the private sector has continued to invest in new rolling stock in the South West and in other regions to provide improved services for passengers.

The market for new rolling stock in the UK has become increasingly vibrant in recent years, with a number of manufacturers competing to provide new rolling stock to the UK's train operating companies.

Train operators are not seeing a shortage of train manufacturing companies or financiers offering new rolling stock for the UK's rail network.

Over 1,900 new vehicles were ordered in 2016 alone.

Great Western Railway are acquiring 29 brand new bi-mode trains to operate services to the South West of England.

Nationally passengers will see over 5,000 new vehicles delivered to operators between now and the end of 2020.

WALES■ **Brexit: Wales**

Jo Stevens: [\[57432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect on Wales of the UK leaving the EU.

Alun Cairns:

The Welsh economy is facing both challenges and opportunities following Brexit.

I have regular meetings with the Secretary of State for the Department for Exiting the European Union and he and I both recently met Welsh industry leaders to discuss these issues.

My Department is committed to working closely with both the Welsh Government and the Department for Exiting the European Union to ensure we get the best possible deal for Wales. To summarise what my hon Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales said in the Westminster Hall Debate on 14 December, the Welsh economy is in a strong position to make the most of the opportunities that exiting the EU presents.

■ **Wales Office: Information Officers**

Jo Stevens: [\[57446\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how much his Department has spent in total on salaries for staff working in press or communications roles in each year since 2010.

Guto Bebb:

The Departmental spend on salaries for staff working in press and communications roles since 2010 is set out below:

FINANCIAL YEAR	SPEND £
2010/11	201,848
2011/12	262,350
2012/13	326,146
2013/14	183,271
2014/15	350,637
2015/16	330,759

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ Gender Recognition Certificates

Kevin Foster:

[56751]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether the six-month validity period for Gender Recognition Certificates will be reviewed as part of the commitment to review the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

Caroline Dinenage:

We have committed to a review of the Gender Recognition Act to streamline and demedicalise the gender recognition process.

We have begun our programme of work on reviewing the gender recognition process, and we will provide an update on the Government's progress in 2017.

■ Staff: Surveys

Paula Sherriff:

[57301]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether there is an annual survey of staff in the (a) Government Equalities Office and (b) Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government Equalities Office takes part in the annual Civil Service People Survey within the Department for Education. The Department's results for 2016 were published on GOV.UK on Tuesday 6 December.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is an independent body and is responsible for its own staff management, including conducting surveys of its staff. I have therefore asked the Chief Executive of the Commission to write to the Hon. Member with the information requested and will place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Child Poverty Unit: Staff

Dan Jarvis:

[57065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many full-time equivalent staff currently work in the Child Poverty Unit.

Damian Hinds:

[Holding answer 15 December 2016]: The Prime Minister is clear that tackling poverty and disadvantage and delivering real social reform, is a priority for this Government. The Department for Work and Pensions is leading work across Government to bring forward a social justice green paper in the New Year which will identify and address the root causes of poverty, building upon the two statutory indicators set out in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

The Child Poverty Unit's main function was to support Ministers in exercising their duties in relation to the income-related targets set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 and the associated child poverty strategy. Following the repeal of those targets, responsibility for child poverty policy and analysis transferred to the Department for Work and Pensions. The Social Mobility Commission Secretariat continues to be based in the Department for Education and the Secretary of State for Education is the lead Minister for the Commission.

■ **Children: Day Care**

Tulip Siddiq: [57312]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2016 to Question 56188, on children: day care, if he will publish the methodology used to calculate the estimated spend forecasts.

Damian Hinds:

The savings were estimated using DWP's models of the tax and benefit system.

Extracting the full details of the calculations carried out within the models would only be possible at disproportionate cost.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Pay**

Jake Berry: [57000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the highest-paid and lowest-paid full-time employee in his Department.

Caroline Nokes:

Government departments do not publish details of the salary of their highest to lowest paid employees.

The Office for National Statistics do, however, publish the salary ratio of highest to median earners for each Civil Service organisation. These ratios are published annually as part of Civil Service Statistics and can be found on the Office for National Statistics website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/civilservicestatistics/2016>

Jake Berry: [57044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the percentage gap in earnings is between the pay of full-time staff in the highest pay grade in his Department and average full-time pay in that Department.

Caroline Nokes:

The Office for National Statistics publish the salary ratio of highest to median earners for each Civil Service organization. These ratios are published annually as part of Civil Service Statistics and can be found on the Office for National Statistics website:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/civilservicestatistics/2016>

Disabilities Charities Consortium**Debbie Abrahams:**[\[57517\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when Ministers from his Department last met the Disabilities Charities Consortium.

Penny Mordaunt:

I met last with the Disability Charities Consortium on Thursday 1st December 2016.

Fulfilling Potential Forum**Debbie Abrahams:**[\[57516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Fulfilling Potential Forum last met; and when the next meeting of that forum is planned to take place.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Fulfilling Potential Forum meets twice a year and last met on 2 November 2016. A date has not yet been finalised for the next meeting.

Jobcentres: Glasgow**Natalie McGarry:**[\[57325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had on what dates with the landlords of the Jobcentre Plus offices in (a) Shettleston, (b) Parkhead and (c) Easterhouse on the closure of Jobcentre Plus offices in Glasgow.

Damian Hinds:

Since 1998 the Department has occupied the majority of its accommodation under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) known as the PRIME contract. Under the terms of this 20 year PFI, the department contracts to occupy fully serviced accommodation from its private sector partner, Telereal Trillium.

The leases for the buildings in question are included within the provisions of this PFI arrangement and are therefore not held directly by the department. As such, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has had no discussions with the landlords of (a) Shettleston, (b) Parkhead and (c) Easterhouse Jobcentre Plus offices.

Natalie McGarry:[\[57326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who the respective landlords are of the Jobcentre Plus offices in (a) Shettleston, (b) Parkhead and (c) Easterhouse.

Damian Hinds:

Since 1998 the Department occupies the majority of its accommodation under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) known as the PRIME contract. Under the terms of this 20-year PFI, the Department contracts to occupy fully serviced accommodation from its private sector partner, Telereal Trillium.

The leases for the buildings in question are included within the provisions of this PFI arrangement and are therefore not held by DWP. Therefore we are unable to supply the information you have requested.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:[\[57534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when he plans to publish on the Government's website the public consultation on proposed job centre closures in Glasgow; and if he will extend the time period for that consultation to take account of the time taken for such online publication since the Department's announcement on 7 December 2016 on plans for that consultation.

Damian Hinds:

The current consultation process for the proposed closure of Glasgow Bridgeton Jobcentre, Glasgow Castlemilk Jobcentre and Glasgow Maryhill Jobcentre started on 7 December 2016. Stakeholders in the area have been notified of this by letter, with leaflets and posters also made available to customers. The Department is currently considering other options on public consultation.

■ Social Security Benefits**Ian Lavery:**[\[57186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many disability living allowance claimants in (a) Wansbeck constituency, (b) North East England and (c) the UK who have reapplied for personal independence payment have been unsuccessful in their applications.

Penny Mordaunt:

The available data on clearances of claims by type (i.e. awarded, disallowed or withdrawn) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), by a range of breakdowns including whether they were new claimants or Disability Living Allowance to PIP reassessment claimants and to a range of geographical levels within Great Britain, is available from Stat-Xplore: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>. Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>. Information regarding Northern Ireland is a matter for the Northern Ireland Office.

Dan Jarvis:[\[57364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment his Department has made of the financial effect on recipients of working age benefits of the benefits freeze; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Nokes:

I refer the honourable gentleman to the answer I previously provided on 6 December 2016 - <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-12-01/55848/>

■ Social Security Benefits: Disqualification

Margaret Ferrier:

[57480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 12 December 2016 to Question 56414, if he will establish a programme to make regular contact with a group of people who are subject to a benefit sanction in order to discern whether they have used food banks at any time over the duration of the sanction for the purposes of collecting data and determining whether there is a link between benefit sanctions and food bank usage.

Damian Hinds:

I refer the hon. Lady to my previous Answer of 12 December 2016 to Question 56414.

Margaret Ferrier:

[57521]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Employment of 22 June 2015, Official Report, column 608, whether it is his Department's position that there is no robust evidence that directly links sanctions and food bank use.

Damian Hinds:

It continues to be widely acknowledged that food bank use cannot be attributed to a single cause and the reasons that people use foodbanks are complex and overlapping.

■ Universal Credit

Drew Hendry:

[57447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department has taken to deal with the backlog of universal credit claims; and what support there will be in December 2016 for people waiting for such claims.

Damian Hinds:

There is no backlog of Universal Credit claims. Where claims are delayed this is due to more information being required from the customer.

Claimants in financial need can apply for an advance of Universal Credit. These requests can be made over the telephone and a decision can be made by agents on that call.

All new Universal Credit claimants have the opportunity to discuss any concerns about how to budget their monthly payment with their work coach. Personal Budgeting Support is available online, by phone and face to face for those with budgeting difficulties.

During December 2016, advances of Universal Credit and Personal Budgeting Support will be available as usual.

■ Universal Credit: Halton

Derek Twigg: [57439]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit payments have been paid back to claimants in the Borough of Halton in the last 12 months.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested on Universal Credit payments is not available.

Universal Credit official statistics can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics>

■ Universal Credit: Telephone Services

Drew Hendry: [57335]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the average call waiting time was for (a) a claimant and (b) an hon. Member's office enquiring about a universal credits claim.

Damian Hinds:

a) The Average Speed to Answer when a claimant makes a call to Universal Credit is 3 minutes 27 seconds based on this financial year to date.

b) We do not hold data specifically for calls made from hon. Member's office's enquiring about a Universal Credit.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Electronic Government: Proof of Identity

Louise Haigh:

[57168]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 8 December 2016 to Question 56146, how many people registering their identity have used the service to (a) report a medical condition that affects their driving, (b) renew a short-term medical driving licence, (c) check their income tax for the current year, (d) get a state pension statement, (e) sign into their personal tax account, (f) view or share driving licence information, (g) apply for universal credit, (h) claim for redundancy and monies owed, (i) file a self assessment tax return, (j) update rural payment details, (k) assist friends or family with their tax and (l) check or update company car tax details.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 15 December 2016. The correct answer should have been:

Ben Gummer:

The number of new verified identity accounts used to register and access the following government services since [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) Verify went into public beta on the 14th October 2016, ~~2014~~, is as follows:

GOVERNMENT SERVICE	NEW VERIFIED ACCOUNTS USED TO REGISTER AND ACCESS A SERVICE (LOA2)	NEW BASIC ACCOUNTS USED TO REGISTER AND ACCESS A SERVICE (LOA1)
Claim for redundancy and monies owed	42,875	
Update rural payment details	13,754	
View or share driving licence information	24,482	
Apply for universal credit	29,307	
Check or update company car tax details	49,088	
Assist friends or family with their tax	1,929	
Sign into their personal tax account	43,539	
File a self assessment tax return	234,904	
Check their income tax for the current year	24,961	

GOVERNMENT SERVICE	NEW VERIFIED ACCOUNTS USED TO REGISTER AND ACCESS A SERVICE (LOA2)	NEW BASIC ACCOUNTS USED TO REGISTER AND ACCESS A SERVICE (LOA1)
Get a state pension statement	62,587	
Report a medical condition that affects their driving	979	
Renew a short-term medical driving licence	545	

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Governance Code on Public Appointments

Minister for the Constitution (Chris Skidmore):

[\[HCWS368\]](#)

On 2nd July 2015, the then Minister for the Cabinet Office announced that the Government had asked Sir Gerry Grimstone to lead a review of the operation of the public appointments system. The completion of the review was announced on 11th March 2016. [Official Report HCWS609]

Sir Gerry Grimstone's review placed an emphasis on the original conclusions reached by Lord Nolan in 1995 that Ministers should be at the heart of the public appointments system and concluded that Lord Nolan's principles have stood the test of time and are as applicable today as they were 20 years ago. The review also recommended a new principle of diversity and also a greater emphasis on transparency throughout the system.

The Government welcomed Sir Gerry's review and announced that it would implement its recommendations, including the publication of a new Public Appointments Governance Code, which I am publishing today. The new Code will come into force in January.

The new Code sets out that:

public appointments should be run in accordance to a set of principles: Ministerial responsibility, selflessness, integrity, merit, openness, diversity, assurance, fairness; Ministers are responsible for public appointments and are central to the decision making process; the Commissioner for Public Appointments has a vital function regulating public appointments. The Commissioner retains responsibility for monitoring and auditing appointments processes, but will not be directly involved in competitions; and processes will be streamlined of bureaucracy with a stronger focus on customer care and transparency to ensure public confidence. There will be an emphasis on diversity in appointments.

The Public Appointments Governance Code can be found on the gov.uk website and copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

DEFENCE

■ Triennial Review of the Independent Medical Expert Group

Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Mark Lancaster):

[\[HCWS371\]](#)

I am today announcing the conclusion of the Triennial Review of the Independent Medical Expert Group. Reviews are part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that Non Departmental Public Bodies continue to have regular independent challenge. I am placing copy of the report in the Library of the House and it will be published on the Gov.uk website.

The Review examined whether there is a continuing need for the Independent Medical Expert Group's function and its form, and whether it should continue to exist at arm's length from Government.

The Review found that the Independent Medical Expert Group provides valuable, high quality, well-respected medical and scientific advice to Ministers. The function the Independent Medical Expert Group fulfils continues to play an important role in ensuring that the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme relies on credible, up-to-date evidence, and is also perceived to do so by those who apply to it. Retaining the Independent Medical Expert Group as a Non Departmental Public Body remains the most appropriate option.

The Review also confirmed that the Independent Medical Expert Group complies with the principles of good corporate governance and with the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and the Principles of Scientific advice to Government.

The outcome of this Review is welcomed and demonstrates the effectiveness of the Independent Medical Expert Group as highly-regarded, independent experts whose function helps to maintain the medical and scientific integrity of the awards made under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Bovine TB

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Andrea Leadsom):
[\[HCWS376\]](#)

Today I am updating the House on the implementation of the Government's 25-year strategy to eradicate bovine TB in England.

The strategy continues to deliver results. Next year we will apply for Officially TB free status in the Low Risk Area of the country where there is no significant TB in wildlife. This will boost trade opportunities and mean some herds require less regular TB testing, reducing costs for farmers and taxpayers. Bovine TB remains the greatest animal health threat to the UK. Dealing with the disease is costing the taxpayer over £100 million each year. Last year alone over 28,000 cattle had to be slaughtered in England to control the disease, causing devastation and distress for hard-working farmers and rural communities.

The Government is taking strong action to deliver a long-term plan to eradicate the disease and protect the future of our dairy and beef industries. The comprehensive strategy includes strengthening cattle testing and movement controls, improving biosecurity on farm and when trading, and badger control in areas where TB is rife.

There is broad scientific consensus that badgers are implicated in the spread of TB to cattle in the high risk area of England, which also has the highest badger density in Europe and has seen a large increase in badger abundance over the last 20 years. The approach of tackling the disease simultaneously in cattle and in wildlife has worked in Australia, is working in New Zealand and Ireland and is supported by the Government and Defra Chief Scientists, the UK Chief Vet and other leading vets.

This year seven new and three existing licensed badger control operations were delivered by local farmers and landowners in parts of Somerset, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Cornwall, Devon and Dorset. These areas comprise ten per cent of the high risk area, and all achieved successful outcomes. As part of our 25 year bovine TB eradication strategy I want to see further expansion of operations in the coming years. This is in line with the UK Chief Veterinary Officer's advice on what is needed to realise and maintain disease control benefits at regional level.

I have also today published a consultation on the next steps in areas that have completed the first four years of badger control. I am proposing to allow continued, strictly licensed, activity to stabilise the population at the reduced level. This will ensure the disease reduction benefits in cattle are prolonged for many years to come.

Following consultation earlier this year, the Government intends to make further improvements to TB testing in the High Risk and Edge areas of England and to introduce new arrangements for controlling the disease in non-bovines. Tough controls on cattle and non-bovine farm animals are an essential complement to controlling the disease in wildlife and our plans published today alongside our summary of consultation responses will help us to make further progress on the disease, while not over-burdening our livestock industry.

Effective biosecurity is essential to protect the gains from reinforced cattle controls and badger control so I very much welcome the progress being made in delivering a joint government-industry TB biosecurity action plan. I am pleased that last month's launch of a new bovine TB herd accreditation programme by the Cattle Health Certification Standards body has started to attract herd owners keen to be recognised and rewarded for good biosecurity practices. We will consult next year on proposed incentives to encourage more herd owners to take up this option.

Innovations enabling our farmers to better protect their herds include access to advice on the TB Hub, our interactive map of TB locations and the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's list of dairy bulls with greater genetic resistance to TB, alongside farm demonstration events, accredited training for vets and new teaching and training resources for land-based colleges.

Although it does not provide complete protection or cure infected animals which continue to spread TB, badger vaccination has a role to play. We remain committed to promoting vaccination in the Edge Area of England albeit deployment continues to be hampered by a global shortage, meaning deliveries of the authorised vaccine are not expected to resume before 2018. We will start work next year with interested organisations on the design of a new Badger Edge Vaccination Scheme (BEVS) as a replacement to the former scheme which had to be cancelled because of the lack of vaccine.

In the meantime, supplies of vaccine for human immunisation will continue to be prioritised.

To ensure we have a successful and resilient industry as the UK enters a new trading relationship with the world, we are determined to implement all available measures necessary to eradicate this devastating disease as quickly as possible.

Copies of the badger control consultation and the cattle and non-bovine summary of consultation responses are available in the Libraries of the House.

HOME OFFICE

■ European Union Opt In Decision - Regulation of the Uniform Format for Residence Permits for Third-Country Nationals

The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr Robert Goodwill): [\[HCWS372\]](#)

The Government has decided not to opt in to the draft Council Regulation amending the Regulation on the uniform format for residence permits for third country nationals. The proposed Regulation is intended to update the 2002 Regulation, which was previously amended in 2008. The draft measure seeks to update the design and security features on the current version of the residence permit.

In reaching its decision, although the Government welcomes measures that will strengthen immigration and border control, it has taken account of the cost of developing a document that the UK may never use. The UK will continue issuing the current format of the residence permit until we leave the EU and we are considering the options following exit.

■ European Union opt in decision: Dublin IV Regulation

The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr Robert Goodwill): [\[HCWS370\]](#)

The Government has decided not to opt in to the EU proposal for the Dublin IV Regulation.

The Regulation will govern the process of deciding which Member State is responsible for deciding an asylum claim and streamline the transfer process. The UK supports those aims, but the proposed Dublin IV Regulation binds Member States to participate in a quota-based distribution scheme. The proposal also permits the Commission to impose considerable financial burdens on Member States, of €250,000 per applicant not transferred under this mechanism.

The UK has long-standing reservations about such relocation schemes. Asylum seekers should claim asylum in the first safe country they enter and not be moved around the EU using allocation quotas.

By not opting in to Dublin IV Regulation, the UK remains bound by the Dublin III Regulation, which will allow the Government to return applicants where another Member State is responsible for determining their asylum claim and discourage secondary movement or so called "asylum shopping".

Until the UK leaves the EU, it remains a full member, and the Government will continue to consider the application of the UK's right to opt in to forthcoming EU legislation in the area of justice and home affairs on a case by case basis, with a view to maximising our country's security, protecting our civil liberties and enhancing our ability to control immigration.

■ European Union Opt In Decision: EU Readmission Agreement with Nigeria

The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr Robert Goodwill): [\[HCWS369\]](#)

The Government has decided not to opt in to a Council Decision (11975/16/16) authorising the opening of negotiations on an agreement between the European Union and Nigeria on readmission.

EU Readmission Agreements (EURAs) ensure reciprocal procedures for the identification, documentation and return of persons illegally entering or remaining in EU Member States, or the third country. We decide whether to participate in EURAs on a case-by-case basis, depending on the priority we attach to the country concerned in terms of numbers of immigration returns and the degree to which we enjoy a good bilateral relationship with that country.

In terms of returns co-operation, the UK already has bilateral arrangements with Nigeria via a memorandum of understanding, which work well, for example allowing the return of Nigerian nationals who have an expired passport. In 2015, there were 599 enforced removals to Nigeria and 1,361 voluntary removals.

We would not envisage an operational advantage if we were to change our current bilateral arrangements for conducting returns to Nigeria.

■ European Union opt-in decision: Asylum Measures

The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr Robert Goodwill): [\[HCWS374\]](#)

The Government has decided not to opt in to the new EU proposals for a Qualification Regulation, an Asylum Procedures Regulation and a recast Reception Conditions Directive. The proposals reform the package of asylum directives adopted between 2011 and 2013 as part of the second phase of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).

The UK chose not to participate in the corresponding second phase CEAS instruments due to concerns over the limits they would place on our national system. As a result the UK remains bound by the directives adopted as part of the first phase of the CEAS: the Reception Conditions Directive 2003/9/EC; the Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC; and the Asylum Procedures Directive 2005/85/EC. These directives established minimum standards and allowed Member States a large degree of flexibility in implementation.

There is some merit in the new proposals, for example the overarching aim of discouraging abuse and unwarranted secondary movements. However, the Government's view is that decisions on asylum systems are best taken at national level. The proposals, in particular where replacing the use of a Directive with a Regulation in the case of the proposals on Qualification and Asylum Procedures, would further limit the Government's ability to take decisions on the UK asylum system at national level and in the UK national interest. There is no reason to change the approach from that taken with regard to the corresponding second phase CEAS measures. Therefore, the UK will not opt in to the proposals.

Until the UK leaves the EU, it remains a full member, and the Government will continue to consider the application of the UK's right to opt in to forthcoming EU legislation in the area

of justice and home affairs on a case by case basis, with a view to maximising our country's security, protecting our civil liberties and enhancing our ability to control immigration.

■ **European Union opt-in decision: European Union Agency for Asylum**

The Minister of State for Immigration (Mr Robert Goodwill): [\[HCWS373\]](#)

The Government has decided not to opt in to the EU proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Asylum.

On 4 May the European Commission published a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) NO 439/2010. The proposed European Union Agency for Asylum would replace the existing European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The UK currently participates in EASO.

The aim of the proposal is an agency with more powers to promote the implementation and improve the functioning of the Common European Asylum System. The proposal provides the European Union Agency for Asylum with a significant degree of oversight over national asylum systems.

We are committed to running a high quality and effective asylum system but have always taken the view that the functioning of the asylum system is a sovereign matter.

The UK will therefore not opt in to the proposal for the EU Agency for Asylum.

JUSTICE

■ **Correction to Written Statement HCWS225**

The Minister of State for Courts and Justice (Sir Oliver Heald): [\[HCWS375\]](#)

On 27 October I made a written ministerial statement on the Government's decision to opt in to the EU proposal amending the Brussels IIa Regulation on family law (HCWS225). There was a minor error in that statement. The statement said "The Government has today decided to opt in to the European Commission's proposal which repeals and replaces Regulation 2201/2003, also known as the Brussels IIa Regulation, on cross border family matters". It should have said "The Government decided on 5 October to opt in to the European Commission's proposal which repeals and replaces Regulation 2201/2003, also known as the Brussels IIa Regulation, on cross border family matters".