



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Daily Report

Tuesday, 28 February 2017

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 28 February 2017 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 28 February 2017). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Attorney General: Brexit

Paul Blomfield:

[\[64537\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what discussions he has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

Robert Buckland:

The Department for Exiting the European Union is working closely with other Government departments to build a detailed understanding of how withdrawal will affect domestic policies and to coordinate policy work across Government. I regularly meet the Prime Minister and Ministerial colleagues to discuss important issues of common interest, including the UK's exit from the EU. I am not able to talk about any legal content of those discussions because, by convention, the fact that the Law Officers have advised or have not advised and the content of their advice is not ordinarily disclosed outside Government.

■ Attorney General: Recruitment

Andrew Selous:

[\[64523\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, whether the Law Officers' Departments operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

Robert Buckland:

The Law Officers' Departments (LODs) do not ask applicants about previous convictions (spent or unspent) on their application forms or in interview.

Due to the nature of the work carried out by the LODs, all staff recruited to the departments are subject to security checks to identify both spent and unspent convictions prior to formal appointment. None of the organisations has any central record of any current employee having an unspent conviction.

■ Attorney General: Uber

Mr Iain Wright:

[\[64367\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how much the Law Officers' Departments have spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Robert Buckland:

None of the Law Officers' Departments have an account with Uber and the Departments have no records of any direct expenditure on Uber for Business or any other Uber transactions.

Staff are able to book and pay for taxis themselves and claim these costs as expenses. It is possible that staff have booked taxis for business purposes using Uber and claimed these costs; however this cannot be specified without incurring disproportionate costs as each individual expenses claim would have to be investigated.

■ **Cleveland Police Authority: Offences Against the Administration of Justice**

Anna Turley: [64769]

To ask the Attorney General, whether any individuals under investigation during Operation Sacristy were charged with perverting the course of justice.

Robert Buckland:

No individual who was investigated as part of Operation Sacristy was charged with perverting the course of justice.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Government Contracts**

Jon Trickett: [64387]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Margot James:

The value of pro bono costs and the number of work days contracted is not held centrally and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Contracts let by the Department are published on the Cabinet Office Website which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

Archived information can be found at:

www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk.

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

Jon Trickett: [64991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many civil servants of his Department oversee contracts which have been awarded to external providers.

Margot James:

It is the responsibility of individual teams across the Department to manage contracts and maintain the appropriate level of oversight consistent with the value, strategic importance and levels of risk associated with individual contracts.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Telephone Services**Justin Madders:**[\[64735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much income has been accrued to his Department from premium rate telephone lines in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Margot James:

The Department has not accrued any income from premium rate telephone lines for the period where figures are available.

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Uber**Mr Iain Wright:**[\[64366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Margot James:

The Department has spent £60.69 on transactions with Uber GB through Government Procurement Cards since 28 October 2016.

The Department does not hold information on individual travel claims centrally.

■ Energy: Exeter**Sir Hugo Swire:**[\[64577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what representations he has received on the work of Exeter City Futures on making Greater Exeter energy independent and congestion free by 2025; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Nick Hurd:

We are greatly encouraged to hear about the ambitious plans that Greater Exeter have on both energy and on congestion. Our local energy team has been working with the Heart of South West LEP to do what we can to support these aspirations for low carbon development and I will ensure that their work joins up with that of Exeter to ensure the city has all the support it needs.

■ Heineken: Punch Taverns**Steve McCabe:**[\[65129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed Heineken takeover of Punch Taverns on jobs in the microbrewing industry.

Margot James:

This is a commercial matter for the parties concerned.

■ **Post Offices**

Justin Madders:

[64730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department takes steps to monitor the availability of post offices for local communities; and if he will make a statement.

Margot James:

The Post Office reports annually on the accessibility of post offices. The Post Office's 2015/16 report was laid in Parliament on Monday 20 February and can be accessed from the Post Office's website:

<http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/sites/default/files/networkreport2016.pdf>. The report shows that over 92% of the UK population live within one mile of a post office and over 99% within three miles.

■ **Post Offices: Closures**

Justin Madders:

[64714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to review the effect of post office closures on older people.

Margot James:

The Government understands the important role post offices play in communities across the country, especially to its more vulnerable customers like the elderly. Thanks to Government investment the UK's network of 11,600 branches is at its most stable in decades. The investment is offering real improvements to customers, including an extra 200,000 opening hours every week and over 4,200 post offices open on a Sunday.

The Post Office's Annual Network Report for 2015/16 shows that 92% of the UK population over 65 live within 1 mile of a post office, and over 99% within 3 miles. The report was laid in Parliament on Monday 20 February and can be accessed from the Post Office's website:

<http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/sites/default/files/networkreport2016.pdf>.

Justin Madders:

[65285]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of post office closures on vulnerable older customers.

Margot James:

The Government understands the important role post offices play in communities across the country, especially to its more vulnerable customers like the elderly. Thanks to Government investment the UK's network of 11,600 branches is at its most stable in decades. The investment is offering real improvements to customers,

including an extra 200,000 opening hours every week and over 4,200 post offices open on a Sunday.

The Post Office's Annual Network Report for 2015/16 shows that 92% of the UK population over 65 live within 1 mile of a post office, and over 99% within 3 miles. Wide coverage across the UK shows that the Post Office is accessible for all. The report was laid in Parliament on Monday 20 February and can be accessed from the Post Office's website:

<http://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/sites/default/files/networkreport2016.pdf>.

■ Research: EU Grants and Loans

Lilian Greenwood:

[64803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of EU structural funding, such as the European Regional Development Fund, on the UK's ability to build research capacity in less economically developed regions of the UK.

Margot James:

For the 2014-20 Structural Funds programming period, the EU has designated two regions of the UK as 'less developed regions': Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and West Wales and the Valleys. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports research and innovation in both areas. Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have been allocated around €90 million in EU funding for research and innovation, with the aim of supporting 550 enterprises. West Wales and the Valleys have been allocated around €300 million, with the aim of providing around 500 grants to enterprises and supporting cooperation between 1,200 enterprises and research institutions.

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper states that the Government will carefully consider the future of the European Structural and Investment Funds following the UK's exit from the European Union, including the support available to less developed areas.

CABINET OFFICE

■ British Nationals Abroad: Voting Rights

Cat Smith:

[64723]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment the Government has made of the potential practical implications for the processing time required for overseas applicants to vote in UK elections of removing the 15-year rule for UK citizens living abroad being able to vote.

Cat Smith:

[64724]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate the Government has made of the number and proportion of UK citizens living abroad who would apply to be overseas

electors for a UK parliamentary election or national referendum in the event that the 15-year rule for UK citizens living abroad being able to vote were removed.

Cat Smith: [\[64725\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on introducing legislative proposals to remove the 15-year time limit on British people living abroad being able to vote in elections.

Cat Smith: [\[64729\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to A democracy that works for everyone: British citizens overseas, a policy statement, published on 7 October 2016, whether increased staff time and resources were a criterion in determining the amount of additional funding to be provided to electoral registration officers in relation to the removal of the 15-year time limit on British citizens living abroad being able to vote in elections.

Chris Skidmore:

British citizens living abroad retain strong links with the United Kingdom: they may have family here, and they may plan to return here in the future. Equally, there are many British citizens abroad who have fought for our country, dedicating their lives to our armed services. Their stake in our country must be respected. This Government will not deny them the opportunity to have their say in the way their country is governed. That is why we are committed to introducing votes for life for British citizens living abroad.

The Government estimates that a further 3 million British citizens resident overseas will be enfranchised under the 'votes for life' proposals set out in the policy statement published on 7 October 2016. The Government has made initial estimates of how many newly enfranchised overseas electors may register to vote, and will continue to further refine its estimates in light of new data as it becomes available.

The Government acknowledges that initial applications to register to vote from newly enfranchised overseas electors are likely to take longer to process than most other applications. This increase in staff time has been built into the Government's estimates of the expected costs of this policy measure. The Government is currently seeking feedback from electoral administrators and others on the detail of its proposals and will review them if measures to streamline processes are identified.

The Government is committed to legislating to remove the 15-year rule before the 2020 general election.

■ Electoral Register

Cat Smith: [\[64726\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people are registered to vote in more than one constituency because they have not de-registered after moving house.

Chris Skidmore:

Maximising the amount of people on the electoral register is a key priority. A person can be entered on more than one electoral register if they are resident in more than

one constituency. For example, if you are a student you may be registered at the address of your parent/guardian and may also register yourself at your college/university address if you are living away from home. Although it is not illegal to be registered in more than one place, it is illegal to vote twice in the same election. However, you can vote in elections for two separate local councils.

Cat Smith:

[\[64727\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people are registered to vote in more than one constituency because they are students.

Chris Skidmore:

Students have the right to register at either their home or term-time address and, it is possible that some do register themselves at both. Unfortunately the Government does not hold data on how many students choose to register at both their home and term addresses. The Government believes that democracy is about an individual's right to make their own decisions, and being registered at both addresses allows students the freedom of choice championed by Individual Electoral Registration.

■ **Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[65136\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2017 to Question 63244, whether the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund (PCPF) Trustee appointed by the Minister for the Civil Service has independently verified the professional advice received by the PCPF Trustee on the long-term risks to financial performance of the PCPF of that fund's investments in the fossil fuel extractive industry.

Ben Gummer:

There is no requirement or expectation for independent verification of professional advice.

Investment decisions within the Parliamentary Contributory Pensions Fund, including consideration of risks arising from investments in the fossil fuel extractive industry, are a matter for the Trustees who receive professional advice regarding decisions about the management of scheme assets.

TREASURY

■ **Bank Services**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[65333\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of introducing open data sharing standards for markets other than banking.

Chi Onwurah: [\[65334\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what role the Government envisages for the (a) Financial Conduct Authority and (b) Information Commissioner's Office in an open banking environment.

Chi Onwurah: [\[65367\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government (a) has taken and (b) plans to take to ensure that the UK's Open Banking Standard can be leveraged internationally.

Simon Kirby:

The Treasury is supportive of open banking standards, and other jurisdictions that wish to follow this initiative. The government has taken steps to explore how open data could be used and shared, in particular:

In September 2015, the Treasury requested for the Open Banking Working Group (OBWG) to be set up, to explore how data could be used to help consumers transact, save, borrow, lend and invest their money. The group published a report on Open Banking Standards, which has since been picked up by governments and organisations globally.

The Treasury welcomes the Competition and Market Authority's (CMA's) remedies on Open Banking, which has the potential to bring significant benefits to consumers and SMEs by promoting competition in the retail banking sector.

Currently the government has no plans of requiring open data sharing standards beyond the banking sector.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) will continue to provide a key supervisory function to protect consumers from the harm that can be caused by firm misconduct. As the competent authority under the EU Payment Systems Directive, the FCA will have a key role in monitoring the Open Banking Standard.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will continue to safeguard personal data and provide advice to banks to ensure data is shared in a secure and responsible manner.

■ Business: Investment

David Rutley: [\[908970\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to encourage business investment in the UK.

Jane Ellison:

The Government has established the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) to deliver additional spending in the areas that are key to boosting productivity and encouraging investment.

The Government has also taken steps to ensure that Britain has a competitive tax system that encourages innovation and business investment. These include reducing

corporation tax to 17%, the lowest rate in the G20, by 2020 and setting the Annual Investment Allowance at £200,000, its highest ever permanent level.

■ Debts

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[65198\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the (a) effectiveness of the Scottish Government's Debt Arrangement Scheme and (b) potential merits of introducing a similar scheme elsewhere in the UK.

Simon Kirby:

In its response to the Independent Review of the Money Advice Service (March 2015), the coalition government agreed to review the legal framework for debt administration, and to consider the impacts of additional statutory protections for consumers. The work on this review is ongoing. The government intends to report back shortly.

Steve McCabe:

[\[65339\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will launch a consultation on an England and Wales-wide debt breathing space scheme similar to the Debt Arrangement Scheme run by the Scottish Government.

Simon Kirby:

The government has committed to exploring whether some form of "breathing space" would be a useful and viable addition to the current range of debt solutions available to consumers and creditors. Work is continuing on this review, and the government plans to report back shortly.

■ Economic Growth

Sir David Amess:

[\[908965\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support economic growth outside London and the South East.

Simon Kirby:

The government will drive up the productivity and growth of every region by investing in their infrastructure, developing the skills of their people and supporting their companies.

At Autumn Statement we announced that regions outside London and the South East will receive £1.3 billion from the Local Growth Fund to back local priorities and support new jobs.

■ Economic Situation: West Midlands

Emma Reynolds:

[\[65287\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what meetings he has had with (a) business, (b) local government and (c) trade union representatives (i) in and (ii) from the West Midlands to discuss the effect of the UK leaving the EU on the regional economy.

Mr David Gauke:

Treasury Ministers meet with a wide variety of organisations as part of the process of policy development and delivery. Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations on departmental business are published on a quarterly basis. The government will publish a Midlands Engine Strategy shortly. This will set out plans to address productivity barriers across the region. The Midlands will also benefit from £392 million of Local Growth Fund allocations. The government has provided a guarantee for all European Structural and Investment Fund projects signed before the UK's departure from the European Union. Officials are beginning the longer-term work of considering how best to support our regions following the UK's departure from the European Union.

■ Fossil Fuels: Tax Allowances**Caroline Lucas:**[\[64417\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2017 to Question 63181, for what reasons the \$400 million loan provided to GE Oil & Gas via UK Export Finance in January 2017 to support the development of oil and gas fields off the coast of Ghana is not considered a subsidy to fossil fuel production or consumption by the Government.

Jane Ellison:

UK Export Finance (UKEF) support does not represent a subsidy and the \$400m support was extended at market-based rates in line with international agreements.

UKEF exists to ensure that no viable UK export should fail for want of finance or insurance from the private market. It provides finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and ensure they get paid for export contracts, while operating at no net cost to the taxpayer.

Caroline Lucas:[\[64418\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2017 to Question 63181, for what reasons the VAT exemption for aviation kerosene is not considered a subsidy to fossil fuel production or consumption by the Government.

Jane Ellison:

The 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation, of which the government is a signatory, prevents the levying of taxation on aviation fuel. With no tax on aviation fuel or VAT on international or domestic flights, Air Passenger Duty ensures that the aviation sector plays its part in contributing towards general taxation.

Caroline Lucas:[\[64419\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2017 to Question 63181, for what reasons the funding provided through the Capacity Mechanism to diesel, coal and gas-fired electricity generation is not considered a subsidy to fossil fuel production or consumption by the Government.

Jane Ellison:

The Capacity Market is open to both fossil and non-fossil fuel sources of generation, and other sources of capacity. Renewable generating unit may participate if they are not already in receipt of Contracts for Difference or Renewables Obligation payments. These plant are excluded to ensure we do not pay for the same capacity twice.

Capacity Market payments are not subsidies but a price set in a competitive market. The generation service this provides is essential – it plays a vital role in ensuring the security of our electricity supply.

Caroline Lucas:[\[64420\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2017 to Question 63181, for what reasons the contract awarded by the Government to PGS and Western Geo to collect seismic data in the North Sea UK is not considered a subsidy to fossil fuel production or consumption by the Government.

Jane Ellison:

At Budget 2015 and 2016, the Government announced funding for seismic surveys to encourage exploration in under-explored areas of the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS). This forms part of the Government's response to low exploration rates in the UK Continental Shelf.

Contracts were awarded to WesternGeco and PGS via an open competition. Over 13,500 km data was acquired from July to October 2016, covering the Rockall Trough and Mid-North Sea High areas. Data from these programmes will be freely available to both industry and academia. This will improve our understanding of underexplored areas of the UKCS and result in better mapping of the basin. It will also inform the Oil and Gas Authority's future licensing rounds.

Greater understanding of under-explored areas of the UK Continental Shelf should help to drive further exploration and investment in the UKCS. This will benefit the nation as a whole, both through future tax revenues and wider economic benefits. The UK's oil and gas ring-fence regime means that any profits from oil and gas production – including any new discoveries informed by this data – will be taxed at a higher rate of 40%, compared to 20% for other sectors.

■ Pay**Alison Thewliss:**[\[908967\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he is taking steps to support wage growth.

Simon Kirby:

Improving productivity is the key driver of higher real wages in the long-term, that's why we have consistently backed business by creating the right environment for them to invest and grow. We have also taken action to ensure that workers are fairly rewarded through the National Living Wage, a pay rise for over a million workers.

■ Revenue and Customs: Yorkshire and the Humber**Louise Haigh:** [\[65401\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what alternative office locations were considered for use in Yorkshire by HM Revenue and Customs as part of its transformation programme.

Jane Ellison:

As part of its Building our Future Locations programme, originally announced in November 2015, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) considered a number of possible locations for its regional centres.

In Yorkshire, HMRC considered three locations – Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield – before deciding that Leeds met its location principles more comprehensively than the other two locations.

■ Science and Technology**Adam Afriyie:** [\[908969\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to encourage investment in innovative UK science and technology projects.

Mr David Gauke:

As my Rt Honorable Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced at Autumn Statement, the government is significantly increasing investment in R&D, rising to an extra £2 billion a year by 2020-21; the largest increase in any parliament since at least 1979.

This includes an Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, which will support collaborations between businesses and the UK's world-leading science base.

This will ensure the UK remains an attractive place for businesses to invest in innovative research, and that the next generation of discoveries are made, developed and produced in Britain.

■ Treasury: Uber**Mr Iain Wright:** [\[64384\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Simon Kirby:

The Treasury does not hold an account with Uber for Business. Some Treasury staff may legitimately use Uber for business purposes and claim the expense. However, spend made with Uber for business, or any other transactions with Uber, is not held to that level of detail.

■ Treasury: Wales

Chris Bryant:

[\[908966\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many people his Department employs in Wales.

Simon Kirby:

HM Treasury does not employ anyone in Wales. For the Chancellor's other departments, HMRC has 3,510 employees in Wales, The Valuation Office Agency has 280 and the Government Internal Audit Agency has 20.

HM Treasury does however have a team dedicated to devolved issues which has strong working relationships with all three of the devolved administrations. In the case of Wales, this was recently exemplified by the joint agreement with the Welsh Government on their new fiscal framework.

■ VAT: Taxis

Mr Iain Wright:

[\[64347\]](#)

To ask Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the potential VAT owed to his Department in respect of supply of passenger transportation services arising as a result of the employment tribunal ruling of 28 October 2016; and if he will make a statement.

Jane Ellison:

Decisions of the employment tribunal are not determinative of the VAT treatment of supplies.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) takes a risk-based approach to VAT compliance, including using HMRC intelligence and third party data.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Care Homes

Jim Fitzpatrick:

[\[64340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with Ministerial colleagues at the Department of Health on (a) how the proposed cap on residential care costs is to be funded and (b) when that cap is planned to be implemented.

Mr Marcus Jones:

Ministers and officials in my department meet regularly with the Department of Health to discuss a wide range of issues. The 2015 Spending Review reaffirmed the Government's commitment to implementing these reforms in April 2020, making funding available in 2019/20 to help local authorities prepare for implementation. Ahead of that, the Department of Health will continue to review the detail, to ensure

that the new system can work from day 1, and my officials will engage with them on this.

■ **Department for Communities and Local Government: Brexit**

Paul Blomfield: [\[64539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

Mr Marcus Jones:

We, and other Departments, are working closely with the Department for Exiting the European Union on all aspects of exiting the European Union.

■ **Department for Communities and Local Government: Recruitment**

Andrew Selous: [\[64466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether his Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

Mr Marcus Jones:

The Department is committed to ensuring that all of our recruitment is done in a fair and open manner, and that all applicants are treated equally.

Consequently, we do operate a ban-the-box policy within our recruitments, and applicants are not asked to provide any information on previous unspent convictions at any point in the selection process.

While successful applicants are subject to criminal record and security clearance checks during pre-appointment, declaration forms are not retained centrally once monitoring checks have been carried out.

■ **Local Government: Conditions of Employment**

Mr Christopher Chope: [\[64860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2017 to Question 63310, on local government: conditions of employment, whether partnership arrangements in place between sovereign councils can be terminated against the will of those sovereign partners.

Mr Marcus Jones:

[Holding answer 24 February 2017]: It is a matter for the councils concerned to decide their partnership arrangements, subject to any legislation relating to the establishment of those councils and the powers they have.

■ Local Government: Dorset

Mr Christopher Chope:

[\[64857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what the closing date is for the submission of (a) objections to the proposal submitted by some Dorset local authorities on 9 February 2017 for local government reorganisation and (b) any alternative or counter-proposals for change to local government structures in Dorset.

Mr Marcus Jones:

[Holding answer 24 February 2017]: I intend to, as soon as practicable, carefully consider the proposal for unitary local government submitted by six Dorset councils and announce whether or not I am minded to use my statutory powers to implement that proposal. Once I have announced my initial decision, there will be an opportunity for those interested to submit representations which I shall carefully consider before reaching any final decision.

Mr Christopher Chope:

[\[65270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, if he will place in the Library a copy of the business plan and cost benefit analysis submitted by some Dorset councils on 9 February 2017 in support of their proposal for local government reorganisation in Dorset.

Mr Marcus Jones:

The documents submitted by the six councils on 9 February in support of their proposal have been published by the councils on www.futuredorset.co.uk.

Mr Christopher Chope:

[\[65271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether, in assessing proposals for local government reorganisation in Dorset, the requirements for greater value for money, better local services and significant savings need to be satisfied in respect of each individual council area or solely against the whole area of Dorset.

Mr Christopher Chope:

[\[65272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether any evaluation of proposals for local government reorganisation in Dorset will be made against all councils collectively or each individual council separately.

Mr Marcus Jones:

I will carefully consider any proposal made by one or more councils in an area for reorganising that area's local government, and reach a judgement in the round as to whether the proposal, if implemented, is likely to improve the area's local government, commands a good deal of local support in the area, and whether the area itself is a credible geography for the proposed new structures.

Mr Christopher Chope:

[\[65273\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether any of his Department's officials gave advice and guidance to local authority leaders in Dorset about

equalisation or harmonisation of council tax while those leaders were preparing a submission for local government reorganisation.

Mr Marcus Jones:

I refer the Hon Member to my answer yesterday to Question UIN 65073.

Mr Christopher Chope:

[\[65274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, whether the officials in his Department who gave advice and guidance to the council leaders of Dorset County, Bournemouth Borough, Weymouth and Portland Borough, West Dorset District, North Dorset District and Poole will be involved in the evaluation of the proposal submitted by those councils on 9 February 2017 for possible reorganisation of local government structures in Dorset.

Mr Marcus Jones:

The advice I receive when I am evaluating any proposal for local government reorganisation will include advice from the team of officials in my department responsible for local governance reform, who as part of their responsibilities provide the kind of information referred to in my answer yesterday to Question UIN 65073 to any councils which request it, as have the nine Dorset councils to whom such information has been provided.

■ **Local Government: Redundancy Pay**

Martyn Day:

[\[65344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what the reasons are for the time taken to update the Local Government Redundancy Modification Order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Marcus Jones:

DCLG administers the Local Government Redundancy Modification Order on behalf of the UK Government and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales.

We are actively looking at options on taking forward the Redundancy Modification Order and will update relevant organisations in due course.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: Small Businesses**

Craig Tracey:

[\[63190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what discussions his Department has had with small businesses ahead of the introduction of proposed changes to business rate rateable values on the definition of a small business.

Craig Tracey:

[\[63191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, if his Department will increase transitional thresholds for business rate relief.

Mr Marcus Jones:

The rateable value threshold for a small property in the 2017 transitional relief scheme was increased from £25,500 to £28,000 in Greater London and from £18,000 to £20,000 elsewhere, compared to the 2010 scheme. This increase was in line with the overall effect of the business rates revaluation on rateable values, and helps to maintain the support the scheme provides to small businesses.

The Government announced this as part of the consultation on the 2017 transitional relief scheme. The Department regularly has discussions with representative bodies for the small business sector on a range of issues, including changes to the business rates system.

At Budget 2016, the Government announced that the threshold for Small Business Rate Relief Scheme would double from April 2017, from £6000 to £12,000. As a result of this change over 600,000 small businesses will pay no rates at all.

■ Owner Occupation**Mr Jim Cunningham:****[65261]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of trends in home ownership for people on low incomes (a) nationally and (b) in Coventry South constituency over the last five years.

Gavin Barwell:

The Department's English Housing Survey provides analysis on home ownership by household income. This is published in Live Table FA1331

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tenure-trends-and-cross-tenure-analysis>) for England from 2008-09 to 2014-15

The information is not available at constituency level.

■ Planning: Fees and Charges**John Healey:****[64421]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2017 to Question 63539, what the time period will be over which he plans the additional fee income to be generated.

Gavin Barwell:

The figure relates to a potential increase over a one year period.

■ Rented Housing**Mr Roger Godsiff:****[64623]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, how much funding for help to rent projects the Government has provided to local authorities in each of the last 10 years.

Gavin Barwell:

The Government is committed to preventing homelessness. Access to the private rented sector plays a part in both preventing and supporting the recovery from homelessness, helping people rebuild their lives.

We made a significant investment of nearly £14 million from 2010 to 2016 for Crisis to develop a programme to help single homeless people access private rented sector accommodation. Over 9,000 people were helped, with over 90 per cent maintaining tenancies for at least 6 months.

In addition, our £50 million Homelessness Prevention Programme is funding 84 projects in 225 local authorities. It provides an end-to-end approach to preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping, and will support a wide range of initiatives in local areas to prevent homelessness and enable people to recover quickly from a crisis.

■ **Rented Housing: Tyne and Wear****Mr Alan Campbell:**[\[64499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, how many people have had a fair rent registered in (a) Tynemouth constituency and (b) North Tyneside borough since 2010.

Gavin Barwell:

The Valuation Office Agency registers fair rents under the Rent Act 1977 on behalf of my Department. They do not hold information on the number of people who had fair rents registered in Tynemouth constituency or North Tyneside borough.

The information set out in the table below, relates to the number of registered rents in the Tyne and Wear registration area.

Fair rent registration in Tyne & Wear (2010 -Dec 312015)

YEAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	TOTAL
Number of registered rents	116	149	101	183	507	547	1603

■ **Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations****John Healey:**[\[64439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of the lack of a cost floor on housing associations whose tenants purchase their home through the right to acquire.

Gavin Barwell:

Schedule 5 (Paragraph 13) of the Right to Acquire regulations (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1997/619/made>) provides a provision designed to safeguard a landlord who has spent money in respect of a property, including construction, development costs and the acquisition of land. This is similar to the cost floor which applies to the Right to Buy.

■ **Unitary Councils****Mr Christopher Chope:****[64859]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2017 to Question 63312, on unitary councils, how the principles enunciated in that answer apply to councils opposed to a particular proposal for reorganisation but with whom other councils refuse to collaborate or work jointly.

Mr Marcus Jones:

[Holding answer 24 February 2017]: As I indicated in my previous answer, it is entirely for the councils concerned to decide whether and if so how they collaborate or work jointly, decisions on which they are accountable to their local electors.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Cybercrime****Andrew Gwynne:****[64527]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what the timetable is for updates to the Cyber Essentials scheme.

Matt Hancock:

As part of the regular reviews of all cyber security standards, the Government considers whether Cyber Essentials needs to be updated.

■ **Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Brexit****Paul Blomfield:****[64540]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

Matt Hancock:

We, and other Departments, are working closely with the Department for Exiting the European Union on all aspects of exiting the European Union.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Equality**Chris Stephens:****[R] [64441]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if she will make a statement.

Matt Hancock:

Through the Government's National Cyber Security Programme, my Department is delivering an ambitious set of initiatives to support the growth of and investment in cyber security companies across the United Kingdom, including those from Northern Ireland. In particular, we provide opportunities for early stage companies from across the UK to be represented at selected events where they can showcase their technologies and expertise in order to secure investment. We are also funding the delivery of two cyber innovation centres which are open to companies from across the UK.

We are also funding the delivery of 'Hut Zero', an accelerator programme for individuals with cyber security ideas, and 'Cyber 101' business training 'bootcamps' for early stage companies, some of which are being delivered in Northern Ireland. I am particularly delighted that Queen's University Belfast's Centre for Secure Information Technology is playing a pivotal role in the delivery of both of those initiatives.

■ Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Recruitment**Andrew Selous:****[64467]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of her Department have unspent convictions.

Matt Hancock:

DCMS is committed to offering all applicants equality of opportunity to ensure that we attract and retain candidates with the most talent and potential. To this end, the DCMS recruitment process does not require applicants to declare unspent criminal convictions at the initial recruitment stage. Applicants are asked to declare unspent criminal convictions as part of basic employment checks when a provisional offer of employment has been made. Decisions concerning appointment to a post where an individual has a conviction history are made on a case-by-case basis.

The department does not retain details centrally that would allow us to identify employees with unspent convictions so the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Electronic Warfare

Jim Shannon:

[\[64575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what steps her Department is taking to promote investment in cyber security companies in all regions and constituent parts of the UK.

Matt Hancock:

Through the Government's National Cyber Security Programme, my Department is delivering an ambitious set of initiatives to support the growth of and investment in cyber security companies across the United Kingdom, including those from Northern Ireland. In particular, we provide opportunities for early stage companies from across the UK to be represented at selected events where they can showcase their technologies and expertise in order to secure investment. We are also funding the delivery of two cyber innovation centres which are open to companies from across the UK.

We are also funding the delivery of 'Hut Zero', an accelerator programme for individuals with cyber security ideas, and 'Cyber 101' business training 'bootcamps' for early stage companies, some of which are being delivered in Northern Ireland. I am particularly delighted that Queen's University Belfast's Centre for Secure Information Technology is playing a pivotal role in the delivery of both of those initiatives.

■ Football

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[65330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, if she will hold discussions with the Football Association on how the FA Cup can best assist non-league football clubs financially.

Tracey Crouch:

Sutton United's and Lincoln City's successful cup runs this season, showed that the FA cup is hugely significant for lower league & non-league clubs in terms of prestige and the revenue it brings, including through TV coverage. The clubs are best placed to make representations within the FA about how the competition might offer even more value to supporters and clubs.

■ Football: Disability

Jim Shannon:

[\[64567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support she provides to small football clubs to improve disabled access at such clubs.

Tracey Crouch:

Through the Football Foundation, the Government is investing £18 million each year in partnership with the Premier League and The FA to amateur football clubs, schools, councils and local sports associations to support the development of new or

refurbished local football facilities. This includes facilities that greatly improve the access to disabled people as users of these sites.

Over and above merely increasing access and opportunities for disabled sports people to play regular sport, many of these facilities also become key venues at which disability-focused community programmes are delivered by professional football clubs' trusts, charities and other organisations.

These schemes often achieve multiple social outcomes beyond sport, such as improving the health and wellbeing of disabled players. These schemes also engage many different types of disability, including wheelchair football, visually-impaired and blind football, and deaf and hearing-impaired football.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that 'reasonable adjustments' are made by service providers, which include the owners of football stadia, to make premises accessible for disabled people. It is for individual clubs to determine what adjustments are 'reasonable' taking into account their own circumstances. Structural changes are not always necessary to make sports grounds accessible to spectators with disabilities. Clubs can also change policies and procedures to make their grounds more accessible to disabled spectators.

The Football Stadia Improvement Fund, which is funded by the Premier League, provides money for clubs in the Football League and The FA National League System down to step 7 who want to improve their facilities for players, officials and spectators. Bids to the Fund must enable clubs to meet the membership conditions of their particular leagues, but clubs may also be eligible to apply for funding to provide facilities for disabled spectators. Further information can be found at: www.fsif.co.uk/.

■ Public Libraries

Mr David Nuttall:

[\[64667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what funding she has provided to libraries in each of the last five years.

Mr Rob Wilson:

Funding provided to public libraries in England in each of the last 5 years by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and through Arts Council England, the development agency for libraries, is shown in the following table:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17 BUDGETED
DCMS				£2,589,626	£4,300,000
Arts Council England	£983,405	£3,960,601	£2,675,015	£3,077,350	£2,500,000
Total	£983,405	£3,960,601	£2,675,015	£5,666,976	£6,800,000

This is in addition to the net investment by local library authorities annually including £701 million in 2015/16.

The funding from DCMS in 2015/16 supported the installation or significant upgrade of WiFi in public libraries across England, while the funding for 2016/17 includes a new public libraries innovation fund to support projects that develop innovative library service activity to benefit disadvantaged people and places in England.

Arts Council England's funding provided to public libraries in England supports library-specific activity or direct investment in a library, such as the Get It Loud In Libraries programme which has created exciting opportunities for young people to lead, participate, volunteer and excel in artistic and cultural activity in a library environment.

■ Sports

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[65209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what her Department's timescale is for meeting each of the key performance indicators in her Department's report, Sporting Future: First Annual Report, published on 9 February 2017.

Tracey Crouch:

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out in Sporting Future are measures that will track progress and trends over time, against the key outputs defined in the strategy. The KPIs are not set targets with a defined end date.

The timeline for reporting on those KPIs in Sporting Future where data is not already available, is provided in the Sporting Future First Annual Report.

There are a number of sources of data for the KPIs, and some of those sources, such as Active Lives Children, are still in development. Figures against these KPIs will be published in future annual reports.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces

Caroline Lucas:

[\[65361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to written statement HCWS431, of 17 December 2015, on UK embedded forces, when he plans to publish details of UK service personnel embedded on the armed forces of other nations.

Sir Michael Fallon:

In my written statement of 17 December 2015 (HCWS431) on UK embedded forces, I committed to release information on Service personnel embedded in other nations' armed forces on an annual basis, through the Ministry of Defence's Annual Report and Accounts.

An update to the table in my statement is available on page 28 of the linked report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-of-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2015-to-2016>. The 2016/17 Annual Report, which will include further updates, will be published later this year.

■ Armed Forces: Correspondence

Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan: [\[65337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost was to his Department of its e-bluey contract in each of the last 10 years; and how many e-blueys were sent in each of those years.

Harriett Baldwin:

The number of e-blueys sent in each of the last 10 years is set out below.

CALENDAR YEAR	NUMBER OF E-BLUEYS
2007	1,227,452
2008	986,473
2009	978,890
2010	971,285
2011	952,696
2012	832,035
2013	643,959
2014	173,622
2015	42,329
2016	36,279

Because we are working on a number of possible options to improve welfare connectivity on deployed operations, the cost of the current contract with SuperLetter.com is commercially sensitive.

Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan: [\[65338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he was made aware that the British Forces Post Office had cancelled its contact with SuperLetter.com to supply e-bluey.com.

Harriett Baldwin:

Ministers were advised in October 2016 that the contract with SuperLetter.com would be terminated as the service no longer provided value for money now that usage has declined by some 98% in recent years.

■ Defence Equipment and Support: Billing

Mr Kevan Jones:

[65266]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total value of invoices received from suppliers to Defence Equipment and Support and unpaid within 30 days has been since November 2016.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[65268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many invoices received from suppliers to Defence Equipment and Support have not been paid in full within 30 days of their receipt since November 2016.

Harriett Baldwin:

Since the implementation of a new purchase to pay system in December 2016 the Ministry of Defence has paid around half a million invoices worth nearly £7 billion to suppliers - equating to 98% of invoices. Just under 10,000 of these - or two per cent of the stated number - with a value of some £374 million, were not satisfied within 30 days.

The MOD is committed to paying all of its suppliers as promptly as possible. We recognise the impact that late payments have on suppliers and we are taking a number of actions to ensure that performance returns to, and then surpasses, usual levels.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[65267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether it is the policy of Defence Equipment and Support to pay suppliers for services received only upon receipt of an invoice for those services.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[65269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's policy is on the length of time taken to pay invoices from suppliers to his Department.

Harriett Baldwin:

Ministry of Defence (MOD) policy is to pay valid and undisputed invoices within 30 calendar days, reflecting our legal obligations. Within the MOD, including Defence Equipment and Support, payment can only be made on presentation of a valid invoice.

However, as a signatory to the Prompt Payment Code, we are fully committed to paying all suppliers as quickly as possible and we aim to pay 80% of invoices within five working days. Information about MOD payment policy and our performance is published on gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ministry-of-defence-supplier-invoicing-and-payment-information>.

■ Middle East: Military Intervention**Tim Farron:** [\[65340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many UK citizens have been identified by his Department as having been killed in British airstrikes on Syria and Iraq.

Sir Michael Fallon:

In support of the Coalition campaign in Iraq and Syria, British airstrikes target Daesh fighters irrespective of nationality and it is not possible to identify how many of these might have been UK Citizens. On 7 September 2015 the then Prime Minister announced that two Daesh fighters, Ruhul Amin and Reyaad Khan, who were of British nationality, had been killed in British airstrikes because they had posed a direct threat to the UK.

■ Ministry of Defence: Equality**Chris Stephens:** [\[R\] \[64442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mark Lancaster:

Over the last three years the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has had, and continues to have due regard, as necessary, to the public sector equality duty in exercising its functions. The Equality Act does not require this due regard to take the form of an equality impact assessment, nor does it define an equality impact assessment, and the MOD does not maintain a record of such assessments."

The MOD aims to ensure that all public service reforms impacting on its staff or members of the public undergo an Equality Analysis, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty placed on the Department by Equalities legislation. We have recently reviewed and updated our Equality Analysis guidance to ensure that those working on policy, projects, or services have a clear and efficient process to follow and all the necessary tools at hand to undertake an Equality Analysis.

EDUCATION**■ Apprentices****Steve McCabe:** [\[65126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2016 to Question 56344, whether her Department has assessed the merits of requiring industry trailblazers to map out post-apprenticeship career progression possibilities.

Robert Halfon:

We do not believe it is desirable for Apprenticeship Trailblazer groups to be asked to map out post-apprenticeship career progression possibilities, for the reasons outlined in my answer to Question 56344 of 19 December 2016.

■ Apprentices: Standards

Steve McCabe:

[65417]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 8 February 2017 to Question 61837, what steps she is taking to encourage trailblazers to incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy elements into new and pre-existing apprenticeship standards.

Robert Halfon:

Employers are developing new apprenticeships— they decide the standards they need to meet the skills needs for their sectors.

A variety of apprenticeship standards at different levels have been developed or are in development which will help provide employers and employees working in the energy sector with the skills they need.

A list of apprenticeships standards is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>

■ Arts: Education

Ian Lavery:

[64944]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure the integration of creative arts into mainstream education.

Nick Gibb:

All schools, including academies and free schools, must provide a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.

The new National Curriculum, introduced in 2014, sets out the essential knowledge in the key subjects that schools should teach. In Key Stages 1 to 3, music and art and design are statutory subjects for maintained schools. At Key Stage 4, all pupils in maintained schools must be offered the opportunity to study at least one subject in the arts 'entitlement' area, which includes art and design, music, dance, drama, and media arts.

Beyond the curriculum, we are investing £300 million of ring-fenced funding in music hubs in 2016-20. This is intended to ensure all children, whatever their background, have access to a high quality music education, including learning to play musical instruments and having the opportunity to play and sing in ensembles.

■ Curriculum

Ian Lavery:

[64946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans for changes to the national curriculum; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The National Curriculum was comprehensively reviewed and then published in 2013. We currently have no plans to review it. Schools started teaching the majority of the new National Curriculum in September 2014, with some subjects taught from September 2015 and the final subject, science at Key Stage 4, taught from September 2016. Schools are therefore currently embedding the new National Curriculum into their teaching. The National Curriculum outlines the body of essential knowledge that must be taught in maintained schools. This essential knowledge should not change significantly over time.

■ **Department for Education: Equality****Chris Stephens:****[R]** [\[64443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Dineneage:

Over the last three years the Department for Education has had and continues to have due regard, as necessary, to the public sector equality duty in exercising its functions. The Equality Act does not require this due regard to take the form of an equality impact assessment, nor does it define an equality impact assessment, and the Department does not maintain a record of such assessments.

■ **Department for Education: Government Contracts****Jon Trickett:**[\[64391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by her Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate she has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Caroline Dineneage:

This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Department for Education: Recruitment****Andrew Selous:**[\[64469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of her Department have unspent convictions.

Caroline Dineneage:

The Department for Education's recruitment policies are fully compliant with the Ban the Box initiative. The Department does not hold information about how many employees have unspent convictions.

■ Department for Education: Uber**Mr Iain Wright:**[\[64372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much her Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Department for Education made no payments to Uber for Business from 28th October 2016 to 20th February 2017.

We do not have access to this information. The Department for Education reimburses employees' expenses via an online expenses system. All personal reimbursement for taxi fares are classified as 'Taxis', and the name of the company is not recorded.

■ Education: Standards**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[65331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will hold discussions with her counterparts in (a) Scotland, (b) Wales and (c) Northern Ireland on how best to assist young people in socially deprived communities across the UK to obtain higher grades in core school subjects.

Edward Timpson:

Officials engage regularly with their counterparts in the devolved administrations on topics of mutual interest and concern. Addressing disadvantage was the topic of a recent four nations workshop facilitated by the British Council. It will also be a theme of the International Summit on the Teaching Profession to be co-hosted by the UK and Scottish Governments in March 2017, in partnership with the OECD and Education International, the global federation of teachers' unions.

■ Educational Psychology: Norfolk**Norman Lamb:**[\[64896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2017 to Question 59084, on Educational Psychology, how many educational psychologists were employed in Norfolk in each year since 2010.

Nick Gibb:

The head count of educational psychologists reported as employed by Norfolk local authority in November each year since 2011 is provided in the table below. Data for 2010 were not provided by the local authority.

2011	30
2012	25
2013	23
2014	28
2015	23

Source: School Workforce Census

The Department has approval to advertise for a new training provider in the East of England providing additional 10 training places.

■ Forced Marriage

Nusrat Ghani: [\[64189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on how many occasions in the last year schools have made representations to her Department about girls being married under religious law while below the age of 16.

Nusrat Ghani: [\[64192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many times schools have reported concerns to her Department or to other relevant authorities on missing children in the context of trafficking for forced marriage.

Edward Timpson:

We have not found any instances where in the last year schools have made representations to this Department about marriage under religious law below the age of 16, or reported concerns about children missing in the context of trafficking for forced marriage. Safeguarding concerns in relation to such issues should be reported to the local authority in line with local procedures.

■ Law: Curriculum

Anna Turley: [\[65201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will take steps to give teaching of the law more prominence in the national curriculum.

Nick Gibb:

The teaching of the legal system in the UK is a key element of the National Curriculum as part of the citizenship education taught at Key Stages 3 and 4. Citizenship education aims to ensure that all pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the role of law and the justice system in our society. The subject also fosters pupils' keen awareness of democracy, Government and how laws are made and upheld.

■ Nurseries: Staff

Helen Hayes:

[64496]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what consultation her Department has conducted with parents on nursery staff qualifications.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Department for Education welcomes hearing parents' views on staff qualifications for those working in the early years.

We regularly undertake a comprehensive survey of parents' use of childcare and early years provision, and their views and experiences. As part of this survey parents are asked what factors they deem important in determining high quality provision, including the qualification levels of staff.

The childcare and early years survey of parents 2014-15 can be accessed here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516924/SFR09-2016_Childcare_and_Early_Years_Parents_Survey_2014-15_report.pdf.pdf

The Department recently conducted a consultation on the appropriate qualification requirements for early years staff operating at Level 3. This consultation was open to responses from anybody with an interest in the early years sector, including parents.

■ Pre-school Education: Teachers

Helen Hayes:

[64494]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many early years teachers she expects to be recruited over the course of this Parliament; and whether the new early years workforce strategy will include details of dedicated funding for the recruitment of new early years teachers.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Department does not use a workforce supply model for early years initial teacher training. We have an ambition to grow the number of graduates who are entering the early years teaching profession, and make places available to meet the demand from the market.

Funding is available for training course fees, with additional funding for nursery employers to help them support graduates in their setting to become early years teachers. To encourage the best graduates into the early years workforce we provide bursaries to eligible trainees.

The workforce strategy will help employers attract, retain and develop staff to deliver high quality provision across the early years sector. As part of the strategy we are considering what government can do to help grow the graduate workforce in the sector.

The workforce strategy will be published shortly.

■ Primary Education

Helen Hayes:

[\[64495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the poorest children start primary school with a good level of development.

Caroline Dinenage:

We want all children, regardless of their background, to have the best possible start in life and to have access to high quality early education and childcare to prepare them for school.

The results from the 2016 Early Years Foundation Stage Profile show that 54% of children with free school meal eligibility achieved a good level of development in their reception year, compared to 72% of all other children. This gap has continued to narrow year on year - from 19.0 percentage points in 2013 to 17.3 percentage points in 2016.

However we know there is more to do, and that is why social mobility is at the heart of the Government's agenda, and why we are investing a record amount in childcare - £6 billion per year by the end of this Parliament.

During the last Parliament we extended our offer of 15 hours a week of free early education to the 40% most disadvantaged 2-year olds, and introduced the Early Years Pupil Premium - worth £300 per year per eligible child - to help providers close the gap between disadvantaged 3- and 4-year olds and their peers.

■ Pupils: Absenteeism

Stephen Timms:

[\[65145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the effects of term-time holiday fines on the incomes of low income families.

Edward Timpson:

The Department does not hold information on the number of penalty notices for unauthorised holiday absence issued to low income families.

■ Schools: Admissions

Stephen Hammond:

[\[64815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will estimate the costs of establishing a pilot initiative based across two or more locally authority areas make provision for children who were born prematurely in the summer months to provide flexibility around timing of school entry to summer-born children in order to gather evidence to inform implementation of the School Admissions Code policy changes.

Nick Gibb:

We are currently undertaking evidence gathering and analysis to estimate the potential costs of providing more flexibility for summer born children. This is complex and it is important that we take the time to consider how to implement any possible

changes and what new arrangements we might put in place. Any changes we do make will be subject to a full statutory process.

■ **Schools: Buildings**

Mr Jim Cunningham:

[\[65260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure that all state school buildings are rated as being of a satisfactory standard; and if she will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is making a huge investment in the school estate of £23 billion up to 2021, to create a further 600,000 new school places, deliver 500 new free schools, and rebuild and refurbish buildings at over 500 schools.

From this, we are investing £10 billion in school replacement, maintenance and improvement works from 2016-2021. As part of this, the £4.4 billion Priority School Building Programme is rebuilding and refurbishing buildings in the very worst condition at more than 500 schools across the country.

Under the first phase of the programme, building work is being undertaken at 260 schools. Of these, 177 schools have already opened in their new and refurbished buildings. The vast majority of schools within the first phase of the programme will be delivered by the end of 2017, two years earlier than originally planned.

Since 2015, the Department has allocated funding on the basis of consistent condition data on the school estate, targeting funding where it is needed most. Funding is allocated each year to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate in order to address the condition need in the estate that was identified through the Property Data Survey.

It is our aim that, over time, the condition need of the school estate will be addressed as more school buildings are replaced and refurbished.

■ **Schools: Inspections**

Justin Tomlinson:

[\[65119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many teachers are employed to conduct inspections on behalf of Ofsted.

Nick Gibb:

This is a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman. I have asked her to write to you and a copy of her reply will be placed in the libraries of the House.

■ **Schools: North East**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[64973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effect of the area cost adjustment on the level of school funding in the North East.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[64974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when she plans to publish the Schools Funding Formula.

Nick Gibb:

Our proposals for a national funding formula include an area cost adjustment to reflect the different labour market costs across the country. Schools in the North East would not receive an uplift through the area cost adjustment, as it is only applied to areas where labour market costs are particularly high. Our proposed national funding formula would increase funding for 622 schools in the North East, with funding for schools in the region as a whole increasing by 1%.

The consultation on the national funding formula will conclude on 22 March. We will confirm final arrangements in the summer, and introduce the formula from April 2018.

■ Sexual Offences: Pupils

Jess Phillips:

[\[64615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance is available for schools on appropriate procedures for dealing with allegations of pupil-on-pupil sexual assault.

Edward Timpson:

Keeping Children Safe in Education is the statutory guidance to which all schools and colleges in England must regard when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance places a responsibility on all staff to provide a safe environment, in which children can learn and to consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.

The guidance requires schools and colleges to have an effective child protection policy, which includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated. The policy should reflect the different forms that peer on peer abuse may take and make clear that abuse should never be tolerated or passed off as banter or part of growing up. The policy should also be clear as to how victims of peer on peer abuse will be supported. The guidance is clear that children's social care and the Police should be involved as appropriate.

Following the recent Women and Equalities report into sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools, the Department for Education has committed to reviewing existing departmental guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education. An advisory group has been set up to support the department in this work.

■ Teachers: Training

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods:

[\[65050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect on recruitment to initial teaching training courses of all university providers only recruiting applicants with a 2.1 degree or higher.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods:

[65051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential effect on teacher training recruitment to shortage subjects of all university providers only recruiting applicants with a 2.1 degree or higher.

Nick Gibb:

Teaching is a graduate profession. We do not stipulate a minimum degree class for trainee teachers; however, initial teacher training providers have the freedom to set their own entry requirements. Through the use of bursaries, we encourage those with a higher degree class to enter teaching. Details of bursaries for those beginning courses in 2017/18 can be found here:

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/funding-and-salary/overview>

The degree class of current postgraduate trainees is provided in Tables 2 and 2a in the Main tables section on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/initial-teacher-training-trainee-number-census-2016-to-2017>.

It includes a breakdown by subject and route.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods:

[65052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what account her Department took of the (a) location, (b) size and (c) date of the latest Ofsted inspection of university providers when awarding universities either a multi-year or single-year allocation of initial teacher training places.

Nick Gibb:

The criteria used to determine eligibility for multi-year allocations are set out in the 2017-18 allocations methodology published in September 2016. For postgraduate providers, these include Ofsted grade (based on published initial teacher education inspection data) but do not refer to provider size or location.

We will publish a detailed technical methodology on how three-year allocations were determined, alongside a full list of allocations for 2017-18, in due course.

Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods:

[65053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what routes her Department recognises as providing appropriate entry into the teaching profession.

Nick Gibb:

To teach in a state maintained secondary, primary, or state or non-state maintained special school you must have qualified teacher status (QTS). Routes that lead to the award of QTS, including those which assess previous teaching experience, are outlined on the Get Into Teaching website:

<https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/explore-my-options/teacher-training-routes>.

Teachers who trained outside England may be able to have their teaching qualification recognised as equivalent to QTS. To do so, such teachers must apply to

the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) to be awarded QTS before they can take up a teaching post in a maintained school or non-maintained special school in England. Individuals who hold qualified teacher learning and skills (QTLS) status are also eligible to work as a qualified teacher in schools in England.

Further information on eligibility and equivalencies is available on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualified-teacher-status-qts>.

■ **Truancy**

John Pugh:

[65354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, (a) how many parents were prosecuted for truancy, (b) how many of those people were found guilty, (c) how many of those convicted were (i) fined and (ii) imprisoned, (d) what the (iii) highest, (iv) lowest and (v) average level of fine imposed was for those who received fines and (e) what the (vi) longest, (vii) shortest and (viii) average length of custodial sentence was for those people who received one.

Edward Timpson:

Statistics on truancy are published by the Ministry of Justice in the “Criminal justice statistics outcomes by offence data tool”, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2015>.

The number of defendants proceeded at court for the offences of truancy (parent failure to secure attendance of child) was 20,808 in England and Wales in 2015. The number of offenders found guilty was 15,649. Similarly, the number of offenders sentenced was 15,649; out of these, 12,095 offenders were sentenced to a court fine, and 8 offenders were given an immediate custody sentence.

The average level of fine for truancy was £184 in 2015. The lowest fine was up to £25, and the highest fine was over £750 and up to £1,000.

The average custodial sentence length for truancy was 1.3 months in 2015, and all custodial sentences given were for 3 months or less.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Badgers: Vaccination**

Paul Flynn:

[65348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to develop an oral *M. Bovis* vaccine for badgers; and what funding from the public purse has been made available for its development.

George Eustice:

Since 2009 Defra has spent £15 million on oral badger vaccine development, using BCG (the attenuated strain of *Mycobacterium bovis* used worldwide to vaccinate people against TB). The Animal and Plant Health Agency has identified palatable bait

and practical field deployment strategies. The immunity conferred by oral vaccination of badgers with BCG tends to be more variable than that resulting from the injectable formulation of the vaccine. Therefore, current studies are focusing on producing a safe, effective and affordable vaccine which provides consistent protection when eaten by badgers.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Vaccination**

Paul Flynn:

[\[65349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which M. Bovis vaccines for bovine animals the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency has access to for the purpose of trials; and what plans her Department has to run bovine vaccination trials.

George Eustice:

BCG (the attenuated strain of *Mycobacterium bovis* used worldwide to vaccinate people against TB) remains the only viable option at present for vaccination of cattle against TB.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (formerly Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratory Agency) has shown a protective effect of BCG in cattle and developed delivery regimes for cattle. However, a DIVA test to differentiate vaccinated from infected animals must also be developed, as vaccination with BCG can interfere with the diagnostic tests routinely used to identify TB-infected cattle. APHA has developed such a test and further studies are ongoing to determine whether this will be suitable for use in the field. Once this has been determined, cattle vaccine field trials could be taken forward.

■ **Cryptosporidia: Lancashire**

Cat Smith:

[\[64958\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many staffing hours the Drinking Water Inspectorate put into investigating the cryptosporidium incident which took place in Lancashire in August 2015 in (a) 2015, (b) 2016 and (c) so far in 2017.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Drinking Water Inspectorate has put the following staffing hours into the investigation of the Cryptosporidium Incident which took place in Lancashire in August 2015.

YEAR	STAFF HOURS
2015	1366
2016	650
2017	222

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Brexit**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[64543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

George Eustice:

We, and other Departments, are working closely with the Department for Exiting the European Union on all aspects of exiting the European Union. This is to build a detailed understanding of how withdrawal will affect domestic policies and to coordinate policy work across Government.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Government Contracts**

Jon Trickett:

[\[64392\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by her Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate she has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

George Eustice:

The information requested is as follows:

There were no pro bono costs.

YEAR	NUMBER OF CONTRACTS	CONTRACT VALUE (£)
2010-2011	761	160,249,080
2011-2012	690	160,919,299
2012-2013	926	175,991,301
2013-2014	679	227,028,543
2014-2015	645	207,764,115
2015-2016	419	127,572,806

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Pay**

Philip Davies:

[\[64164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the (a) mean and (b) median pay was for staff in her Department who were (i) male, (ii) female, (iii)

white, (iv) from an ethnic minority background, (v) disabled and (vi) non-disabled in the most recent year for which information is available, broken down by (A) full-time and (B) part-time workers.

George Eustice:

The Civil Service is committed to being a place where everyone can thrive, regardless of background, with the aim of becoming the most inclusive employer in the UK.

Whilst it is encouraging to see a positive trajectory in terms of diversity representation in the Civil Service, we recognise that there is more to do. That is why in March 2016 the Government published its refreshed Talent Action Plan for the Civil Service, identifying actions to support our staff, increase diversity in the Civil Service and deliver the best possible public services.

■ **Hunting Act 2004: Criminal Proceedings and Convictions**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[64671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people were (a) proceeded against and (b) convicted of an offence under the Hunting Act 2004 in each police force area in (i) 2015 and (ii) 2016.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The number of defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts and found guilty at all courts for offences under the Hunting Act 2004, in England and Wales, in 2015, can be viewed in the table attached. Data for 2016 is planned for publication in May 2017.

Attachments:

1. 64671 table referred to [Hunting Act 2004, England and Wales, 2015.pdf]

■ **Marine Environment: Microplastics**

Sarah Olney:

[\[65312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effect of microbeads used in industrial processes on marine wildlife.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Our consultation on banning the use of microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products asks for evidence on the extent of the environmental impacts of microplastics, including microbeads, found in other products and processes. This includes whether microbeads are used in industrial processes and whether they end up in the marine environment. If they do we will use this information to inform future UK actions to protect the marine environment.

■ Marine Environment: Protection**Melanie Onn:** [\[65166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that protection of the UK marine environment will not be affected as a result of the UK leaving the EU.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Until exit negotiations are concluded, the UK remains a full member of the European Union (EU) and all rights and obligations of EU membership remain in force.

The Prime Minister announced a Repeal Bill to convert EU law into domestic British law. This provides certainty for consumers, workers and businesses by maintaining existing laws.

In line with our manifesto, the Government is committed to ours being the first generation to leave the environment of England in a better state than we found it.

■ Microplastics**Sarah Olney:** [\[65311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make it her policy to extend the ban on microbeads to include non-cosmetic and non-domestic products.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

We are currently running a consultation on our proposals to ban microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products. The consultation ends on 28th February 2017. The consultation also seeks to gather evidence on the extent of the environmental impacts of microplastics, including microbeads, found in other products. This evidence will be used to inform future UK actions to protect the marine environment.

Sarah Olney: [\[65313\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans she has to tackle the use of microbeads in products outside the scope of her Department's proposed ban.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

We are currently running a consultation on our proposals to ban microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products. The consultation ends on 28th February 2017. The consultation also seeks to gather evidence on the extent of the environmental impacts of microplastics, including microbeads, found in other products. This evidence will be used to inform future UK actions to protect the marine environment.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[65332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will conduct an assessment of the potential biological effects of microbead products including those not in her Department's proposed ban.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra funded a study on micro plastics that was published last year and which has contributed to our knowledge base in formulating the consultation.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[65358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether officials from her Department have met officials from the World Health Organisation to discuss a ban on the use of microbead products.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra has not met with the World Health Organisation to discuss.

Anne Marie Morris:

[\[65429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies on the planned ban of microbeads.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

We are currently running a consultation on our proposals to ban microbeads in cosmetics and personal care products in preparation for the consultation which Defra carried out an assessment on the impacts of a ban. This concluded that a ban of this kind would help improve the state of the marine environment and address public concerns relating to consumer confidence in UK cosmetics. The impact on industry was considered to be low given that many companies had already committed to discontinuing their use.

■ Microplastics: USA

Sarah Olney:

[\[65314\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the decision to ban microbeads by the US.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The US ban has not yet come into force but we will continue to monitor its progress

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[65352\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if her Department will monitor the effectiveness of the US ban on microbeads which is due to come into effect in July 2017.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Yes.

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[65353\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether officials from her Department met counterparts from the Environmental Protection Agency in the US to discuss that country's ban on the production of personal care products and cosmetics which contain plastic microbeads.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra officials have been in discussions with the US Food & Drug Administration to help develop aspects of the UK approach on which we are currently consulting.

■ Rivers: Environment Protection

Mims Davies:

[\[64775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of environmental protections for chalk streams.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Objectives and actions to protect and improve chalk streams are included in England's river basin management plans. These plans provide the framework setting out how our rivers will improve over the next 6 years from investment and activity across the sectors.

Working with Natural England, the Environment Agency carries out monitoring and works with water companies and other stakeholders where actions are identified to protect and improve our water environment including chalk streams.

The Agency has changed 63 abstraction licences relating to 15 chalk streams across England, which has returned 16 million cubic metres per year of water back to chalk streams. Further, as a result of River Restoration Strategies and Site Improvement Plans being implemented on Sites of Special Scientific Interest chalk streams, 70 kilometres of priority chalk stream have been improved since 2011. Water company investment on phosphate removal at sewage treatment works across England will also benefit chalk rivers.

■ Tree Planting

Jim Shannon:

[\[64562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to encourage the planting of mature trees.

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

The Government does not offer any direct support to plant mature trees. The Government recognises that planting larger older trees can be a key element in landscaping urban development and an important component of green infrastructure. However, the transportation of mature trees and the soil associated with their roots is a significant pathway in the transportation and establishment of tree pests and diseases, such as Oak Processionary Moth. Therefore the Government strongly recommends that those planting mature trees should source trees that have been

grown in the UK or supplied from nurseries with adequate biosecurity procedures in place.

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

■ Brexit

Paul Blomfield:

[\[64639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, if he will publish a list of the sectors the Government has categorised as (a) high, (b) medium and (c) low priority as part of the UK's negotiations to exit the EU.

Mr Robin Walker:

We have been doing detailed work to prepare for the negotiation, analysing more than 50 sectors as well as areas of cross-cutting regulation. We want the best possible outcome for the whole of the UK economy and there is no question of prioritising sectors. We want to deliver an exit in the most orderly and smooth way possible, delivering maximum certainty for businesses and workers across the whole United Kingdom and in all sectors.

■ Department for Exiting the European Union: Government Contracts

Jon Trickett:

[\[64393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Mr David Jones:

The Department for Exiting the European Union will publish the information on contracts over £10,000 as part of transparency data releases in due course. The Department has not made an estimate of the value of pro bono costs. Additionally the Department, wherever possible, seeks to award contracts on an outcome basis and pays for deliverables rather than by contractor days. Note that the Department only came into existence in 2016.

■ Department for Exiting the European Union: Information Officers

Justin Madders:

[\[65108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, how many staff in his Department are employed in media relations and communications roles; and how much has been spent on the salaries of such staff members.

Mr Robin Walker:

All departments are equipping themselves with the resources they need to get the best deal for the UK. The Department for Exiting the European Union now has over

300 staff, and is growing fast. We are not in a position to give a final total for particular groups of staff as recruitment is ongoing and we will not be giving a running commentary.

■ **Department for Exiting the European Union: Recruitment**

Andrew Selous:

[\[64471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, whether his Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

Mr David Jones:

The Government is committed to improving diversity of opportunity and creating an inclusive working environment that attracts the best talent and makes the most of potential skills and productivity of ex-offenders in the community.

The Civil Service has committed to banning the box, following the former Prime Minister's commitment in February 2016. Business in the Community's Ban the Box campaign was formally launched across the Civil Service on the 17th October 2016.

A number of departments are already operating their recruitment process in line with the Ban the Box principles. This approach is now being formalised across the Civil Service and departments are working to implement this initiative quickly and effectively to ensure their roles attract the widest possible range of applicants. The Cabinet Office is responsible for the Ban the Box policy in the Civil Service.

Information requested relating to how many DExEU employees have unspent convictions could only be obtained at disproportionate cost in terms of time and resource.

■ **Department for Exiting the European Union: Uber**

Mr Iain Wright:

[\[64374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Mr David Jones:

The financial systems of the Department do not record expenses claimed by staff for taxi travel by company name.

■ **Economic Situation**

Paul Blomfield:

[\[64702\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what the 51 economic sectors are which have been identified by his Department during its work on the UK's negotiations to leave the EU; and if he will place a list of those sectors in the Library.

Mr David Jones:

DExEU officials, supported by officials across Government, are carrying out a programme of sectoral and regulatory analysis. We are conducting analysis on over 50 sectors within the areas of goods; services; financial services; network industries; and agriculture and fisheries. We are also carrying out analysis on cross-cutting regulations. Together with extensive stakeholder engagement all this analysis will be used to inform the Government's approach to, and during, the negotiations. As the Prime Minister has said, the government's plan for leaving the EU will be discussed at length. But as Parliament has also agreed, we will not publish anything that would undermine our ability to negotiate the best deal for the UK.

■ Economic Situation: West Midlands**Emma Reynolds:**[\[65288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, if he will establish formal arrangements for regular engagement with representatives from the West Midlands on the effect of the UK leaving the EU on that region's economy during his negotiations on leaving the EU.

Mr Robin Walker:

We are determined to listen and talk to as many organisations, companies and institutions as possible in the West Midlands and throughout the UK.

DExEU Ministers have visited the West Midlands twice in the last four months to meet local businesses.

We will ensure that all views are reflected in the British Government's analysis of the priorities and opportunities for the UK as it exits the European Union.

■ EU Grants and Loans**Emma Reynolds:**[\[65371\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, pursuant to the Answer of 24 October 2016 to Question 49406, on combined Authorities; EU Grants and Loans, what consultation with West Midlands stakeholders has been undertaken to date in the review that the Government is undertaking of all EU funding schemes.

Mr Robin Walker:

We are determined to listen and talk to as many organisations, companies and institutions as possible in the West Midlands and throughout the UK.

DExEU ministers have visited the West Midlands twice in the last four months to engage with local businesses.

We will ensure that all views are reflected in the British Government's analysis of the priorities and opportunities for the UK as it exits the European Union.

■ Iron and Steel: Manufacturing Industries

Margaret Ferrier: [\[64955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the future of the UK steel industry.

Mr Robin Walker:

We will continue to ensure that all views are reflected in the British Government's analysis of the priorities and opportunities for the UK as it exits the European Union.

The Government has left no stone unturned in our work to support the steel sector. We will continue to engage with the sector, as well as with the devolved nations and other key stakeholders as we seek to secure long-term viable solutions for the industry. The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry met with steel CEOs on 9 January.

The Department for Exiting the European Union's Officials and Ministers are working closely with other departments, including the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and others, to deliver the best outcomes for the UK.

Margaret Ferrier: [\[65301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, what discussions he has had with (a) the Engineering Employers Federation, (b) the Liberty House Group, (c) Tata Steel and (d) other steel manufacturers on the potential effect in the steel industry of the UK leaving the EU.

Mr Robin Walker:

We need to ensure that all views are reflected in the British Government's analysis of the priorities and opportunities for the UK as it exits the European Union.

The Government has set up the Steel Council to work with all key stakeholders to explore actions industry and Government can take to further support the UK steel sector. The Department for Exiting the European Union's Officials and Ministers are working closely with other departments, including the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and others, to deliver the best outcomes for the UK.

DExEU Ministers are working closely with their colleagues across Government to ensure that we are all speaking to every sector, from small family businesses to multinational companies and trade bodies. Details of Ministerial meetings will be published in the Department's Quarterly Transparency Returns, which will be made publicly available on GOV.UK.

■ Members: Correspondence

Rosie Cooper: [\[64790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, when he plans to respond to the letter of 1 June 2016 relating to a mock vote in the House originally addressed to the then Prime Minister, which was transferred to his Department and then to the

Department for Exiting the European Union, which has declined to reply to the correspondence as it pre-dates that Department's existence.

Mr David Jones:

I refer the honourable member to the letter sent to her office on 27 February by the Leader of the House of Commons, and reiterate the apologies in that letter for the delay related to the changes in Ministry of Government.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ **Algeria: Politics and Government**

Edward Argar:

[\[64425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the political and international security situation in Algeria.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

We assess that the Government of Algeria is working to achieve its goals of sustainable security, stability and prosperity in the country and wider region. The UK and other members of the international community are supporting Algeria in this work.

Edward Argar:

[\[64427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Government of Algeria on the political and security situation in that country.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

British Government ministers and officials discuss regularly with Algerian counterparts the political and security situation in Algeria, including through twice yearly bilateral security talks. The last security talks took place in London in December 2016, during which I also had a meeting with the Algerian Deputy Foreign Minister.

■ **Burma Campaign UK**

Catherine West:

[\[65428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when (a) he and (b) the Minister for Asia last met representatives from the Burma Campaign.

Alok Sharma:

Neither the Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), nor I have met representatives from Burma Campaign UK during our time in office. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last met representatives from Burma Campaign UK on 31 January.

Burma: Females

Catherine West: [\[65425\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he raised the issue of protecting women's rights with the Burmese Government on his recent visit to that country.

Catherine West: [\[65426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Burmese counterpart on protecting and promoting women's rights in that country in the last 12 months.

Catherine West: [\[65427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he discussed women's rights with representatives of the Rohingya community on his recent visit to Burma.

Alok Sharma:

When the Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), visited Burma in January he raised a number of human rights concerns with both the civilian and military authorities. Specifically he called for a restrained security response in Rakhine State, for immediate humanitarian access there and for an end to discrimination against the Rohingya. He also called for a de-escalation of conflict in Kachin and Shan States, as well as for full humanitarian access. He did not specifically raise women's rights.

Protecting women's rights was, however, the explicit focus of the visit of the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my noble Friend, the Rt Hon. the Baroness of Anelay of St Johns, who visited Burma in November in her capacity as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. She used her visit to press the Minister of Defence on the importance of the army handling allegations of sexual violence against women in a thorough and transparent manner. She lobbied senior Ministers for a full and independent investigation into reports of human rights violations. During her visit the Minister heard direct from Rohingya leaders about the plight faced by their community in Rakhine State including a range of human rights violations. She also hosted a workshop in which she met survivors of sexual violence and practitioners engaged in efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

Burma: Rohingya

Stephen Gethins: [\[64437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if the Government will support an independent international investigation into human rights violations committed by the Burmese military against the Rohingya Muslim community in Rakhine state as set out in the recent report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at the forthcoming session of the UN Human Rights Council.

Alok Sharma:

We are concerned about reports of human rights violations against the Rohingya Muslim community in Rakhine. We have called repeatedly for an independent investigation into these reports. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has issued a substantive report on the violations carried out by the military in Rakhine State since 9 October. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma is also due to issue a full report in March ahead of the UN Human Rights Council.

In light of the two reports we will consider, with our EU and international partners, what scope there is for further enhancing scrutiny of the military's actions in Rakhine.

Cameroon: Politics and Government**Tom Brake:**[\[64344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions the government has had with the governments of (a) Cameroon and (b) other countries on the political situation in Cameroon.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The British High Commission Yaoundé is closely following the situation in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon following on from the demonstrations and strikes by lawyers and teachers. We are engaged with the Government of Cameroon and will continue to raise this with them and other key international partners.

We have called for restraint by all involved, including in the use of force. We have reiterated the obligation to uphold human rights standards and encouraged the use of transparent legal means to address concerns. We have regularly called for issues to be resolved through broad-based dialogue, with a range of interlocutors, and a return to normality in the two regions.

Cyprus: Politics and Government**Edward Argar:**[\[64424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when the talks on a Cyprus settlement are scheduled to reconvene.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The leaders of the two Cypriot communities are continuing to hold talks on-island, facilitated by the UN. No date has yet been set for the continuation at political level of the Conference on Cyprus, convened in Geneva on 12 January under the auspices of the UN Secretary General, with the participation of the two leaders and representatives of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom (as Guarantor Powers). It is for the two leaders to decide when to reconvene the Conference, in consultation with the UN and the Guarantor Powers. The UK stands ready to participate at the appropriate level.

■ Cyprus: Visits Abroad

Edward Argar: [\[64564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when a Minister of his Department last undertook an official visit to Cyprus.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The most recent official visit by a Foreign Office Minister to Cyprus was by the Foreign Secretary on 30 November last year. I also visited Cyprus on 6-8 September. The Secretary of State for Defence made an official visit to Cyprus earlier this month, on 10 February.

■ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Brexit

Paul Blomfield: [\[64544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU) is the lead department supporting the Prime Minister on such matters. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and other departments, are working closely with DExEU on a wide range of issues to prepare for the UK's Exit from the EU.

■ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Equality

Chris Stephens: [\[R\] \[64444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Alan Duncan:

It is the responsibility of policy leads to conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) where appropriate and as such there is no central record of the number of assessments made. To provide you with this would require us to gather information from over 200 posts and departments and the cost of doing this would be disproportionate and exceed the appropriate cost limit. Policy leads are however encouraged to engage with the relevant staff support groups early on in policy formation to ensure that no group are disproportionately or disadvantaged. The FCO's Diversity and Inclusion Team provides expert guidance and support, where needed, to ensure EIAs are conducted effectively.

■ **Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Uber**

Mr Iain Wright:

[\[64375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Sir Alan Duncan:

The FCO has spent £44,573.09 on Uber transactions worldwide since 28 October 2016. The FCO does not differentiate between Uber for Business and other Uber transactions.

■ **Georgia: Foreign Relations**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[64814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Georgian counterpart on maintaining diplomatic and economic ties between the UK and Georgia after the UK has left the EU.

Boris Johnson:

I and my Ministerial colleagues have regular discussions with our Georgian counterparts and both sides have agreed that we look forward to maintaining the closest diplomatic and economic ties following the UK's exit from the European Union. The UK's commitment to Georgia as a valuable international security partner and regional democratic role model is unwavering. The Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, my Right Hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan), visited Tbilisi in November 2016 as head of the UK delegation for the annual bilateral Wardrop Dialogue, which takes place at Ministerial and official level between our two countries. The Wardrop Dialogue was upgraded to strategic level in 2016, a marker of our continued commitment to Georgia. We are already the world's second biggest investor in Georgia and over January-September 2016 bilateral trade was at £100 million, a 50 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2015.

■ **Georgia: Peacekeeping Operations**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[64809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support the Government is providing to the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia; and what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the work of that mission.

Boris Johnson:

13 of the 208 staff at the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia are British – three are funded by the EU and 10 are funded by the British Government. The EUMM, deployed in the wake of the August 2008 Georgian-Russian war to monitor the implementation of the Peace Agreements of 1 August and 8 September, is an important stabilising factor and trusted independent arbiter in any cross boundary issues. The UK's continued political and practical support to the EUMM is a clear demonstration of UK commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and

sovereignty. As the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan), said in his Explanatory Memorandum to the European Scrutiny Committee of December 2016, we assess that the mission continues to perform valuable work in the field, in challenging circumstances, and it remains the only international mission on the ground monitoring implementation of the 2008 peace agreements.

■ Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

Bob Blackman:

[\[64414\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent reports he has received on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' and the (a) persecution of dissidents and dual nationals in Iran, (b) exporting of terrorism abroad and (c) need to proscribe that organisation.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is a proscribed organisation by the EU, listed due to actions relating to Iran's support for terrorism and human rights violations. There are several reports on the IRGC's role and their involvement in the persecution of individuals in Iran, including the latest report from the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in Iran.

We remain concerned about IRGC activity in the region, including worrying reports of Iran's links and support (including financial support and the provision of military equipment and training) to militant/proscribed groups, such as Hizballah, Hamas, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Palestinian rejectionist groups. This support directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting peace in the region.

Bob Blackman:

[\[64415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if his Department will take steps to work with UK allies to expel the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its proxies from Syria, Iraq and Yemen and to impose sanctions on that organisation.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

The Government remains deeply concerned about Iranian activity in the region, particularly its support for armed militias in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. We continue to encourage Iran to play a transparent and constructive role in regional affairs and, as the Prime Minister, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) made clear in her speech to the Gulf Cooperation Council in Manama on 7 December, we remain committed to working with our allies to push back against Iran's aggressive regional actions. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is currently sanctioned in its entirety under the EU's nuclear listings. In addition, specific individuals within the IRGC are sanctioned in the EU for broader reasons including counter terrorism and human rights.

■ Israel: Palestinians

Bob Blackman:

[\[64413\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 6 February 2017 to Question 62082, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of allegations that the Palestinian Authority honours those who have killed Israelis.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

Our clear position is that we do not hesitate to raise instances of incitement whenever it is appropriate. We have a regular dialogue with both the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel in which we reiterate the need for both sides to prepare their populations for peaceful coexistence. We consider that the track record of President Abbas and Prime Minister Hamdallah shows their commitment to non-violence.

■ Overseas Aid

Mr Ivan Lewis:

[\[65290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, from which budget the planned £700 million empowerment fund will be allocated; and whether those funds will be counted as Official Development Assistance.

Alok Sharma:

The Empowerment Fund, which is expected to consist entirely of Official Development Assistance funding, is currently under development. Details of the Fund, including governance and oversight arrangements, will be announced to Parliament in due course.

Mr Ivan Lewis:

[\[65291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether funds from the planned £700 million empowerment fund will be subject to oversight by the National Security Council.

Alok Sharma:

The Empowerment Fund, which is expected to consist entirely of Official Development Assistance funding, is currently under development. Details of the Fund, including governance and oversight arrangements, will be announced to Parliament in due course.

Mr Ivan Lewis:

[\[65292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether funds from the planned £700 million empowerment fund will be depressed through a competitive tendering process.

Alok Sharma:

The Empowerment Fund, which is expected to consist entirely of Official Development Assistance funding, is currently under development. Details of the

Fund, including governance and oversight arrangements, will be announced to Parliament in due course.

■ **Ukraine: Armed Conflict**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[63790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what reports he has received on the effect of the conflict in eastern Ukraine on public opinion in that country.

Boris Johnson:

We have not received reports of any data on the effect of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine on public opinion. However, the National Democratic Institute has conducted recent polling in government-controlled parts of Ukraine on a range of related issues. What has been clear from their polling is that there is strong support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence, and for continued sanctions against Russia because of its role in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. 80 per cent of respondents would not exchange Ukraine's right to determine its own future for peace in Eastern Ukraine. Restrictions imposed by Russian-backed separatists mean that access to reliable information in non-Government controlled areas of Eastern Ukraine is extremely poor, and there is little genuinely open public discussion on the effect of the conflict.

■ **Yemen: Military Intervention**

Julie Elliott:

[\[64346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has received on the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Mr Tobias Ellwood:

I receive a wide range of representations on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, including from non-governmental organisations and other government departments. Yemen is one of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world. The UK is the fourth largest donor to the conflict in Yemen and I regularly raise humanitarian issues with the Coalition. Most recently, The Foreign Secretary discussed the humanitarian situation at the Quint meeting, between US, UK, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UN, in Bonn on 16 February.

HEALTH

■ **Analgesics**

Jim Shannon:

[\[64558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the cost of prescription pain-killers to the NHS.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Health Service Medical Supplies (Costs) Bill will strengthen the Secretary of State's existing powers to control the cost of unbranded generic medicines by enabling the Secretary of State to set the price of a medicine when the manufacturer is in the voluntary pricing scheme but the medicine is not covered by that scheme. The Bill will also provide a statutory footing for current voluntary arrangements to obtain information on more products and from more companies, which will inform reimbursement arrangements for community pharmacies.

■ Appendicitis**Jim Shannon:**[\[64571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what discussions he has had with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges on advice provided to patients on the necessity for appendix operations.

Mr Philip Dunne:

No discussions have taken place with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges on this issue.

■ Autism and Learning Disability: Prescription Drugs**Mr Roger Godsiff:**[\[64622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps are being taken to ensure that NHS staff are aware of the stopping over-medication of people with a learning disability pledge; and what steps are being taken to ensure that people with autism or a learning disability are not prescribed unnecessary antipsychotic or antidepressant drugs.

David Mowat:

Through the 'Stopping Over-Medication of People with Learning Disabilities' (STOMP) initiative, NHS England and its partners are taking a number of actions to raise awareness and influence the behaviours of professionals in relation to the prescribing of unnecessary antipsychotic or antidepressant drugs.

The Royal Colleges of Psychiatry, Nursing and General Practitioners; Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the British Psychological Society have all undertaken a range of activity in this regard, including audits and the publication of guidance and other materials to promote STOMP to their members.

The Care Quality Commission is undertaking work to equip inspection teams with the awareness, knowledge and tools to assess whether good prescribing practice takes place in services that it regulates.

A STOMP pledge for social care providers and a self-assessment tool will be published by the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group during March, with sign up to the pledge expected from across the sector. Additionally, a STOMP pledge is being developed and piloted with healthcare providers, which is expected to be rolled out generally across National Health Service and independent sector providers in summer 2017.

■ Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**Rosie Cooper:** [\[65221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how much funding was provided to Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust by the Sustainability Transformation Fund in the 2016-17 financial year; and whether his Department plans to increase the funding from the Sustainability Transformation Fund to that Trust in the 2017-18 financial year.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The general allocation from the Sustainability Transformation Fund to Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in 2016/17 was £1.55 million. Funding from the Sustainability Transformation Fund to trusts for the financial year 2017/18 is currently under consideration and will be announced in due course.

■ Cancer**Justin Madders:** [\[64434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to align the work of Cancer Alliances and Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

David Mowat:

Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) are an important delivery vehicle for the National Health Service national strategy for cancer. Cancer Alliances are supporting commissioning partners and providers within STPs to commission and deliver appropriate local services.

In line with this, all local plans are expected to set out how NHS organisations, councils and if appropriate other partner organisations will work together to make progress in the following key areas:

- Preventing cancer by addressing cancer risk factors;
- Diagnosing more cancers early; and
- Improving cancer treatment and care.

■ Care Homes: Finance**Sir Hugo Swire:** [\[64365\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how his Department plans to fund the proposed cap on residential care costs.

David Mowat:

The Government remains committed to introducing a cap on care costs and extension of means tested support from April 2020.

The Spending Review 2015 set budgets for the next four years to 2019-20. The final year includes funding to cover the costs of local authorities preparing to implement the changes the following year. Decisions about the allocation of funding for these reforms will be confirmed nearer the time.

■ Dentistry: EU Nationals**Luciana Berger:****[65138]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what estimate he has made of the number of nationals of other EU countries working in the NHS as dentists; what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU on the number of such dentists; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect on NHS productivity of that change in the number of such dentists.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Department of Health: Equality**Chris Stephens:****[R] [64446]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

David Mowat:

The number of equality impact assessments in each of the last three years is contained in the following links:

- Equality analysis published in 2016:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meeting-the-public-sector-equality-duty-in-2016/meeting-the-public-sector-equality-duty-in-2016>

- Equality analysis published in 2015:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dh-public-sector-equality-duty-compliance-2015/meeting-the-public-sector-equality-duty-in-2015#equality-analyses-published-in-2015>

- Equality analysis published in 2014:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/401180/DH_equalities_2015_acc.pdf (see page 18)

■ Department of Health: Government Contracts**Jon Trickett:****[64396]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

David Mowat:

We are unable to provide information on the Department's number and value of government contracts that have been contracted out since financial year 2010, or the

number of work days contracted out per year, as this would incur a disproportionate cost given the information requested to this level is not held in a standardised format.

Under this Government's transparency programme, further details on published contracts are available on Contracts Finder at:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

■ Department of Health: Recruitment

Andrew Selous:

[64474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, whether his Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

David Mowat:

The Department advertises vacancies on Civil Service Resourcing which centrally applies the Ban the Box Employment Policy for job applicants.

Information is not held on employees employed by the Department who have unspent convictions.

■ Department of Health: Uber

Mr Iain Wright:

[64376]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

David Mowat:

The Department can confirm following a detailed search of its Business Management Services database, that "Uber for Business" and "Uber" are not a registered supplier and consequently hold no records of any contracts held with this company.

Departmental staff travelling on official business may claim reimbursement for taxi journeys. Whilst we can identify the cost of these journeys the name of the provider is not recorded and so we would be unable to supply an expenditure figure specifically for Uber. All staff expense claims must be approved by an appropriate (more senior) approver and staff are required to submit receipts to justify their expenditure which would, in most cases, identify the supplier. However, it would incur a disproportionate cost to obtain this information through the examination of these receipts.

■ Depressive Illnesses

Nic Dakin:

[65275]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of measures in place for GPs to be updated on new research and treatment guidance for the use of (a) anti-depressants and (b) mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for repeat episode depression.

David Mowat:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence refreshed its Clinical Guideline CG90 Depression in adults: recognition and management in April 2016. This includes treatment guidance on the range of approved interventions including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and anti-depressants.

General practitioners are responsible for maintaining their continuing professional development, ensuring that they can provide high quality care to all patients.

Health Education England, through its local offices, has a role in ensuring employers remain committed to continuing professional development and in developing the overall strategy for workforce skills and development in their areas.

■ **Doctors: EEA Nationals****Julie Cooper:**[\[65336\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many doctors from countries in the European Economic Area are working in East Lancashire hospitals.

Mr Philip Dunne:

NHS Digital publishes data on the nationality of staff working in the National Health Service in England. Nationality is self-reported within the NHS human resources and payroll system, the electronic staff record.

The information is shown in the following table.

NHS Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS): HCHS Doctors working in East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust by selected nationality group, in NHS Trusts and clinical commissioning groups in England, as at 30 November 2016, headcount

ORGANISATION	ALL NATIONALITIES	OF WHICH EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (EEA) (INCLUDING OF WHICH EEA UNITED KINGDOM) (EXCLUDING UK)			UNKNOWN
East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust	739	567	64		14

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS workforce statistics.

The November data is the most recent data available.

EEA nationals include any staff with the following nationalities: Austrian, Belgian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Cypriot, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourg, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Icelandic, Liechtenstein, Norwegian and Swiss and UK staff.

■ East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust: Standards**Edward Argar:** [\[64429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what recent discussions he has had with East Midlands Ambulance Service on its response times to calls.

Mr Philip Dunne:

There have been no such discussions.

East Midlands Ambulance Service is participating in the Dispatch on Disposition pilot of NHS England's Ambulance Response Programme (ARP). The ARP is part of NHS England's Urgent and Emergency Care Review, which will transform ambulance services from a service based on a model of transportation to one of clinical assessment and treatment. We expect NHS England will make recommendations in Spring 2017.

■ European Medicines Agency**Stephen Timms:** [\[65307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what his Department's policy is on the UK's relationship with the European Medicines Agency after the UK leaves the EU.

David Mowat:

The Government is fully assessing how the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union will impact on medicines regulation in the UK, including the potential relocation of the European Medicines Agency (EMA). Whatever the future relationship between the UK and EMA, the Government will work to ensure that patient access to medicines will not be adversely impacted.

■ Gender Recognition: Consent to Medical Treatment**Jim Shannon:** [\[64557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that sex change drugs are not prescribed to children without parental consent.

Nicola Blackwood:

In 2016 NHS England published a new service specification for the children and young people's Gender Identity Development Service and a clinical commissioning policy for prescribing cross-sex hormones to young people. Both documents were informed by a process of stakeholder engagement and public consultation.

The clinical commissioning policy makes clear that cross sex hormones may not be prescribed to young people until they are aged around 16 years. The recommendation for hormone therapy must be agreed between the specialist multi-disciplinary team and the young person in accordance with the criteria set out in the policy.

The policy describes that ideally there will be support for the young person's decisions by the parents or carers. However, young people are presumed in law to

have the capacity to consent to medical treatment from the age of 16 years; people younger than 16 years are presumed in law to have capacity to give informed consent to medical treatment if they meet the legal tests of competence commonly known as the 'Gillick' test (consent to medical treatment) or 'Fraser' test (consent to sexual health treatment).

■ General Practitioners: Closures

Steve McCabe: [\[65309\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what support his Department offers to GP practices which are at risk of closure; and if he will make a statement.

Steve McCabe: [\[65310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what information his Department holds on GP practices in Birmingham which have been identified as vulnerable to closure during the last 12 months.

Steve McCabe: [\[65408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many GP practices in England have been closed since 2010.

David Mowat:

NHS England is responsible for the provision of primary medical services in England. As such, it is for NHS England to ensure that patients in all areas have access to general practitioner (GP) services. The General Practice Forward View, published in April 2016, includes a national £508 million five-year Sustainability and Transformation package to support struggling practices, further develop the workforce, tackle workload and stimulate care redesign.

NHS England's West Midlands regional team prioritised 45 practices for support under the Vulnerable Practices Programme of which 25 were identified in Birmingham South Central and Birmingham Cross City Clinical Commissioning Groups. The criteria for selection may include practices at risk of closure, but will also include practices not necessarily at risk of closure, but identified as vulnerable.

Comprehensive data on practice closures is not held centrally. Practices may close for a variety of reasons, including mergers with neighbouring practices or the retirement of GPs from single-handed practices.

■ Health Professions: EU Nationals

Luciana Berger: [\[65140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what estimate he has made of the number of nationals of other EU countries working in the NHS as radiographers; what the assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU on the number of such radiographers; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect on NHS productivity of that change in the number of such radiographers.

Mr Philip Dunne:

NHS Digital publishes data on the nationality of staff working in the National Health Service in England. Nationality is self-reported within the NHS human resources and payroll system, the electronic staff record.

NHS Hospital and Community Health Services: Qualified radiography staff in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups in England as at 30 November 2016

	ALL NATIONALITIES	OF WHICH EUROPEAN UNION (EXCLUDING UNITED KINGDOM)
Total qualified radiography staff	18,487	890
Qualified diagnostic radiography staff	15,642	776
Qualified therapeutic radiography staff	2,850	114

Source: NHS Digital, NHS Hospital and Community Health Service workforce statistics.

Note: Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components.

The November data is the most recent data available.

The potential effect on nationals and productivity of leaving the EU will be dependent on the outcome of negotiations. My Rt. hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been clear that she wants to protect the status of EU nationals already living here. It is the Government's aim to get the best settlement for the UK in all areas including the healthcare system.

■ Health Professions: Training

Alison Thewliss:[\[65346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what training will be offered to health professionals in England to prepare for the introduction of the third-party reporting mechanism for the non-consensual sex exemption in respect of child tax credit payments.

Mr Philip Dunne:

Any training required of staff implementing this policy is a matter for the Department for Work and Pensions as they roll out this policy.

■ Health Services: Children

Gill Furniss:[\[65315\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how much funding was provided for children's (a) hospitals and (b) services in each of the last five years.

Nicola Blackwood:

NHS England has advised us that it does not hold the required information.

NHS England allocates money to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) who go on to commission services from hospitals. CCGs also commission certain services directly, for example, specialised services and primary care.

Some services are not provided by the National Health Service, for example children's social services.

Health Services: Healthcare Assistants**Luciana Berger:**[\[65156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what his Department's policy is on the administration of medication without supervision by health care assistants.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The administration of medication by healthcare assistants and the supervision thereof are a matter for local National Health Service determination, within the strictures of Care Quality Commission regulation and subject to the duties of registered professionals within each healthcare assistant's team to ensure safe delegation.

Health Services: Reciprocal Arrangements**Justin Madders:**[\[64435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what amount is owed from each European Economic Area country in respect of healthcare provided to citizens of those countries by the NHS.

Mr Philip Dunne:

European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland reimburse the United Kingdom for the cost of the National Health Service providing treatment to people they are responsible for under European Union law, including UK nationals insured in another EEA country or Switzerland.

Member States can submit claims up to 18 months in arrears. Therefore, claims for any 12 month period do not necessarily reflect treatment provided in that period.

The attached table provides information about how much was paid to the UK for NHS provided treatments for 2015-2016, the latest year available, broken down by country of destination.

Attachments:

1. EEA Medical costs [EEA Medical Costs Table 64435.docx]

Tim Farron:[\[65430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many non-UK citizens have used the European Health Insurance Card to access NHS services in England in each of the last five years; and what nationality each of those people held.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The number of non-United Kingdom citizens that have used the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to access National Health Service services in England in each of the last five years and the nationality of those people held, is shown in the following table.

AMOUNT OF EHIC REPORTED USED IN ENGLAND

Country of Residence	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total Per Country
Italy	524	621	1,061	2,136	4,128	8,470
Spain	351	517	795	1,349	2,048	5,060
Germany	444	528	794	1,342	1,745	4,853
France	377	397	627	1,165	1,750	4,316
Poland	407	471	625	1,165	1,543	4,211
Portugal	119	209	242	508	875	1,953
The Netherlands	189	221	288	573	648	1,919
Sweden	137	161	269	380	566	1,513
Romania	126	153	234	266	394	1,173
Hungary	89	124	208	358	391	1,170
Switzerland	89	133	158	252	423	1,055
Norway	117	160	168	309	292	1,046
Ireland	133	126	148	260	371	1,038
Bulgaria	83	78	159	307	406	1,033
Total Of other European Economic Area Countries	669	808	1,054	1,999	2,587	7,117
Total Per Year	3,854	4,707	6,830	12,369	18,167	45,927

Note: Data is shown as calendar years.

For reasons of patient confidentiality, we have amalgamated Country totals where fewer than 1,000 patients from that country used the EHIC card to access NHS services over the five year period.

■ **Health: Children and Young People**

Jim Shannon:

[64573]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps he is taking to promote wellbeing among people aged 16 to 24.

Nicola Blackwood:

Public Health England (PHE) provides national leadership in delivering a range of work programmes which aim to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of young people aged 16-24 and reduce health inequalities. PHE's programmes tackle the principal health priorities for young people including sexual and reproductive health, drugs, alcohol and tobacco, mental wellbeing and prevention of mental illness and suicide; road injury prevention and the promotion of physical activity and healthy weight. PHE also provides professional leadership for the school nursing service which provides support and early help to promote young people's wellbeing.

PHE has published a national framework to address and promote health outcomes of young people. The framework is available to view here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-young-peoples-health-and-wellbeing-a-framework-for-public-health>

PHE supports local commissioners to improve the quality of services available to young people by providing evidence, data and intelligence, and sharing best practice. PHE funds information, advice and helplines targeting young people and delivers engaging interactive content direct to young people through social marketing.

■ **Hospitals: Warrington**

Helen Jones:

[65099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will assess the effect on areas of health deprivation in Warrington of the siting of any new hospital south of the Manchester Ship Canal.

Mr Philip Dunne:

Decisions regarding the strategic planning of care are the responsibility of individual clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). Each CCG has a duty under section 14T of the National Health Service Act 2006 to have regard to the need to reduce inequalities between patients with respect to their ability to access health services, and reduce inequalities between patients with respect to the outcomes achieved for them by the provision of health services. This applies to decisions about the location of services.

While the local health economy has announced its long term intention to build a new hospital, no specific site, timescales or financial arrangements have yet been confirmed.

Any proposals for a new site would be subject to wide scale public engagement giving local people the opportunity to feed in their ideas and comments.

■ Hypertension: Medical Treatments

Jim Shannon:

[\[64560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans he has to make the coupler to reduce high blood pressure available on the NHS.

Nicola Blackwood:

There are no current plans to make the coupler device, manufactured by ROX Medical, California, United States of America, available on the National Health Service. This device is at the research stage and has not received a CE mark that would allow it to be made available for general use in patients in the United Kingdom. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has no current plans to develop guidance on this technology.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation

Fiona Bruce:

[\[64501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what his policy is on the use of compounds with pharmacological effects at any stage of the procedures licenced under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Mitochondrial Donation) Regulations 2015.

Nicola Blackwood:

The provision of mitochondrial donation treatments will be regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), in accordance with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Mitochondrial Donation) Regulations 2015, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 and the HFEA's Code of Practice guidance. The culture media in which embryos are grown is regulated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The HFEA and MHRA will ensure that the media used in mitochondrial donation is appropriate for use in this treatment.

Gloria De Piero:

[\[65437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps his Department is taking to reduce regional variations in the availability of free of charge IVF treatment.

Nicola Blackwood:

The provision of National Health Service funded in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment services is a matter for local determination. In making decisions on the level of funding, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are expected to take account of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) fertility guideline recommending that three full cycles of IVF should be provided for qualifying couples. On 10 February 2017 I wrote to the National Medical Director, Sir Bruce Keogh, to

ask that NHS England re-emphasise to all those involved in commissioning fertility services that they should have regard to the NICE fertility guideline as it currently stands.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 30 January 2017, to Questions [61798](#) and [61799](#), in which I set out the work currently underway to assist CCGs to commission fertility services more effectively.

■ Midwives: Resignations

Jo Stevens:

[\[65308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what information his Department holds on the reasons why midwives left employment in the NHS in England in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr Philip Dunne:

NHS Digital publishes data on leavers and the reasons for leaving. The information is presented in the attached table.

Since May 2010, we have over 2,300 more midwives working in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups as at November 2016.

Attachments:

1. PQ65308 attached table [PQ65308 attached document.xlsx]

■ NHS Property Services

Karin Smyth:

[\[64432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 21 November 2016 to Question 52599, what progress his Department has made on working with NHS Property Services to resolve complex billing-related disputes arising from the move to market rents.

Mr Philip Dunne:

NHS Property Services (NHSPS) has moved to charging market rents to ensure that all of its properties are charged on a consistent and transparent basis that reflects the market cost of providing such properties. This is to encourage the efficient holding of properties and optimise investment decisions. Overall this will cause the charges across the Company's portfolio to rise by £127 million; the Department has provided an additional £127 million to the NHS England Mandate to fund the increased costs within the National Health Service of this policy change.

In November 2016 NHS England received feedback from a number of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) regarding the funding allocation. Subsequent to this, NHS England has reissued the funding allocations in early January.

From the beginning of February the funding has been available for all CCGs to draw down and NHS England and NHSPS continue to work with CCGs to resolve any issues regarding the additional funding allocated. We understand that whilst Bristol CCG initially raised a number of queries, these have now been addressed and it has

now agreed the funding uplift for the impact of market rents with NHS England, which will be passed on to all service providers in NHSPS properties.

■ NHS Property Services and Community Health Partnerships

Karin Smyth:

[\[64433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what representations his Department has received on proposals for the strategy and objectives of the organisation planned to be formed from NHS Property Services and Community Health Partnerships.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The new National Health Service property organisation is being developed by the Department in response to early recommendations made by Sir Robert Naylor in the course of his review of the NHS estate.

In developing his recommendations Sir Robert has engaged widely with a range of experts and leaders from across the health and property sectors.

The Department is committed to ensuring that the new organisation fully supports and reflects the needs and priorities of the NHS, and we will ensure there is an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders in its design as this is progressed.

■ NHS: EEA Nationals

Justin Madders:

[\[64436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what the proportion of NHS staff from European Economic Area countries was in each of the last five years.

Mr Philip Dunne:

NHS Digital publishes self-reported data on the nationality of staff working in the National Health Service in England. The information is available in the following table.

NHS Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) staff with a European Economic Area (EEA) nationality including United Kingdom, in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in England, as at 30 September in each year, 2012 to 2016, headcount:

NHS TRUSTS AND CCGs, AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER IN EACH SPECIFIED YEAR					HEADCOUNT
	September 2012	September 2013	September 2014	September 2015	September 2016
All nationalities	1,117,038	1,111,101	1,131,680	1,151,138	1,175,668
EEA	903,030	920,312	954,103	987,227	1,015,266

NHS TRUSTS AND CCGs, AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER IN EACH SPECIFIED YEAR						HEADCOUNT
as a percentage of all known nationalities	80.8%	82.8%	84.3%	85.8%		86.4%
Unknown	143,937	123,143	109,575	94,365		87,940

Source: NHS Digital, NHS HCHS workforce statistics.

Notes:

1. The reduction in the number of staff with unknown nationality across this time period makes it difficult to definitely say that any group has increased in size. Any increase may be due more accurate classification of staff.
2. An EEA national is a person who holds the nationality of an EEA member country and as such includes those who declare themselves as UK nationals.
3. Headcount totals are unlikely to equal the sum of components due to some staff working in more than one role.

■ NHS: Finance

Gloria De Piero:

[\[65436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, with reference to NHS Improvement's quarterly performance data, published most recently in September 2016, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce the deficit in the NHS budget.

Mr Philip Dunne:

NHS England and NHS Improvement together set out their plan for balancing the books of the National Health Service in its Strengthening Financial Performance and Accountability document in July 2016. This includes the agreement of control totals, controls on agency spending, and the introduction of a new financial special measures regime. The NHS has worked hard to manage its finances in response to this plan and the latest quarterly performance data shows the majority of hospitals are on track to hit their targets by the end of the year. NHS Improvement will be working closely with those providers that are off plan, to bring them back as close as possible back to plan this year.

■ Offences against Children

Norman Lamb:

[\[65434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how much was spent by each clinical commissioning group on evidence-based therapeutic treatment and support for children aged under 18 who have suffered sexual abuse in each of the last three years.

Norman Lamb:

[65435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of provision of evidence-based therapeutic treatment and support for children aged under 18 who have suffered sexual abuse.

Nicola Blackwood:

The information requested on expenditure is not collected centrally.

In July 2016, NHS England published Children and young people's mental health Local Transformation Plans - a summary of key themes, which includes information on the development of mental health services for children who have been sexually abused or exploited, as recommended by Future In Mind. The report states, "A significant number of Local Transition Plans referenced child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child sexual abuse (CSA) as a priority".

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/mentalhealth/wp-content/uploads/sites/29/2016/08/cyp-mh-ltp.pdf>

The Department is working to improve the evidence base for providers and commissioners around interventions for people who have been abused. This includes developing a transformative health and wellbeing service model for supporting children who have been abused, a cost benefits model for quaternary (over medicalisation) prevention of abuse, an economic model of a trauma-informed healthcare service for young women who have been abused, and commissioned the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to develop a guideline on child abuse and neglect.

■ **Palbociclib**

Mr Roger Godsiff:

[64627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what the current availability of palbociclib is on the NHS; and what steps are being taken to ensure that all breast cancer patients who would benefit from that drug are able to access it.

Nicola Blackwood:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence are currently reviewing the evidence for palbociclib in combination with an aromatase inhibitor for treating hormone receptor-positive, human epidermal growth factor receptor 2-negative, locally advanced or metastatic breast cancer in adults. Their draft guidance was out to consultation until 24 February. Stakeholders were encouraged to respond to the consultation.

■ **Parkinson's Disease: Diagnosis**

Jim Shannon:

[64572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what plans he has to make blood tests for the diagnoses of Parkinson's disease available on the NHS.

David Mowat:

The Department is aware of recent research into a blood test to diagnose Parkinson's disease. The test is used to look for a protein in blood which could be a marker for the condition. Trials to date have been relatively small, and whilst early results have been promising, larger scale trials would be needed to demonstrate the efficacy of this approach before the test could be considered for routine use.

■ Patients: Medical Equipment**Oliver Colvile:**[\[64526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what advice is given to patients and families of deceased patients who no longer require prescribed medicines, aids and medical equipment.

David Mowat:

Disposal of waste medicines is an essential service within the community pharmacy contractual framework, to be provided by all community pharmacies in England. NHS England is responsible for commissioning National Health Service pharmaceutical services.

Patients are normally advised to return unused medicines to their local community pharmacy for safe disposal. This is the case also for patients and families of deceased patients who no longer require prescribed medicines.

Appliances are normally collected by community nurses. Occasionally there is a local amnesty with appeals to patients to return equipment, for example crutches and wheelchairs to accident and emergency departments.

■ Pregnancy: Advisory Services**Jim Shannon:**[\[64570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what advice the NHS provides to pregnant women over the age of 40.

Mr Philip Dunne:

The advice about the care that healthy women should receive during pregnancy is set out in 'Antenatal care for uncomplicated pregnancies' clinical guideline 62 produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The guideline aims to ensure that pregnant women are offered regular check-ups, information and support. NICE has also produced guidelines on diabetes in pregnancy, hypertension in pregnancy, multiple pregnancy and ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage.

During a women's pregnancy she should be offered a series of antenatal appointments to check on her health and the health of her baby and to provide information for example, about a healthy pregnancy diet or antenatal screening. The exact number of antenatal appointments and their frequency will depend on a women's individual situation.

A brief guide to what usually happens at each antenatal appointment is available at the NICE website:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG62/ifp/chapter/Antenatal-appointments-schedule>

■ Prescription Drugs: Older People

Clive Efford: [64576]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what guidance NHS England provides to GPs on whether GPs can continue to prescribe medication to pensioners in the event that such medication is also available for purchase over the counter.

David Mowat:

Prescribing is a clinical decision made by general practitioners, in line with regulations.

■ Prisoners: Mental Illness

Luciana Berger: [65324]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many prisoners waited more than 14 days for a transfer to hospital under the Mental Health Act 1983 in 2016-17 to date.

Nicola Blackwood:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Prisons: Mental Health Services

Luciana Berger: [65326]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many people have been employed by mental health in-reach teams in prisons in each year since 2010.

Nicola Blackwood:

The information requested is not collected centrally.

■ Seasonal Affective Disorder

Jim Shannon: [64556]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will set out the Government's plans to address Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Nicola Blackwood:

The Government has no specific plans to address Seasonal Affective Disorder. Its treatment is undertaken in the same way as other mental health diagnoses within National Health Service services.

■ Social Workers

Alison Thewliss: [65345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many serving social workers were in post in England as at 1 January 2017.

David Mowat:

Skills for Care estimate that there are 18,700 social workers working in adult services in England. These figures do not include social workers operating on a self-employed basis.

Information on the number of social workers in child and family services is held by the Department for Education.

■ Surgery**Rachael Maskell:**[\[65368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2017 to Question 63000 on Surgery, how clinical commissioning groups that fund smoking cessation services only for pregnant women will provide other patients with the support they need to stop smoking before an operation.

David Mowat:

Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory duty to meet the reasonable health requirements of their local population. As part of their duty to seek continuous improvement in the quality of services they commission, CCGs must act with a view to securing continuous improvement in the outcomes.

Information on CCGs' commissioning policies for smoking cessation services for patients due to undergo surgery is not held centrally. CCGs' commissioning intentions are available from individual CCGs.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Advisory Services****Stuart C. McDonald:**[\[65370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what role Asylum Support Medical Advisors play in decisions made by the Home Office on support at Regulation 3(2)(b) of the Immigration and Asylum (Provision of Accommodation of Failed Asylum Seekers) Regulations 2005, what qualifications are needed to become such an advisor; how many such advisors have a contract with the Home Office in 2016; and what oversight arrangements the Home Office have in place for monitoring the work of those advisors.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

Under the specified provision, an applicant is eligible for Section 4 support if they are unable to leave the UK by reason of a physical impediment, or other medical reason. When an applicant submits medical evidence in this regard, caseworkers may consider whether to refer the case to the Asylum Support Medical Adviser (ASMA) regarding the impact of the applicant's medical condition on his ability to undertake international travel. All ASMA advisors are registered with the General Medical

Council (GMC), and the Home Office is reviewing its relationship with the ASMA advisors, including the oversight of their operations.

■ **Asylum: Children**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[65024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with South Lanarkshire Council on that area's capacity for resettling unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[65025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were resettled in (a) South Lanarkshire Council area and (b) Scotland under the Dubs amendment in the last 12 months.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

In accordance with the Immigration Act 2016 the Government conducted a comprehensive consultation with local authorities across the UK in order to assess capacity for the care of unaccompanied children. On 13 May 2016, the then Immigration Minister wrote to all local authorities to provide an update on the launch of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and to encourage local authorities to participate in all schemes designed for children. On 7 June 2016, the then Immigration Minister, the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families and the then Minister with responsibility for Syrian Refugees attended a national launch event in London which was attended by local authorities from across the UK. This was followed by regional events in England and in Scotland and Wales.

On 8 September last year, I wrote to all local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland asking them to confirm how many places they could offer to accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Home Office officials also maintained an ongoing dialogue with individual local authorities and regional Strategic Migration Partnerships throughout.

In 2016 over 900 unaccompanied asylums seeking children were transferred to the UK, of which over 750 have been transferred from France, of which over 200 came under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

This is a voluntary scheme whereby local authorities sign up to accept unaccompanied asylum seeking children on a voluntary basis.

We asked local authorities to consider carefully whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care of these unaccompanied children before participating in the NTS. We estimate that at least 50 of the family reunion cases transferred from France as part of the Calais clearance will require a local authority placement in cases where the family reunion does not work out. We estimate that at least 50 of the family reunion cases transferred from France as part of the Calais clearance will require a local authority placement in cases where the family reunion does not work out.

Every region in England is participating in the NTS and we are working very closely with local authorities in Scotland and Wales who have also responded positively

We are grateful for to local authorities across the UK, including South Lanarkshire, for coming forward to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

It is for individual local authorities to decide the number of children they are able to accommodate but we continue to work with those not currently participating in the NTS to support them to do so at the earliest opportunity.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[65067]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consultation her Department has had with local authorities on the number of unaccompanied refugee children to be resettled as required by the Immigration Act 2016; how many local authorities have (a) responded and (b) not responded to those consultations; and of those that have responded how many have said they (i) can place a child or children and (ii) cannot place any children.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

In accordance with the Immigration Act 2016 the Government conducted a comprehensive consultation with local authorities across the UK in order to assess capacity for the care of unaccompanied children. On 13 May 2016, the then Immigration Minister wrote to all local authorities to provide an update on the launch of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and to encourage local authorities to participate in all schemes designed for children. On 7 June 2016, the then Immigration Minister, the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families and the then Minister with responsibility for Syrian Refugees attended a national launch event in London which was attended by local authorities from across the UK. This was followed by regional events in England and in Scotland and Wales.

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This is a voluntary scheme whereby local authorities sign up to accept unaccompanied asylum seeking children on a voluntary basis.

We asked local authorities to consider carefully whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care of these unaccompanied children before participating in the NTS.

Our consultation with local authorities indicated that there was capacity for an additional 400 UASC. This is in addition to the unaccompanied children already in local authority care. We estimate that at least 50 of the family reunion cases will require a local authority placement in circumstances where the reunion does not work out. We estimate that at least 50 of the family reunion cases transferred from France as part of the Calais clearance will require a local authority placement in cases where

the family reunion does not work out. We estimate that at least 50 of the family reunion cases transferred from France as part of the Calais clearance will require a local authority placement in cases where the family reunion does not work out.

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It is for individual local authorities to decide the number of children they are able to accommodate but we continue to work with those not currently participating in the NTS to support them to do so at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Jim Cunningham:

[65258]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions her Department has had with Coventry City Council on that area's capacity for resettling unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Mr Jim Cunningham:

[65259]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were resettled in (a) Coventry City Council area and (b) the West Midlands under the Dubs amendment provisions since May 2016.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

In accordance with the Immigration Act 2016 the Government conducted a comprehensive consultation with local authorities across the UK in order to assess capacity for the care of unaccompanied children. On 13 May 2016, the then Immigration Minister wrote to all local authorities to provide an update on the launch of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) and to encourage local authorities to participate in all schemes designed for children. On 7 June 2016, the then Immigration Minister, the Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families and the then Minister with responsibility for Syrian Refugees attended a national launch event in London which was attended by local authorities from across the UK. This was followed by regional events in England, including an event in the West Midlands, and in Scotland and Wales.

On 8 September last year, I wrote to all local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland asking them to confirm how many places they could offer to accommodate unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Home Office officials also maintained an ongoing dialogue with individual local authorities and regional Strategic Migration Partnerships throughout. In 2016 over 900 unaccompanied asylums seeking children were transferred to the UK, of which over 750 have been transferred from France, of which over 200 came under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016.

The NTS is a voluntary scheme whereby local authorities sign up to accept unaccompanied asylum seeking children on a voluntary basis. We asked local authorities to consider carefully whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care of these unaccompanied children before participating in the NTS. Every region in England is participating in the NTS and we are working closely with local authorities in Scotland and Wales who have

also responded positively. We are grateful to all local authorities who continue to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children, including Coventry City Council. It is for individual local authorities to decide the number of children they are able to accommodate but we continue to work with those not currently participating in the NTS to support them to do so at the earliest opportunity.

■ Customs Officers

Stuart C. McDonald:

[64966]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) immigration officers and (b) other officials have been designated as general customs officials under section 3 of the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Act 2009 in each year since that Act came into force.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

This information is not held centrally within the Home Office, and would have to be obtained on an Area by Area basis. The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Stuart C. McDonald:

[64968]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) immigration officers and (b) other officials designated as general customs officials under section 3 of the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Act 2009 are serving in (a) the UK, (b) Scotland, (c) England, (d) Wales and (e) Northern Ireland.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

This information is not held centrally within the Home Office, and would have to be obtained on an Area by Area basis. The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Further Education: Standards

Thangam Debbonaire:

[65087]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer given by the Prime Minister to Question 58 at the Liaison Committee meeting on 20 December 2016, how many colleges have ceased to operate since 2010 because they have been found to be not offering an education; and if she will place a list of those colleges in the Library.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

The number of educational institutions which have had their Tier 4 sponsor licence revoked between 1 May 2010 and up to 7 October 2014 is available and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tier-4-sponsors-whose-status-appeared-as-revoked-from-2010-to-2014>

This means that these institutions cannot bring in non-EEA students to study in the UK under the Tier 4 route. The Home Office is planning to publish up to date data shortly.

Revoking an institution's Tier 4 sponsor licence does not prevent them from operating.

■ G4S

Paul Blomfield:

[64605]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2017 to Question 62704, whether her Department knew of the G4S decision to use body-worn cameras prior to their pilot and launch.

Mr Robert Goodwill:

The Home Office was informed of G4S' decision to launch the use of body worn cameras when that decision had been made, and prior to their deployment.

■ Home Office: Government Contracts

Jon Trickett:

[64406]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by her Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate she has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Sarah Newton:

The Home Office publishes accounting records, detailing where relevant, contracted-out services, within the Annual Reporting & Accounts document at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ho-annual-reports-and-accounts>

The Home Office is committed to publishing all applicable contracts, over the value of £10,000 on the Contracts Finder website, at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

■ Human Trafficking: Children

Mr Jim Cunningham:

[65369]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of children brought into the UK by people traffickers in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

Sarah Newton:

Modern Slavery remains a largely hidden crime and it is challenging to accurately assess its prevalence. The Government holds data on potential victims of trafficking referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The link below provides NRM statistics which include data on the number of non-UK national children aged 17

years and under (at the time of referral) referred to the NRM because of a human trafficking claim.

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>

Data for the first three quarters of 2016 is available within the link. The final quarter and annual summary is due to be published in March 2017.

■ **Police: Greater London**

Mrs Theresa Villiers:

[65265]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many police officers are serving in (a) Greater London and (b) the Borough of Barnet.

Brandon Lewis:

The Home Office does not hold all of the information requested.

The Home Office collects and publishes data annually on the number of police officers in each Police Force Area. The Home Office does not hold data at lower levels of geography, such as London boroughs.

The latest available data are published in the "Police Workforce, England and Wales, 30 September 2016" statistical bulletin:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2016>

■ **Police: Training**

Alison Thewliss:

[65347]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what training will be offered to police officers in England to prepare for the introduction of the third-party reporting mechanism for the non-consensual sex exemption in respect of child tax credit payments.

Sarah Newton:

The Government outlined in the consultation response on 20 January 2017 that the list of third parties used for the non-consensual sex exception will include health care professionals, social workers and relevant specialist charities. The model is not attempting to pre-empt the criminal justice system and therefore does not include police in the third party model.

The exception will also apply where there is a successful conviction or award of compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority for rape occurring at a time when the child's conception might have resulted. The Government recognises this exception is sensitive, so has consulted on how it should be implemented and is currently working with stakeholders to develop guidance for this process.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ House of Commons: Procurement****Jon Trickett:****[65000]**

To ask the right hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many officials of the House of Commons Administration oversee contracts which have been awarded to external providers.

Tom Brake:

There are 228 contract managers across the service overseeing the delivery of 724 contracts with external providers. These contract managers are responsible for ensuring that our contracts remain fit for purpose in terms of commercial, operational and compliance aspects.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**■ Nigeria: Politics and Government****Chi Onwurah:****[65341]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent representations she has made to the Nigerian Government on the humanitarian crisis in the north east of that country.

James Wharton:

The UK has been at the forefront of the response to the humanitarian crisis in North East Nigeria. Our early response to the crisis, and expertise, has been welcomed by the Government of Nigeria and we have used this position to continually push for Nigerian leadership of the response. Most recently DFID's Permanent Secretary attended the Oslo Humanitarian Conference for Nigeria/Lake Chad on 24 February, which was co-hosted by the Governments of Nigeria, Norway and Germany. The UK encouraged the Nigerian Government to set out how they would lead the response, called other donors to do more, and encouraged all parties to make sure that every pound donated to the response has maximum impact. The British High Commissioner to Nigeria delivered the same messages to the President's Chief of Staff earlier in the week. The UK is currently examining what further steps it can take to help prevent famine in the region.

■ South Sudan: Famine**Catherine West:****[64807]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with her South Sudanese counterpart on the flow of emergency aid into areas affected by the UN-declared famine in South Sudan.

James Wharton:

I visited South Sudan earlier this month. During my visit, I met with Stephen Dhieu, South Sudan's Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, and delivered a clear message: that the Government of South Sudan must bring an end to the fighting and allow humanitarian access to all areas of the country.

Patrick Grady:[\[65276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what additional support her Department plans to provide to South Sudan in response to the declaration of famine in that country.

James Wharton:

Millions of people in South Sudan have been suffering from food shortages for many years. For this reason, we developed a large humanitarian programme and the UK, with other donors, has been able to prevent famine in each of the last three years. When famine was declared this year we were able to respond quickly and confirmed the day after the UN appeal was announced that we will make £100 million available in 2017 to provide food for 500,000 people. We will continue to monitor the situation and encourage other donors to follow the UK's lead.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Department for International Trade: Government Contracts****Jon Trickett:**[\[64397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Mark Garnier:

The Department for International Trade was formed in July 2016. Since that time the Department has awarded 38 contracts at a maximum total contract value of £68m*. The Department has not made an estimate of the value of pro bono costs. Additionally, the Department, wherever possible, seeks to award contracts on an outcome basis and pays for deliverables rather than by days. However, we have used specialist contractors and interim resource for a total of 22,000 days since July 2016.

Note

*£50,000,000 of this total value is made up of the Green Park contract which is a call off for specialist and interim resource and is not committed spend.

■ Department for International Trade: Recruitment**Andrew Selous:** [\[64477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether his Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

Mark Garnier:

The Department for International Trade is operating its recruitment processes in line with the Ban the Box principles. We are committed to improving diversity of opportunity and creating an inclusive working environment that attracts the best talent and makes the most of potential skills and productivity of ex-offenders in the community.

All offers of employment are subject to clearance through the appropriate vetting processes. Following successful clearance and the individual taking up their offer of employment with the department, any history of criminal convictions would not be held on a central personnel record.

■ EU Law**Mr Kevan Jones:** [\[64601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 9 February 2017 to Question 63161, what the evidential basis is for all the relevant EU directives having been transposed into UK law.

Mark Garnier:

There are two relevant directives.

Directive 91/477/EEC : the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons.

The relevant parts of this Directive relate to transfers of firearms by persons in possession of a European Firearms Pass which is implemented by article 15 of the Export Control Order 2008 SI 2008/3231.

Directive 2009/43/EC : simplifying terms and conditions of transfers of defence-related products within the Community.

This was transposed into UK law through The Export Control (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2012 S.I. 2012/1910.

■ EU Trade: Antidumping**Louise Haigh:** [\[65400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January 2017 to Question 58975, what the Government's policy is on the modernisation of EU trade defence measures.

Mark Garnier:

The UK agrees that EU trade defence instruments should be modernised, but we remain strongly opposed to the European Commission's proposal in its current form.

■ Trade Agreements

Emma Reynolds:

[\[65289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many Mutual Recognition Agreements the UK currently has with third nations through EU membership; and whether it is his policy to seek to maintain those agreements after the UK leaves the EU.

Mark Garnier:

The UK currently benefits from a wide range of agreements that have commitments on mutual recognition. The UK remains committed to pursuing free trade. That includes seeking to achieve continuity in our trade and investment relationships with third countries, including those covered by EU agreements with other countries, such as Mutual Recognition Agreements. We are actively exploring what may be possible with our trading partners on ways to achieve this.

JUSTICE

■ Domestic Abuse: Convictions

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[64524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many (a) men and (b) women were convicted of domestic abuse-related crimes in each of the last three years; and how many in each category received a custodial sentence.

Sir Oliver Heald:

The information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

■ Harassment: Court Orders

Jess Phillips:

[\[64617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many restraining orders were issued by courts in England and Wales in each of the last three years; how many of those orders were breached (a) once, (b) twice, (c) three times and (d) on four or more occasions; and for each category of numbers of breaches, how often a custodial sentence was handed down.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The number of restraining orders issued and sentences given for breaches of restraining orders, from 2013 to 2015, in England and Wales, can be viewed in the following tables.

Court proceedings data for 2016 are planned for publication in May 2017.

TABLE 1: RESTRAINING ORDERS ISSUED BY THE COURTS AND OFFENDERS CONVICTED AND SENTENCED FOR BREACH OF RESTRAINING ORDERS, WITH SENTENCING OUTCOMES, ENGLAND & WALES, 2013 TO 2015 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

	2013 ⁽³⁾	2014	2015
Restraining orders issued ⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾⁽⁶⁾	20,356	21,508	23,057
Offenders convicted of breaching a restraining order			
Convicted	6,348	7,371	8,395
Sentenced	6,205	7,083	8,194
Immediate custody	2,237	2,606	2,989
Suspended sentence	827	1,068	1,346
Community sentence	1,565	1,524	1,815
Fine	848	1,020	1,137
Absolute discharge	40	47	57
Conditional discharge	469	532	624
Otherwise dealt with	211	281	221
Compensation	8	5	5

(1) The figures given in the table relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

(2) Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

(3) Previously issued figures for 2013 have been revised following the receipt of a small

TABLE 1: RESTRAINING ORDERS ISSUED BY THE COURTS AND OFFENDERS CONVICTED AND SENTENCED FOR BREACH OF RESTRAINING ORDERS, WITH SENTENCING OUTCOMES, ENGLAND & WALES, 2013 TO 2015 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

amount of late data.

(4) Includes restraining orders issued on conviction or acquittal.

(5) Issued under either S.5 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 or S.5A Sex Offenders Act 1997.

(6) SOPOs replaced restraining orders under s.5A Sex Offenders Act 1997 and sex offender orders under s.2 Crime and Disorder Act 1998. However, it is possible for cases to still appear where an offender is subject to one of the orders that pre-date the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Source: Justice
Statistics Analytical
Services - Ministry of
Justice.

PQ: 64617

TABLE 2: OFFENDERS CONVICTED FOR BREACHING RESTRAINING ORDERS AND SENTENCES RECEIVED, ENGLAND AND WALES, APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2016 ^{1,2,3}

Financial year	Number of breaches	Occasions on which the offender received ⁴			Number of offenders ⁶
		Custodial sentence ⁵	Non-custodial sentence ⁵	Total	
2013/14	1	996	2,364	3,360	3,360
	2	887	1,173	2,060	1,030
	3	623	568	1,191	397
	4 or more	1,489	909	2,398	446
2014/15	1	1,115	2,679	3,794	3,794

TABLE 2: OFFENDERS CONVICTED FOR BREACHING RESTRAINING ORDERS AND SENTENCES RECEIVED, ENGLAND AND WALES, APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2016 ^{1,2,3}

	2	982	1,292	2,274	1,137
	3	734	673	1,407	469
	4 or more	1,893	1,124	3,017	538
2015/16	1	1,154	3,162	4,316	4,316
	2	1,131	1,545	2,676	1,338
	3	939	909	1,848	616
	4 or more	2,191	1,350	3,541	635

Source: MoJ's extract of the Police National Computer

Notes:

1) Figures exclude those who were cautioned rather than convicted

2) A restraining order refers to a restraining order under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 Sec.5

3) Figures refer to convictions in which breach of a restraining order was the main offence

4) Occasion refers to an occasion which an offender is sentenced

5) Custodial sentence refers to immediate custodial sentences only. Other sentences are non-custodial

6) The number of breaches an individual offender has been convicted for is taken at the offender's last conviction for the offence in each financial year. The offender may appear in multiple years where they were convicted of the offence in more than one year

■ **Human Trafficking**

Sir Edward Garnier:

[64638]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people convicted of human trafficking offences in the last three years have been returned to a country of origin (a) within the EU and (b) outside the EU to serve a prison sentence.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The information requested is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Only main offences are recorded centrally, so offenders may have human trafficking offences as secondary offences which could only be found by examining individual case files.

Legal Aid Scheme**Ian Lavery:**[\[64609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps her Department has taken to secure the provision of legal aid for people on low incomes.

Sir Oliver Heald:

Legal aid is a fundamental part of our justice system. We must ensure it is available for the individuals who need it, sustainable for the lawyers who provide it, and affordable for the taxpayers who ultimately pay for it.

The Government's reform programme will deliver a justice system that is more accessible to the public. It aims to support people in resolving their disputes using simpler, modern procedures.

This programme will modernise the courts and tribunal system improving the experience of everyone who comes into contact with it, including victims and witnesses. We will also make sure that the provision of legal support is updated to reflect the new way in which the justice system will work. We will publish a Green Paper on Legal Support next year.

Ministry of Justice: Equality**Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[64448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if she will make a statement.

Dr Phillip Lee:

Over the last three years the Ministry of Justice has had and continues to have due regard, as necessary, to the public sector equality duty in exercising its functions. The Equality Act does not require this due regard to take the form of an equality impact assessment, nor does it define an equality impact assessment, and the department does not maintain a record of such assessments.

Ministry of Justice: Government Contracts**Jon Trickett:**[\[64398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by her Department was in each

year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate she has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Dr Phillip Lee:

The table below shows the number and contract value of contracts let by MoJ since Financial Year 2010/11.

FINANCIAL YEAR	COUNT OF TOTAL CON/FWORK VAL (£)	SUM OF TOTAL CON/FWORK VAL (£)2
2010/11	161	£6,389,363,484
2011/12	578	£1,883,462,647
2012/13	600	£3,399,238,346
2013/14	579	£994,022,004
2014/15	626	£9,210,984,689
2015/16	353	£671,933,056
Grand Total	2897	£22,549,004,226

The information requested relating to the value of pro bono costs and the number of work days contracted out in each such year is not held centrally.

■ **Ministry of Justice: iNHouse Communications**

Melanie Onn: [\[59737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department has awarded any commercial contracts to iNHouse Communications Ltd in the last five years.

Melanie Onn: [\[59738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether her Department is in communication with iNHouse Communications Ltd in relation to any ongoing commercial tender process.

Dr Phillip Lee:

Between April 2011 and March 2016 the Ministry of Justice has not awarded any contracts to iNHouse Communications Ltd.

The information requested cannot be disclosed as it would prejudice the commercial interests of Ministry of Justice as well as the third party organisations currently taking part in tender exercises across the department.

■ **Ministry of Justice: Uber**

Mr Iain Wright: [\[64380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how much her Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Dr Phillip Lee:

There has been no direct Departmental spend with Uber through either a contract or by using a GPC card.

There is the possibility of individual usage which may have been claimed through expenses, but expenses data is not held below the level of "taxi fare" as a generic classification making it impossible to extract such data.

■ Offenders: Crimes against the Person**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[64525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate she has made of the number of vexatious applications taken out against their victim by a person convicted of (a) stalking or (b) domestic abuse in the family or civil courts in each of the last three years.

Sir Oliver Heald:

The information requested is not held centrally. We are determined to improve the family justice response to stalking and domestic abuse and are legislating to prevent abusers from questioning their victims in person in family proceedings.

■ Police Cautions**Tim Farron:**[\[52874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many police cautions have been issued for offences of (a) rape, (b) sexual assault, (c) robbery and (d) burglary in each (i) year between 2014 and 2016 and (ii) month since January 2016.

Sir Oliver Heald:

Information about the number of cautions issued for different categories of offence for 2014 and 2015 (the latest available statistics) can be found in the criminal justice system quarterly statistics on GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2015>

■ Prison Officers: Training**Richard Burgon:**[\[64710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many candidates (a) started and (b) did not complete prison officer entry level training in each year since 2010.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

New joiner data is publicly available in the NOMS workforce statistics section on gov.uk.

We do not hold data on number of candidates who do not complete Prison Officer Entry Level Training each year.

■ Prison Sentences

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[65043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment her Department has made of the consistency and proportionality of imprisonment for public protection sentencing.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

Assessment of imprisonment for public protection (IPP) sentencing found that it had been used far more widely than intended. This assessment led to its abolition by the Coalition Government in 2012 and its replacement with a new regime of determinate sentences alongside life sentences for the most serious offenders. We are taking steps, namely the creation of a case progression unit and the ongoing implementation of a joint NOMS and Parole Board action plan, to improve the opportunities given to remaining IPP prisoners to progress towards release. However, IPP prisoners should continue to be detained if the level of risk they pose to the public cannot be safely managed in the community.

■ Prisoners' Release

Philip Davies:

[\[50375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 24 October 2016 to Question 48562, what the sentence length of each of the 61 people convicted of murder was; and at what point in that sentence those people were released on temporary licence during Christmas 2015.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

In 60 of the cases mentioned in the reply to Question 48562, the offender is serving a sentence of life imprisonment, which means they must serve a minimum period, or tariff, in prison and may be released on life licence on or after the expiry of the tariff, only where the Parole Board assesses that it is safe to do so. In 36 of these cases the offender was beyond the tariff expiry date before being temporarily released last Christmas. In 24 cases the release took place within a 24 month period leading up to the tariff expiry date. Allowing temporary release before tariff expiry in suitable cases where the offender is making good progress ensures that the offender can be prepared for release when this is considered by the Parole Board. In the remaining case the offender was convicted and given a determinate sentence in another jurisdiction. He was subsequently repatriated to serve the sentence in the UK and his temporary release at Christmas 2015 took place 5 months before his conditional release date.

Philip Davies:

[\[50862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 12 October 2016 to Question 41032, how many prisoners convicted of murder had previously been released on temporary licence over a Christmas period; and, in each such case, how many times each of those prisoners had previously been released at Christmas.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

Records going back to 2002 but excluding 2009 and 2010 show that, of the 61 prisoners referred to in the reply to Question 41032, this was the first release at Christmas in 40 cases, the second such release in 13 cases and the third such release in 8 cases. Data on releases during 2009 and 2010 are not available because of disruption in the supply of data due to the migration from one reporting system to another.

■ **Prisoners: Suicide****Luciana Berger:**[\[65325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions her Department has had with the Department of Health on the number of people taking their own lives in prisons in the last year.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The Ministry of Justice works closely with the Department of Health at all levels on reducing suicide and self-harm in prisons, to which we are all fully committed. Ministers from both departments, and from the Home Office, are members of the Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody and are supported by senior officials. Department of Health officials and practitioners have specific strands of action as part of the Suicide and Self-Harm Working Group, and sit on the Project Board that oversees its work. The Project is rolling out revised safer custody training to all prison officers, to equip them better to identify and manage the risk of suicide and self-harm, including during the early days in custody.

■ **Prisons: Corruption****Mr David Hanson:**[\[64699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time equivalent staff in the prison service have worked on investigations into alleged corruption in prisons in each year since 2010.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The information requested has been provided in the table below:

YEAR (1 JUNE)	NUMBER OF FULL TIME EQUIVALENT OFFICIALS
2010	12.15
2011	10.15
2012	15.98
2013	15.98
2014	15.98
2015	17.98

YEAR (1 JUNE)	NUMBER OF FULL TIME EQUIVALENT OFFICIALS
2016	18.37
2017 - present	18.37

Prior to 2012, ten staff worked in prison regions and were responsible for corruption, professional standards and counter-terrorism. The amount of time spent on corruption varied by region depending on local need and they have therefore not been included in the table above. From 2012, full-time regional corruption prevention managers were allocated to the Corruption Prevention unit and have been included in the above figures.

In addition, all prisons have an identified Local Corruption Prevention Manager (LCPM), and in some cases a deputy, who develops intelligence, raises awareness of corruption prevention and supports staff to report any corruption related concerns. This role is carried out in addition to other duties they may hold in a prison and so have not been included in the figures provided.

The vast majority of staff undertake their duties with honesty and integrity. However, the Prison Service is committed to investigating and eliminating corruption to ensure prisons remain a safe and secure environment for staff, prisoners and visitors.

■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence

Yasmin Qureshi: [\[65406\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many reported incidents of violence in prisons resulted in (a) arrest and (b) charge, by type of offence in each of the last four years.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The information requested is not held centrally and could only be collected at disproportionate costs.

■ Prisons: Suicide

Richard Burgon: [\[64707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork assessors are employed in each public sector prison.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Rape: Trials

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[64487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many applications have been made to Crown Courts in England and Wales under section 41 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 in each of the last three years.

Sir Oliver Heald:

The information requested is not held centrally.

■ Stalking: Convictions

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[64486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many people were convicted of stalking offences under section 4A of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 in each of the last three years.

Mr Sam Gyimah:

The information requested is available in the criminal justice systems quarterly statistics on GOV.UK.

■ Victims' Commissioner

Jess Phillips:

[\[64618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has plans to increase or strengthen the powers and duties of the Victims' Commissioner.

Dr Phillip Lee:

The role of the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses is defined in the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004. It is to promote the interests of victims and witnesses, encourage good practice in their treatment, and regularly review the operation of the Code of Practice for Victims. There are no current plans to change the role of the Commissioner as provided by the legislation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Office: Government Contracts

Jon Trickett:

[\[64400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Kris Hopkins:

The total number and value of Government Contracts that have been awarded by the Northern Ireland Office since 2010 is shown below:

YEAR	NO. OF CONTRACTS	TOTAL VALUE OF CONTRACTS, £'000s
2010	3	15
2011	1	20
2012	1	20
2013	17	90
2014	1	5,760
2015	0	0
2016	1	3,000
2017	0	0

The Department does not hold any information on which of these involved contracting out, pro bono costs or the number of work days contracted out to enable me to provide an answer for the remainder of your question.

SCOTLAND

■ Food Banks: Scotland

Alison Thewliss: [\[65343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he plans to visit a food bank in March 2017.

David Mundell:

I currently have no plans to visit a food bank in March 2017 in my capacity as Secretary of State for Scotland.

■ Scotland Office: Government Contracts

Jon Trickett: [\[64402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

David Mundell:

Other than minor or bespoke purchases, the Scotland Office does not normally undertake direct procurement or tendering projects. It uses existing service contracts between suppliers and the Scottish Government or the Ministry of Justice.

Since May 2010, only one contract has been contracted out by the Scotland Office. This was issued to the Royal Mail in 2011-12 for its role in providing candidates' free mailing in the Scottish Parliament election of 2011, the value of which was just over £6.4 million.

We do not record information on pro bono costs nor the number of work days contracted out each year.

Since January 2011, central government departments have been required to publish details of contracts above the value of £10,000 on Contracts Finder. Contracts published prior to 26 February 2015 can be viewed at:

<https://data.gov.uk/data/contracts-finder-archive>

Those published after 26 February 2015 can be viewed at:

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

■ **Scotland Office: Uber**

Mr Iain Wright:

[\[64382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

David Mundell:

The Scotland Office do not centrally record information on (a) Uber for Business or (b) other Uber transactions.

■ **Trussell Trust: Scotland**

Alison Thewliss:

[\[65342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, on what date he last met representatives of the Trussell Trust.

David Mundell:

I have not met with representatives of the Trussell Trust in my role as Secretary of State for Scotland.

TRANSPORT

■ **A1**

Caroline Flint:

[\[65372\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle traffic congestion on the A1 between J35 and the M6 J33.

Mr John Hayes:

The Road Investment Strategy (RIS), published in December 2014, announced two schemes on the A1/A1(M) that would be developed during the first road investment

period (2015-2020) for delivery in the second road investment period (2021-2025). The schemes are A1 Redhouse to Darrington and A1(M) Doncaster Bypass.

The feasibility study for the A1 between Redhouse and Darrington has been concluded and the outcomes are being considered by government. The feasibility study identified a number of potential high level options for resolving the current and future issues along this stretch of the network. These options will be developed further alongside public and key stakeholder engagement and consultation for consideration in the second road investment period.

■ Aviation

Jim Shannon:

[\[64563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that airports have increased capacity in the next 10 to 20 years.

Mr John Hayes:

The 2013 Aviation Policy Framework (APF) states that "the UK Government wants to see the best use of existing capacity at all UK airports". The UK's airports are private entities operating in a competitive, commercial environment, and it is therefore for individual airport operators to propose and develop capacity expansion plans. In this regard the Government welcomes the ambition of airports across the country to respond to local and regional demand by investing in their infrastructure to enable services to more destinations, and better facilities and choice for their passengers.

This year we have begun the process of developing a new strategy for UK aviation which will build on its success. The new strategy will set the framework for how the industry can grow sustainably.

This will be an ambitious, ongoing programme of work which has already begun to explore where Government can, and should, make a difference. We will be consulting widely, both with the industry and with consumers throughout 2017, starting in the spring. This will maintain momentum and set the rhythm for aviation policy in the lead up to publication of an Aviation Strategy White Paper in 2018.

■ Bus Services

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[64602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2017 to Question 63176, what information his Department holds on the number of quality partnership schemes that were in place between 2010 and 2016.

Andrew Jones:

The development and implementation of quality partnership schemes is primarily a matter for individual local authorities, working with their local bus operators, and so my Department does not hold information on the precise number of schemes. However, the post legislative assessment of the Local Transport Act 2008 and the Impact Assessment of the Bus Services Bill, as referred to in my previous answer of 14 February 2017, do contain some information on existing schemes.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[64603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2017 to Question 63176, what assessment he has made of the effect that quality partnership schemes have had on local bus (a) patronage, (b) mileage and (c) fares.

Andrew Jones:

The impacts on patronage, mileage and fares that are directly attributable to a quality partnership scheme – rather than influenced by other factors – can be difficult to identify. The assessment of the performance of individual quality partnerships schemes is primarily a matter for the local authorities that have introduced them and it is for them, working in co-operation with their local bus operators, to determine whether the objectives of individual schemes are being met.

However, in autumn 2015, the Department held a number of workshops on options to reform the legal framework for bus services. Discussions at these events, and more widely, suggest that both local authorities and bus operators found that partnership schemes have usually achieved or exceeded their objectives.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[64604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2017 to Question 63176, and with reference in the post-legislative assessment of the Local Transport Act 2008 to quality partnership schemes having been seen to be beneficial, what those benefits are.

Andrew Jones:

The benefits of quality partnerships vary from scheme to scheme but are generally aimed at improving the quality and/or reliability of local bus services. This primarily benefits passengers who use the services concerned. As stated in the post-legislative assessment of the Local Transport Act 2008, partnerships can also result in other benefits, such as growth in patronage, better value for money and improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of bus networks.

■ Department for Transport: Brexit

Paul Blomfield:

[\[64552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

Andrew Jones:

We, and other Departments, are working closely with the Department for Exiting the European Union on all aspects of exiting the European Union.

■ Department for Transport: Equality

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[64451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Jones:

Over the last three years the Department for Transport has had and continues to have due regard, as necessary, to the public sector equality duty in exercising its functions. The Equality Act does not require this due regard to take the form of an equality impact assessment, nor does it define an equality impact assessment, and the Department for Transport does not maintain a record of such assessments.

■ Department for Transport: Government Contracts

Jon Trickett:

[\[64403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Mr John Hayes:

Table A below has been extracted from Departmental records and provides details of contracts let, and their value per calendar year for the Department for Transport. It includes information for the Highways Agency which was an Agency of the Department prior to 2015.

Table A

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	QTY	Value (£k)	QTY	Value (£k)	QTY	Value (£k)	QTY	Value (£k)
DFT(c)	46	18,177	62	18,388	117	27,449	146	117,393
DVLA	63	85,467	66	187,252	54	211,872	65	207,360
DVSA	23	3,270	73	18,924	79	41,840	113	22,524
HA	63	2,216,895	74	4,539,098	59	1,471,073	32	7,375
MCA	153	20,743	187	19,733	186	218,607	206	1,631,072
VCA	2	46	2	72	8	263	1	84

	2010		2011		2012		2013	
Total	350	2,344,599	464	4,783,467	503	1,971,103	563	1,985,806
	2014		2015		2016		2017	
	QTY	Value (£k)	QTY	Value (£k)	QTY	Value (£k)	QTY	Value (£k)
DFT(c)	158	76,793	161	56,280	250	63,220	17	3,436
DVLA	156	86,352	227	110,460	170	250,831	9	2,392
DVSA	126	35,639	53	48,387	64	145,842	4	318
HA	58	837,294	4	1,436		-		-
MCA	176	51,412	115	14,066	194	17,053	17	1,259
VCA	8	146	9	357	9	102	1	0
Total	682	1,087,635	569	230,987	687	477,048	48	7,405

*Value: this column includes the potential maximum call off values of framework contracts

My department does not have a comprehensive record of the value of probono work provided nor an estimate of work days “contracted out” over the period requested.

■ Department for Transport: Procurement

Jon Trickett:

[\[65407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many civil servants of his Department oversee contracts which have been awarded to external providers.

Mr John Hayes:

Based on information held in our contracts register, which includes data for the central Department and the four agencies (DVLA, DVSA, MCA and VCA), 679 civil servants of my Department oversee contracts that have been awarded to external providers. This number includes the number of named contract managers and Senior Responsible Owners.

■ Department for Transport: Recruitment

Andrew Selous:

[\[64480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

Mr John Hayes:

The Department for Transport supports 'ban the box' and once a provisional offer of employment is made, candidates are asked to disclose unspent convictions and then a criminal record check is undertaken as a part of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard; however, no documentation regarding criminal history is retained by the Department, nor transferred to the employees' personnel records.

■ **Department for Transport: Uber****Mr Iain Wright:**[\[64383\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Mr John Hayes:

I confirm that my Department has nil direct spend via purchase orders or contracts with Uber private hire services to date.

Departmental staff may, exceptionally, claim taxi or private hire fares when on official business. The Department electronically records the type of travel e.g. private hire and the amount claimed on the travel expenses accounting systems but does not in all cases centrally record or identify separately the name of the firm used.

■ **Driving Tests: Glasgow****Alison Thewliss:**[\[65381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many theory tests have been (a) sat, (b) passed and (c) failed at the Glasgow Driving Theory Test Centre in each year since 2007.

Andrew Jones:

The table below includes all categories of theory tests taken at the Glasgow driving theory test centre. The data for 2016/2017 includes car and motorbike tests only for April to September.

GLASGOW	CONDUCTED	PASSED	FAILED
2007-2008	27,130	18,576	8,554
2008-2009	26,792	18,323	8,469
2009-2010	26,897	17,959	8,938
2010-2011	25,648	17,008	8,640
2011-2012	33,254	21,297	11,957
2012-2013	37,478	23,367	14,111
2013-2014	46,769	25,796	20,973

GLASGOW	CONDUCTED	PASSED	FAILED
2014-2015	44,586	24,370	20,216
2015-2016	54,228	28,869	25,359
2016-2017	26,444	13,581	12,863

■ Road Traffic Control

Mims Davies:

[\[64776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the provision of additional junctions to decrease ramp times on the strategic road network (a) in general and (b) at the missing Junction 6 of the M27.

Mr John Hayes:

Highways England is guided by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges on the provision of new accesses and interchanges to the Strategic Road Network. As well as monitoring traffic flow data, they assess information from local development plans and local highway and planning authorities to identify when and where additional junctions are required.

I understand you met recently with Highways England at which unfortunately you were advised that a new junction could not be built to current standards at this location on the M27 due to other road improvements made since the motorway was constructed. Highways England is continuing to discuss this important matter with the local planning authority and monitoring developments in the vicinity.

■ Road Traffic Offences

Richard Burden:

[\[65264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people participated in a diversionary course as a result of a road traffic offence in each of the last five years; and what proportion of such people were subsequently prosecuted for a further offence.

Andrew Jones:

The number of participants in a diversionary course in the last five years is published by the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS). Their website gives the details as follows:

2012 963,627

2013 1,017,158

2014 1,355,796

2015 1,403,555

2016 1,390,880

We have no record of how many participants have since reoffended. However, the Department for Transport, in conjunction with the Road Safety Trust, has commissioned an evaluation of the NDORS speed awareness course, which is the most commonly awarded diversionary course. This evaluation will look at a number of aspects of the speed awareness course, including the impact of the courses on reoffending rates.

■ Road Traffic Offences: Speed Limits

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[65327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many motorists have taken speed awareness courses after being charged with speeding offences in each of the last three years.

Andrew Jones:

The numbers of participants in speed awareness courses, which a driver may be awarded instead of a charge for a speeding offence, are published by the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS). NDORS' website gives the details for attendance for the last three years (UK figures) as follows:

2014 1,185,860

2015 1,207,570

2016 1,188,961

■ Roads: Accidents

Edward Argar:

[\[64428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the road KS1 rates are in (a) Leicestershire, (b) Nottinghamshire, (c) Derbyshire and (d) Lincolnshire for each year from 2005 to date.

Andrew Jones:

The table below shows the reported killed and seriously injured (KSI) casualty rate per billion vehicle miles by local authority.

Reported killed or seriously injured casualty rate per billion vehicle miles

RATE PER BILLION VEHICLE MILES¹

LOCAL AUTHORITY	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Leicestershire County Council 2	67	65	57	55	58	53	52	44	41	53	51
Leicester City Council	78	97	97	107	97	98	107	100	105	111	117

Rutland County Council	74	58	77	80	70	75	47	68	41	64	76
Nottinghamshire County Council 3	140	124	116	111	104	97	105	102	79	76	70
Nottingham City Council	200	184	179	160	150	143	158	140	125	112	145
Derbyshire County Council 4	103	99	102	88	94	67	70	70	64	87	67
Derby City Council	96	106	98	103	108	86	86	76	72	98	69
Lincolnshire County Council	122	107	113	91	124	126	132	117	113	106	83

1 Casualties include pedestrians and cyclists. Vehicle miles is the distance travelled by all vehicles (including cyclists)

2 Not including Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council

3 Not including Nottingham City Council

4 Not including Derby City Council

■ Thameslink Railway Line

Bob Stewart:

[\[65243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce the introduction of Thameslink Class 700 trains into Kent.

Paul Maynard:

New Class 700 trains started operating some Thameslink services between Sevenoaks and London Blackfriars via Bromley South and Catford in November 2016. GoVia Thameslink Railway (GTR) will be introducing more of these trains over the coming months.

GTR's consultation on proposals for the 2018 Timetable included options for Thameslink services to operate on new routes in Kent and enhanced frequencies on other routes, including those via Catford. Detailed timetable development work is currently ongoing. The next phase of public consultation on the detailed timetable is planned for summer 2017.

WALES■ **Health Services: Wales**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[65263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, whether his Department has made a comparative assessment of the value for money of care delivered by NHS Wales and NHS England.

Alun Cairns:

The Wales Office has made no such assessment. Health is a devolved matter and it is for the Welsh Government to ensure the NHS Wales offers value for money for taxpayers whilst meeting the needs of patients in Wales.

■ **Wales Office: Equality**

Chris Stephens: [\[R\] \[64453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Alun Cairns:

The Wales Office has not carried out any public sector reforms in the last three years.

■ **Wales Office: Government Contracts**

Jon Trickett: [\[64404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what the total (a) number and (b) value of Government contracts that have been contracted out by his Department was in each year since 2010; what the value of pro bono costs was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the number of work days contracted out in each such year.

Guto Bebb:

The Wales Office receives procurement services from the Ministry of Justice. We therefore do not hold the information requested.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES■ **Government Equalities Office: Impact Assessments**

Chris Stephens: [\[R\] \[64445\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if she will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

Over the last three years the Government Equalities Office (GEO) has had and continues to have due regard, as necessary, to the public sector equality duty in

exercising its functions. The Equality Act does not require this due regard to take the form of an equality impact assessment, nor does it define an equality impact assessment, and the GEO does not maintain a record of such assessments.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ **Benefits Rules: Attendance**

Maria Eagle:

[\[64662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that all Jobcentre Plus staff are fully trained in the correct procedures for applying sanctions for missed appointments.

Damian Hinds:

All Jobcentre staff have access to a comprehensive learning framework which is designed to build the core skills and knowledge essential to their role. This learning covers the appropriate use of sanctions, including in instances where a claimant has missed an appointment, and the support available for people who have been sanctioned. Independent assurance managers undertake quality checks to ensure that Work Coaches have followed the correct operational instructions when making sanction referrals.

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

Paul Blomfield:

[\[64555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions he has had with the Department for Exiting the European Union on the contents of the White Paper entitled The United Kingdom's exit from and new partnership with the European Union, Cm 9417, published in February 2017.

Damian Hinds:

We, and other Departments, are working closely with the Department for Exiting the European Union on all aspects of exiting the European Union. This includes the contents of the White Paper, where the policies of this Department may be affected.

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

Chris Stephens:

[\[R\] \[64454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many equality impact assessments have been carried out in the last three years on public service reforms which impact on (a) departmental staff and (b) members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Nokes:

As an employer DWP are committed to equality and valuing diversity in our workforce. DWP policies, guidance and procedures continually raise awareness to assure that any new policies or policy changes do not discriminate unfairly against

claimants/customers, employees or external partners under the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 is embedded into DWP processes and policies, however, the information requested is not collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Recruitment

Andrew Selous:

[\[64483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his Department operates a ban the box employment policy in respect of ex-offender job applicants with unspent convictions; and how many employees of his Department have unspent convictions.

Caroline Nokes:

Ban the box encourages employers to remove the tick box asking about criminal convictions on application forms. The application form template used by Civil Service Resourcing for DWP recruitment does not ask about criminal convictions.

As part of the external recruitment process, successful candidates for DWP vacancies are required to undertake a pre-employment check which includes a Basic Criminal record check via Disclosure Scotland.

The check only highlights convictions which are classed as unspent.

If the check highlights an unspent conviction, a decision is made by the business in consultation with their HR Business Partner (HRBP) on whether to offer the candidate a post. If a post is offered, the pre-employment checks will simply be recorded as having been passed, or if a decision is made not to offer a post, the pre-employment checks will be recorded as being failed. It should be noted that the pre-employment checks can also be failed for a number of other reasons. The reason for the pre-employment check fail is not recorded.

As a result DWP, is unable to provide figures for the number of former prisoners that are currently employed within the department.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Uber

Mr Iain Wright:

[\[64386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much his Department has spent on (a) Uber for Business and (b) other Uber transactions since 28 October 2016.

Caroline Nokes:

The information is not available.

■ Jobcentres: Closures

Louise Haigh:

[\[65402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether his departmental officials used google maps to calculate estimates of travel time between those jobcentres which

his Department proposes to close and those jobcentres from where replacement services will be delivered.

Damian Hinds:

Distances and journey times have been calculated using a variety of methods to improve accuracy, including Google Maps and AA route mapping, and information collected about local public transport routes with input from local DWP colleagues.

■ **Jobcentres: Sheffield**

Louise Haigh:

[\[65399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of people who visited the jobcentre at Eastern Avenue, Sheffield in each year from 2010 to date.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested is not available. However, such information that is available is in the tables and provides the number of (a) Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit (required to seek work) claimants; plus the number of new claims to (b) Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support from people who are required to attend Sheffield Eastern Avenue Jobcentre.

Table (a) The number of Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit (required to seek work) claimants required to attend Sheffield Eastern Avenue Jobcentre

POSITION AT JANUARY FOR EACH YEAR SINCE 2010	THE NUMBER OF JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANTS REQUIRED TO ATTEND SHEFFIELD EASTERN AVENUE JOBCENTRE
January 2010	2,438
January 2011	2,448
January 2012	3,053
January 2013	3,010
January 2014	2,440
January 2015	1,605
January 2016	1,355
January 2017	1,170

Table (b) The number of new claims to Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support required to attend Sheffield Eastern Avenue Jobcentre

POSITION FOR EACH 12 MONTH PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY TO JANUARY FROM 2010	THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE MAKING A NEW CLAIM TO EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT ALLOWANCE REQUIRED TO ATTEND SHEFFIELD EASTERN AVENUE JOBCENTRE	THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE MAKING A NEW CLAIM TO INCOME SUPPORT REQUIRED TO ATTEND SHEFFIELD EASTERN AVENUE JOBCENTRE
February 2009 to January 2010	Not Available	Not Available
February 2010 to January 2011	686	Not Available
February 2011 to January 2012	720	Not Available
February 2012 to January 2013	2,352	500
February 2013 to January 2014	2,497	535
February 2014 to January 2015	1,929	439
February 2015 to January 2016	1,695	423
February 2016 to January 2017	1,541	246

■ Social Security Benefits and Pensions: Charnwood

Edward Argar:

[64430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants for (a) the state pension, (b) jobseeker's allowance, (c) personal independence payment and (d) employment and support allowance there have been for Charnwood constituency for each year they have been in place since 2010.

Damian Hinds:

Please see the table below for the number of claimants who have been in receipt of payment for State Pension (SP), Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for the Charnwood constituency since 2010.

Claims in payment are in the table below:

Claimants for the Charnwood constituency

BENEFIT	AUG-2010	AUG-2011	AUG-2012	AUG-2013	AUG-2014	AUG-2015	AUG-2016
SP	20,910	21,110	21,480	21,640	21,890	21,960	22,020
JSA	1,170	1,300	1,210	960	550	430	230
ESA	520	580	960	1,520	1,830	1,990	2,160
Benefit				Oct-2013	Oct-2014	Oct-2015	Oct-2016
PIP				13	258	765	1,027

Notes:

1. August 2016 is the latest available date for claims in payment for SP, JSA and ESA and August has been used for the previous years for comparison purposes
1. October 2016 is the latest available date for claims in payment for PIP and October has been used for the previous years for comparison purposes
1. PIP was not introduced until April 2013
1. For SP, JSA and ESA there may be a discrepancy between any sub-national November 2015 data reproduced in this table and the equivalent statistics produced by the DWP tabulation tool. The differences are small, at most 3% at regional level.
1. The reduction in JSA caseload will be driven by two factors. The first is the general positive rate of unemployment which means that people already on JSA will be signing off. The second more significant element is the expansion of Universal Credit (UC) which, since April 2016, takes all national simple claims and some other claims that would have previously gone to claim JSA. Increasingly, the deployment of the next iteration of UC is widening the gateway further for more claim types to be taken onto UC instead of JSA. The reduction in JSA will increase as the rollout of the Full Service accelerates.
1. The ESA caseload in Charnwood has increased by 315% since 2010. This increase is consistent with the national ESA caseload increase of 347% over the same period. The increase is a result of the cessation of Incapacity Benefit and conversion to ESA.

Sources:

1. Claims in payment for SP, JSA and ESA have been taken from the Official Labour Market Statistics (NOMIS), provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)
1. Claims in payment for PIP have been taken from Stat-Xplore, the Department for Work and Pensions online tool

■ Universal Credit

Maria Eagle: [\[64659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what procedures are in place to prevent lengthy, open-ended sanctions in cases where people claiming universal credit have not received correspondence informing them of a sanction on their claim.

Damian Hinds:

DWP has robust procedures in place to ensure that claimants are notified of sanctions that are applied to their claim and are clearly informed of their responsibilities and options of what to do next.

Open-ended sanctions relate to a failure to undertake a specific requirement which will be ended if the claimant re-engages to satisfy the original requirement or if the original requirement changes or becomes no longer relevant. Other changes in circumstances will also end the sanction such as a change in conditionality group or if the claim terminates.

Maria Eagle: [\[64661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure that people previously receiving employment and support allowance are fully informed of the procedures for missed appointments due to illness when starting new claims for jobseeker's allowance under universal credit.

Damian Hinds:

At the point that each mandatory interview is arranged, all Universal Credit claimants, including those with a health condition or disability, are verbally advised by their Work Coach of the proper procedure if they cannot attend any appointment at the Jobcentre. This advice is also included in the notification of the appointment issued to the claimant.

Melanie Onn: [\[65160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to reduce the length of time it takes for working families to receive universal credit payments.

Damian Hinds:

The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure is a fundamental part of the design; it helps reduce welfare dependency and support people into employment by mirroring the world of work, where 75% of people are paid monthly. It is not possible to award a Universal Credit payment as soon as eligibility is determined.

We have a number of safeguards in place to help claimants transition to Universal Credit including Advances and Budgeting Support. Claimants can apply for an advance and can receive up to 50 per cent of their indicative award. Personal Budgeting Support is also discussed at the claimant's initial work search interview to gauge their potential support needs and can include money advice.

We continue to work closely with landlords, Local Authorities and other organisations to ensure claimants are supported.

■ **Universal Credit: Disqualification**

Maria Eagle:

[64663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what procedures are in place to ensure that people claiming universal credit are informed of sanctioning rules in the case of missed appointments due to illness.

Damian Hinds:

Claimants are advised at the outset of their claim and at relevant points throughout the life of their claim of the requirements for receipt of Universal Credit, including the need to attend regular meetings, and what will happen should they fail to meet those requirements. When making an appointment, either by telephone or by letter, the claimant is further advised that they may be sanctioned if they fail to attend without a good reason.

■ **Universal Credit: Great Grimsby**

Melanie Onn:

[65158]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many recipients of universal credit have a managed payment to landlord in Great Grimsby.

Damian Hinds:

This information is not currently available.

Melanie Onn:

[65159]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many benefit sanctions have been applied to recipients of universal credit in Great Grimsby constituency in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested is not currently available.

The Department published its strategy for releasing official statistics on benefit sanctions, including Universal Credit (UC) in April 2016. As outlined in the strategy, officials are currently developing the data for UC sanctions and will only release information once the necessary quality assurance work has taken place. These statistics will be published in accordance with the relevant protocols in the Code of Practice for official statistics.

Benefit Sanctions official statistics and the Departments release strategy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions>

■ Universal Credit: Merseyside**Maria Eagle:****[64660]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in Garston and Halewood constituency receiving universal credit have been subject to open-ended sanctions since they were introduced.

Damian Hinds:

The information requested is not currently available.

The Department published its strategy for releasing official statistics on benefit sanctions, including Universal Credit (UC) in April 2016. As outlined in the strategy, officials are currently developing the data for UC sanctions and will only release information once the necessary quality assurance work has taken place. These statistics will be published in accordance with the relevant protocols in the Code of Practice for official statistics.

Benefit Sanction Decision official statistics and the Departments release strategy can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/jobseekers-allowance-sanctions> ,

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Microplastics

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[65358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether officials from her Department have met officials from the World Health Organisation to discuss a ban on the use of microbead products.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 28 February 2017. The correct answer should have been:

Dr Thérèse Coffey:

Defra has not met with the World Health Organisation to discuss **microplastics**.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH

■ Government Response to Professor Walker's advice on Regulation of Herbal Medicines and Practitioners

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Nicola Blackwood):
[\[HCWS505\]](#)

The issues around the regulation of herbal medicines and practitioners are longstanding and complex. To understand and fully consider all the relevant issues, the Coalition Government commissioned an independent working group, led by Professor David Walker, to provide advice on options for the assurance of herbal medicines and practitioners. This report was published in March 2015.

I thank Professor Walker for his report, as well as the Hon. Member for Bosworth (David Tredinnick) and other members of the Herbal Medicines and Practitioners Working Group whose work informed the report. I would also like to thank those individuals and organisations who contributed to the report by providing information and advice to Professor Walker.

This statement sets out the appropriate level of assurance for herbal medicines supplied by herbal practitioners based on available information and advice, including that provided by Professor Walker's report. Any system of assurance needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the risks presented to public safety and be enforceable and effective.

Professor Walker recommended: more research into the level of assurance required to ensure public protection (recommendation 6); and that the sector considers seeking accreditation of its voluntary registers by the Professional Standards Authority (recommendation 5).

The Government supports these recommendations and encourages the sector to take them forwards. Delivery of recommendation 5 and 6 by the sector supports the development of standards for education, training and conduct, and would allow for collaboration on the collection of safety data and the establishment of an academic infrastructure to develop training and research into herbal medicines.

The Report, whilst recognising the value of the current system for regulating the supply of herbal medicines, explored the scope for further changes to enhance public protection and access, and made recommendations for more work to: identify known potent or toxic herbs (recommendation 1); and consider if learning can be applied from a review of food lists (recommendation 2).

In response to recommendation 1, the Government is proposing a review to identify potentially potent or toxic herbal ingredients. This is with a view to restricting the use of potent or toxic ingredients through existing mechanisms such as the Human Medicines Regulations 2012. This would link to a scheduled review of toxic ingredients of Schedule 20 of the Medicines Regulations 2012 enabling for a targeted approach to be taken with a

clear focus on protecting the public. Scoping work will commence in 2017 with a view to commencing any detailed scientific assessment work as soon as practicable thereafter.

While it accepts the intention of recommendation 2, the Government believes that existing food lists have little relevance when considering substances used by herbal practitioners, which can be significantly more potent. Case law requires that the classification of a medicinal product must proceed on a case-by-case basis, a point which is made in the body of Professor Walker's Report. The suggestion that food lists (which relate to the safety and availability of products under food law) could be used to classify medicinal products conflicts with this.

Rather than reviewing food lists, which are not applicable to herbal remedies, the Government believes that more benefit will be gained by working with the sector to increase understanding of existing regulatory controls. To deliver this, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the Department of Health will produce a joint communications and engagement plan setting out proposed work with the sector in 2017.

The Report also recognises the impact of the EU's Herbal Directive on access to some herbal medicinal products by recommending consideration of: a system to allow small scale assembly of products off-site on a named patient basis (recommendation 3); and inviting a review by the European Commission on the operation of the Herbal Directive (recommendation 4).

In due course, the United Kingdom will be leaving the European Union. The outcome of the exit negotiations will determine what arrangements apply in relation to EU legislation in future once the UK has left the EU.

The Government does not accept recommendation 3. The UK already operates a permissive regime for herbal practitioners which allows them to make up preparations on their own premises for named patients following one to one consultations. Those that are permitted to dispense (pharmacists, other registered medical professionals), and the premises they use, are heavily regulated for safety reasons.

The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 permit herbal medicinal products to be manufactured or assembled by people other than registered nurses, midwives, doctors and dentists provided that preparations are made up on premises they occupy and from which the public can be excluded, that preparations are made up on a named patient basis, and that these preparations do not contain specifically prohibited substances as listed in domestic legislation.

Practitioners therefore may make up preparations on their own premises for individual patients but they may not import or sell any mass-produced products which do not hold a Traditional Herbal Registration or Marketing Authorisation. Allowing people with no qualifications to put together medicines and carry this out on unregulated premises conflicts with everything else the MHRA does and could cause confusion to the public.

The Government notes recommendation 4. The Government is open to further consideration of the case for statutory regulation once there is further evidence to understand the risk and confirm what level of assurance is appropriate and proportionate.

This evidence would be obtained from experience of voluntary registration accredited by the Professional Standards Authority and further research undertaken by the sector.

One reason for wishing to consider the evidence is because the range of products has changed following amended regulations in 2011. This has revised the risks presented. Another change is the development and delivery of the process for independent accreditation of voluntary registers provides an alternative option for the assurance of herbal practitioners.

Consideration of the evidence will support the public, employers and commissioners to make an informed choice about an individual practitioner as they will have demonstrated their commitment to upholding standards relevant to their practice.