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## UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF SAM LISTER

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I, Sam Lister, will say as follows:

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## **Preface**

- 0.1. I was formerly the Director General for Strategy and Operations at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), previously the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. I held this role from August 2019 to November 2024, after which I began my current role as Director General at the Department for Business and Trade. I make this statement as the former Director General in post during the specified period of 1 January 2020 and 28 June 2022.
- 0.2. The 'digital' part of DCMS was moved across to the newly created Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) as a result of the machinery of government changes announced on 7 February 2023. Throughout this statement, when I refer to DCMS, I am referring to the department's previous functions prior to the machinery of government changes.
- 0.3. Similarly, I will refer to other government departments and agencies by the title that was correct at the time.
- 0.4. I make this statement pursuant to a Rule 9 request from the Inquiry dated 23 January 2025 for a witness statement covering the issues raised in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module Nine (M9) of the Covid-19 Inquiry. M9 is concerned with economic interventions taken by the UK Government and the devolved administrations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on the specific period of 1 January 2020 until 28 June 2022. The contents of this statement relate primarily to matters that occurred within this date range, unless indicated otherwise.

## **Part A: Role, responsibilities and preparedness**

- 1.1. DCMS supports culture, arts, media, sport, tourism and civil society across every part of England - recognising the UK's world-leading position in these areas and the importance of these sectors in contributing to our economy, way of life and the global reputation of the country.
- 1.2. DCMS leads on the media and creative industry sectors, including advertising, architecture, crafts, design, fashion, film and high-end television, music, publishing and video games. DCMS also has wider policy responsibilities in relation to media, including general policy responsibility for TV, radio and press.
- 1.3. The department has oversight of national arts policy in England, including funding for the sector, sponsorship of Arts Council England (ACE) and DCMS is responsible for the Government Art Collection.
- 1.4. DCMS is responsible for public libraries policy and sponsors the British Library which, in turn, supports the development of libraries nationally. DCMS also sponsors The National Archives.
- 1.5. The department is also responsible for the protection, promotion and conservation of England's historic environment. Wider heritage policy responsibility includes leadership of the development of contested heritage policy, which DCMS works on alongside Historic England.
- 1.6. The department's responsibility for museums involves setting policy for the museums sector, direct sponsorship of national museums, allocating funding to the wider sector and acting as the policy lead for international protection and trade, art crime, restitution, sustainability and partnerships.
- 1.7. DCMS is responsible for driving the growth of the visitor economy, which involves supporting the domestic leisure and tourism sector in England and supporting and facilitating international inbound visitors for leisure and business purposes. We support the 'Global Britain' initiative through the promotion and protection of cultural and heritage assets as soft power to deliver economic and foreign policy objectives. We also sponsor VisitEngland and VisitBritain.
- 1.8. DCMS also leads on government policy relating to the voluntary and community sector and volunteering through its Civil Society and Youth (CSY) directorate (this was known as the Office for Civil Society prior to 2021; I refer to the CSY directorate throughout

this statement for clarity and consistency). This function moved to DCMS in 2016 from the Cabinet Office (CO). The CSY directorate is responsible for policy relating to charities, volunteering, social action, social enterprises, voluntary and community sector organisations and a range of functions including charity law, dormant asset legislation and the local authority statutory duty for youth services.

- 1.9. The department's responsibilities for sport cover elite and professional sport, international sport, sports participation, diversity in sport, sport integrity and football regulation. DCMS also supports the bidding for and hosting of major sporting events in the UK.
- 1.10. In relation to gambling, we are responsible for the regime set out in the Gambling Act 2005, which provides the framework for gambling regulation, online gambling, casinos, betting shops, bingo halls and arcades. This policy area also includes the national lottery and society lotteries, and horse and greyhound racing.
- 1.11. DCMS oversees and/or partners with a large number of public bodies. This stood at 47 before the machinery of government changes in February 2023 and the dissolution of the Organising Committee for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, and is now 42<sup>1</sup>. This is the largest number of any government department. These public bodies range from national museums and nationwide funders to major regulators and small advisory bodies. They are responsible for ensuring there is appropriate financial oversight, risk management, governance and accountability, and that our public bodies are fully informed on government policy and direction. Engagement with all our public bodies is primarily through senior civil servants and working-level sponsors.
- 1.12. Prior to the machinery of government changes in February 2023, DCMS was also responsible for the majority of the communications sector including telecommunications (fixed line communications, mobile communications and internet service providers), digital and tech policy and infrastructure, online harms, counter disinformation policy, the cyber and AI sectors, data infrastructure, and broadcasting. Following the machinery of government changes, responsibility for the majority of these policy areas was transferred to the newly created Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). However, DCMS has retained responsibility for broadcast services.

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<sup>1</sup>The full list of public bodies can be found on Gov.uk.

***Planning and preparation for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) funding***

*Sector engagement*

- 1.13. Work undertaken by the CSY directorate in the years prior to the pandemic, while not necessarily specific pandemic planning (which is addressed further below), helped to lay the foundation for the work which was to come during Covid-19.
- 1.14. The CSY directorate has an established practice of regular civil society stakeholder engagement which has been maintained since it joined DCMS in 2016. This includes regular meetings between CSY officials and civil society stakeholders, as well as ministers engaging with stakeholders at an individual and group level. The CSY directorate also maintains regular engagement with the voluntary and community sector via a newsletter, which is used to disseminate information and share updates from DCMS and, where appropriate, other government departments. This continued during the pandemic and has included public health messaging when relevant. For example, during the pandemic, DCMS would regularly share CO's stakeholder toolkit with DCMS sectors, using our existing engagement and communications channels, for sector stakeholders to further share with communities. These established and effective relationships proved critical during the pandemic, including in DCMS's support of the economic response.
- 1.15. CO is responsible for cross-government coordination of crisis management and resilience planning, coordinated through the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. The CSY directorate's working relationships with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat and other government departments on resilience and emergency response responsibilities were strengthened in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017. DCMS also worked with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat on helping to strengthen communities' resilience, partnering with voluntary and community sector capabilities, and supporting the continued integration of the sector into emergency planning, as outlined in a briefing note from September 2018 [**SL/1 INQ000102741**]. The work was taken forward through the Communities Prepared national group, which was convened and led by CO and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat<sup>2</sup>. The CSY directorate attended on an ad hoc basis and the Department of

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<sup>2</sup>Communities Prepared is a National Lottery funded Groundwork (federation of independent charities, called working under a common brand to a single federation strategy) programme that provides people and communities with the knowledge and confidence to prepare for, respond to and recover from a range of emergencies and, in-turn, foster long-term resilience

Health and Social Care (DHSC) was also part of this group.

- 1.16. In 2018, DCMS sought to cooperate more closely with the voluntary and community sectors and began working with the Charity Commission of England and Wales and partners on developing the voluntary and community sector's capability to respond to major incidents<sup>3</sup>. This included awarding funding through the Nesta Innovation Fund to a number of schemes aimed at mobilising communities in emergencies and increasing resilience in the voluntary and community sector<sup>4</sup>. Between March 2018 and March 2020, a total of £257,000 was awarded to the British Red Cross (Community and Voluntary Sector Resilience Project), North Yorkshire Council (Ready for Anything Project) and Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire (Blue Lights Brigade). The latter programme, for instance, helped to create volunteering opportunities for retired emergency service personnel, to ensure their skills could be put to good use during major incidents. The aim was to reduce pressure on emergency services in North East Lincolnshire by enabling current personnel to focus on responding to those that require the most support, with retired volunteers providing back up support. The Blue Lights Brigade went on to deliver community level support (such as shopping for food/supplies, delivering medicine, and befriending services to tackle loneliness) during the pandemic.
- 1.17. DCMS also sought to improve its engagement with the voluntary and community sector in relation to crisis response. The primary mechanism for achieving this was the provision of start-up funding for the National Emergencies Trust, which was launched in November 2019<sup>5</sup>. The National Emergencies Trust was set up as a charity to coordinate fundraising and distribution of funds in the event of a domestic disaster or emergency, including major terrorist incidents. In the event of such an incident, the National Emergencies Trust collaborates with charities and other bodies to raise and distribute money and support those affected. The National Emergencies Trust went on to launch the Coronavirus Appeal in March 2020. As referenced above the CSY directorate also maintains regular engagement with the voluntary and community sector via a newsletter. This also served as a way for VCSE sector organisations to make contact with DCMS, with many reaching out to request to feature in the newsletter, ask about its content, or begin dialogue with DCMS more broadly.

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<sup>3</sup>The Charity Commission for England and Wales is a non-ministerial government department that regulates registered charities in England and Wales and maintains the central register of charities.

<sup>4</sup>Nesta is a British foundation, registered as a charity, which supports innovation.

<sup>5</sup>While the National Emergencies Trust remains a DCMS stakeholder, the department has no current financial or contractual relationship with it.

### *Pandemic preparation*

- 1.18. In the years preceding the pandemic, the CSY directorate had undertaken a range of work to support the sector, including economic support. While this was not specifically pandemic planning, the relationships developed and lessons learnt did inform the department's response during Covid-19. For example, through the interventions set out below, DCMS had already developed experience and established mechanisms to distribute significant funding to VCSE organisations.
- 1.19. Part of CSY's previous approach before the pandemic had been to test, build, and produce accessible learning and development tools to provide proof of concept about the effectiveness of using social action (including volunteering) to improve public service delivery<sup>6</sup>. From 2013 to 2020 the CSY directorate (both when it was in CO and DCMS) ran the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund with Nesta, the innovation policy agency. The Innovation Fund was run in two phases, the first between 2013 and 2016 (£14 million), the second from 2017 to 2020 (£9.4 million). Its overall aim was to pilot and scale up innovative approaches to encourage and enable social action in and alongside public services, including improving emergency responses and building community resilience against economic and social shocks.
- 1.20. A key objective for the Innovation Fund was to gather robust evidence about what social action interventions work to enhance public service delivery and reduce the burden on public services. The purpose was to ensure that social action providers (such as NHS Trusts, VCSE organisations, local authorities) had proof of concept about the impact that their interventions could have, helping them to secure future funding beyond the end of their government grant. For instance, funding provided to the Dance to Health programme, which focused on improving mobility and movement among older people, led to a 58% reduction in falls over the course of the funding period. The programme also led to improvements in physical and mental health wellbeing and reduced fear of falling. It led to estimated potential savings over a two year period of greater than £196 million (of which £158 million was to the NHS). Dance to Health went on to secure funding from NHS Trusts, The National Lottery Community Fund and several local authorities after proving the effectiveness of their approach. The value of having this proof of concept was felt during the response to the pandemic. There was confidence in DCMS and across government that VCSE organisations and social action, such as volunteering, could be viable routes for supporting people in their

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<sup>6</sup>A proof of concept shows whether an idea, solution, or product is practical before moving forward with full development.

homes during lockdown.

- 1.21. One strand of the Innovation Fund focused on digital solutions to improve public services. The Innovation Fund piloted a collaboration between the emergency response application, GoodSAM, and the London Ambulance Service, paving the way for the growth of GoodSAM's services<sup>7</sup>. DHSC went on to use GoodSAM as the platform for the NHS and Care Volunteer Responders programme during the pandemic. Another strand focused on using impact volunteering to support people in older age, following discharge from hospital, and through bereavement. One of the projects was run by the British Red Cross, a key member and founder of the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP)<sup>8</sup>. Again, proof of concept provided confidence that the British Red Cross could achieve impactful objectives and appropriately use government resources to deliver programmes for vulnerable people. A document was produced setting out the lessons learned from the Innovation Fund **[SL/2 INQ000102752]**.
- 1.22. In November 2018, proposals were made by leading voluntary and community sector-based resilience and emergency response organisations to establish the VCSEP, which would coordinate offers of support for charities responding to emergencies. While this work was not initially funded by DCMS, the engagement meant the groundwork for this process was in place for DCMS to approve a revised proposal submitted in 2020, once the pandemic had begun. More detail on the VCSEP funding can be found at paragraph 4.41-4.44 of this statement.
- 1.23. In the years preceding the pandemic, DCMS and other government departments had undertaken considerable work to build confidence and trust between the government and civil society. For example, DCMS worked closely with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat and the Communities Prepared national group (convened by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat) to support and develop the capability of the voluntary and community sector in planning for and responding to emergencies **[SL/1 INQ000102741]**. DCMS also, along with DHSC, engaged with Exercise Cygnus in 2016, which included a focus on voluntary and community sector support to social care in a pandemic scenario. It was due to the strengthening of these relationships that

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<sup>7</sup>GoodSAM provides solutions across emergency, volunteering and support services. The platform dispatches emergency staff and community first responders to emergency requirements, and has developed one-way video to support in emergency situations such as cardiac arrest.

<sup>8</sup>The VCSEP was established in 2018 by leading voluntary and community sector resilience and emergency response organisations, with the aim of delivering a coordinated response to national emergencies.

DCMS was able to work quickly with these trusted VCSE organisations during Covid-19 to identify routes through which we and the sector could provide economic support for vulnerable people.

- 1.24. Similarly, the CSY directorate uses expert advice from relevant civil society organisations such as infrastructure bodies, civil society data experts, funding bodies, regulators, special interest organisations and groups which focus on specific civil society areas, for example volunteering, youth, loneliness. They aid the CSY directorate in identifying areas of risk and informing on policy to strengthen civil society resilience and sector health.
- 1.25. In December 2020, DCMS commissioned a Youth Evidence Review in order to understand the challenges and opportunities facing young people at the time and in the future, and to inform government thinking on youth policy [**SL/3 INQ000652354**; **SL/4 INQ000623573**; **SL/5 INQ000623572**]. The findings of the review were not yet available when the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund (part of the VCSE £750 million package detailed in Part D) was designed and implemented. However, the findings of the review set the direction of our support for young people during the remainder of the pandemic, including development of the National Youth Guarantee to support regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home and youth volunteering opportunities<sup>9</sup>. It enabled us to advocate for youth sector residential guidance to be proportionate, in line with schools residential guidance and to ensure young people had access to the adventures away from home that were so important to them.

### ***Shifting of roles and responsibilities***

- 1.26. In early January 2020, DCMS's response to the pandemic was initially focused on concerns related to a drop in tourism from China. Throughout that month, as the impact of Covid-19 began to grow, DCMS tourism officials worked closely with their stakeholders to understand concerns relating to border control, movement of people and travel advice more generally. DCMS attended cross-government meetings on Covid-19 to report relevant information gathered from its policy sectors (principally the inbound tourism sector), including attending Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) committees at both ministerial and official level. In particular, DCMS provided information concerning the inbound tourism sector which would be particularly affected by border closures (although DCMS did not, and does not, have any responsibility for

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<sup>9</sup>Announced by government in February 2022, the National Youth Guarantee, was a £580 million investment to ensure that "by 2025, every young person in England should have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer".

borders). By late January, concerns had extended beyond inbound tourism to encapsulate issues with the cultural sector, with institutions such as museums and performing arts organisations seeking advice on planned and ongoing tours or loans to China, Japan and Korea.

- 1.27. By the end of January, DCMS was instructed by COBR to consider the likely impacts of a 'reasonable worst case scenario' [[SL/6 INQ000182292](#); [SL/7 INQ000182302](#)]. This envisaged the virus spreading beyond China to the rest of the world with up to 80% of the UK population being infected. At this point the department increased internal resourcing on the pandemic response, with officials from key policy teams including civil society, telecoms, culture and sport moving to join tourism officials in a small director-led team.
- 1.28. As Covid-19 spread through Europe during February and March 2020, the effect and potential impact of the pandemic became more pronounced across many DCMS sectors and the role of the department expanded significantly. In response, DCMS began to concentrate workloads on the pandemic, including contingency planning. For example, DCMS's sport and broadcasting teams considered how sporting fixtures might continue behind closed doors, if required, and sport, arts, heritage, museums and tourism sectors considered how businesses would be financially impacted if Covid-19 was not classified a notifiable disease. In response to this shift in responsibilities and priorities, DCMS took early action to consider how its teams were organised. A number of team structures were altered and some new teams - such as the Covid-19 Hub and the Economic Response Directorate (ERD) - were established early in the pandemic to lead on coordinating the department's response, as covered further at paragraphs 1.39-1.105.
- 1.29. DCMS's responsibilities expanded - as did those for other government departments - after restrictions were introduced in March 2020 to accommodate some 'sub-sector' businesses that did not have a relationship with a particular government department prior to Covid-19, principally because there had been a limited need for bespoke engagement. These businesses now required government support and advice, with DCMS taking on responsibilities for niche sub-sectors such as soft play centres, go-karting tracks and trampoline parks.
- 1.30. In April 2020, CO created nine cross-government workstreams to oversee the pandemic response, one of which was 'Safer Places'. Within this workstream was responsibility for recreational activities, termed 'Recreation' (led by DCMS), 'Safer Workplaces' (led by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

(BEIS)), 'Public Places' (led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG<sup>10</sup>)), 'Schools' (led by the Department for Education (DfE) and 'Transport' (led by the Department for Transport (DfT)). The 'Recreation' project aimed to support the adaptation and effective management of recreational activities to minimise Covid-19 transmission, maximise the number of participants where appropriate, and minimise the economic impacts on affected sectors.

- 1.31. Recreation within this context was defined as "indoor or outdoor activities for non-work purposes, excluding the household settings". It had four sub-domains: sport and physical activity; entertainment and creative industries; culture and domestic tourism/hospitality; and youth. BEIS led a separate workstream covering pubs and restaurants. The workstream brought together the department's work internally and within government to support and address the pandemic's impact on those DCMS sectors which are reliant on social activity **[SL/8 INQ000182264]**. It involved regular engagement with representatives of affected sectors at different ministerial and official levels. As part of that engagement, the team discussed and assessed impacts on the relevant sectors, the strategic development of guidance, and as the case for economic support and adaptations in restrictions. Throughout the period from April 2020 to March 2021, DCMS reported weekly to CO via this workstream. It included a senior official-level board, which was also attended by MHCLG and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to ensure that issues related to areas of shared interest could be discussed. Those areas included zoos, a policy area owned by Defra but in which DCMS has an interest both because zoos make up part of the visitor economy and in relation to historic listed zoos.
- 1.32. DCMS did not make decisions concerning non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) or lockdown in March 2020. DCMS provided information and analysis on the probable impact of various NPI options around this time (largely to CO) and attended COBR meetings, as appropriate, including when decisions were being made to move from the 'contain' to 'delay' phase of the response **[SL/9 IN0000182645; SL/10 INQ000182664; SL/11 INQ000182657; SL/12 INQ000182663; SL/13 INQ000182656]**. In some areas, DCMS sought to influence policy development, particularly concerning the need for economic support for its sectors managing with severely constrained activity as a result of NPIs, the issues faced by businesses which

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<sup>10</sup>MHCLG was renamed the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in September 2021 and reverted to MHCLG in July 2024. For consistency, the department is referred to as MHCLG throughout this statement.

were not covered by government financial packages and the issues faced by organisations in securing business insurance to cover for their reduced activities. We also made the case for the key employees within some of our sectors to be included as 'critical workers' (for example, broadcasters and data infrastructure workers).

- 1.33. The pandemic and the unprecedented nature of the interventions that the government put in place highlighted the need for a more detailed understanding of how organisations in our sectors operated. DCMS subsequently built on existing work to strengthen its analytical capability even further during the pandemic, as detailed at paragraphs 1.80-1.85.

#### *Civil Society and Youth*

- 1.34. The CSY directorate was quick to recognise the financial strains that the pandemic would place on the voluntary and community sector, from both increased demand for services and reduced income as charity shops closed and fundraising events were cancelled. This impact led the directorate to pivot its attention to the economic support required by the sector. Subsequently, DCMS worked with His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) to make a £750 million package of support available in April 2020, covered in further detail at Part D.
- 1.35. The CSY directorate established the Civil Society Stakeholder Group at the start of the pandemic to provide the department with insight and perspectives from the sector<sup>11</sup>. This stakeholder group had a number of time-limited, focused subgroups that brought together expertise to provide input across a range of issues including funding, finance, young people and inclusion. During the pandemic, CSY directorate also established a volunteering guidance reference group to ensure guidance on safe and effective volunteering drew on expertise as well as the needs of volunteers involving organisations and the communities they serve. As highlighted above, a significant number of staff from within DCMS and from outside government, namely sector experts, were surged to support the delivery of the pandemic response from April 2020.
- 1.36. DCMS also has a number of frontline policy responsibilities that can be deployed directly in response to a pandemic. Volunteering is one such area, and the civil society sector was impressive in its response, with both voluntary and community organisations and individual citizens showing agility and altruism in providing for the

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<sup>11</sup>One of eight sectoral working groups established in May 2020 to support and work alongside the Cultural Renewal Taskforce (established to help in getting the country's recreation and leisure sector up and running again following the first national lockdown).

changing needs of their neighbours and communities.

- 1.37. Prior to the pandemic, DCMS's work encompassed encouraging and enabling a wider range of pro-social activity (community action, civic engagement, befriending and peer support schemes), often referred to as social action. During the pandemic, DCMS's role largely focused on the coordination of supply and demand for volunteers, helping government departments articulate their needs, and supporting the voluntary and community sector and public sector organisations to work together. This included managing the complexities of an inherently decentralised response mechanism, where volunteering responses were happening at a local level but with central government keen to fully understand the details of community-level responses. The work done by CSY on developing a deeper understanding of its sector and building stronger relationships, including with the VCSEP, will ensure that we can use this policy area even more effectively in the event of a future pandemic. This work continues to develop and to inform the government's understanding of and work with the sector.
- 1.38. DCMS has continued its primary focus on supporting formal volunteering since the pandemic. Much of DCMS's work since 2021 has been focused on creating more volunteering opportunities for people from disadvantaged communities, part of which was motivated by an aim to build on the enthusiasm people showed for volunteering during the pandemic. DCMS has also continued to fund the VCSEP, including because of the agile, collaborative approach the organisation provides for government to engage with the sector during acute crises and in order to build capability. The funding enables the VCSEP to build capability across the VCSE sector to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. For instance, during the unexploded WW2 bomb incident in Plymouth in 2024, the VCSEP represented voluntary and community sector partners on coordination calls chaired by the local emergency services and liaised between them and the VCS partners involved.

### ***Structures and processes***

#### *Senior oversight*

- 1.39. The Secretary of State has final responsibility for all policy decisions. Decisions will be based on advice from officials and some policy responsibilities are devolved to junior ministers (but these areas will differ depending on who the Secretary of State is and priorities across government). Operational structures of DCMS are the responsibility of the Permanent Secretary and need to take into account the policy aims of the Secretary of State to ensure the department can deliver them.

- 1.40. The Permanent Secretary supports the Secretary of State and is accountable to Parliament. The Permanent Secretary is the Accounting Officer for DCMS and responsible for the day-to-day running of the department, including the budget. There are currently two directors general reporting to the Permanent Secretary. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were also two (Director General for Digital and Media Susannah Storey and Director General for Culture, Sport and Civil Society Helen Judge, later replaced by Emma Squire, then jobshares Ruth Hannant and Polly Payne). A third interim director general post was created on 17 March 2020 to support the department's Covid-19 work on volunteering and the charity sector (Director General Scott McPherson). This role was time-limited. In July 2020, a third permanent director general role was introduced as the department continued to expand rapidly in size (Director General for Strategy and Operations Sam Lister). DCMS continued to have three directors general until the machinery of government changes, when it reverted back to two.
- 1.41. DCMS is supported by a Departmental Board (in previous years referred to as the Ministerial Board), which brings together ministerial and civil service leaders with senior non-executives from outside of government. It has an advisory rather than a decision-making role, and provides advice and challenge to DCMS and its ministers on strategic and operational issues. The board is chaired by the Secretary of State.
- 1.42. The Audit and Risk Committee has remained constant throughout the period and reports to and advises the Departmental Board on governance, risk management and control. It provides constructive challenges to DCMS's governance, risk management and financial controls. It also provides assurance of the financial report and accounts.
- 1.43. The Executive Board provides day-to-day leadership of the department, overseeing delivery of ministers' objectives and reviewing budgets across the department. It is chaired by the Permanent Secretary. There are a number of sub-committees that report to the Executive Board on various issues and, over the years, these have grown, fallen away or been merged as circumstances dictate. For example, at the beginning of the 2010-11 financial year there were three sub-committees while at the beginning of 2019-20 there were nine. By 2020-21, this had been stripped back to four sub-committees. An overview of how the governance structure in DCMS has changed from 2010 to 2022 has been submitted to the Inquiry [[SL/14 INQ000102746](#)].
- 1.44. Before the pandemic, in autumn 2019, the Executive Board set out an ambition to improve partnership working with public bodies, with the Partnership Project launching in January 2020.

*Pre-pandemic structures and how they changed*

- 1.45. Due to the pace of the onset of the pandemic and the breadth of its impact, almost every area within DCMS was impacted. In response, the department adapted existing structures and developed new ones, which subsequently evolved over time, depending on the pandemic and the required response. This included surging those officials within the department whose work had stopped or slowed due to the pandemic and related travel restrictions to other parts of the DCMS in order to develop its response. Decision-making structures, in terms of senior officials and decision-making from ministers, stayed largely the same, though sometimes decisions were made through less formal governance channels where these were required to be made at pace.
- 1.46. DCMS consists of a number of policy teams whose work is to engage with and support DCMS's sectors, including sport, tourism, culture and creative industries, media, civil society and youth, and museums. The department also has several cross-cutting and corporate teams, which cover finance, commercial, strategy, analysis and science. All of these teams were impacted or required to respond to the pandemic in some way. The majority of these teams shifted their focus to respond to the pandemic, and many played a significant role in supporting DCMS's economic response.
- 1.47. In January 2020, DCMS's initial coordination and delivery of its pandemic response was led by the tourism team, noting that - as referenced above - DCMS's response was initially focused on concerns related to a drop in tourism from China. Following the development and increase in scale of the pandemic, in March 2020, DCMS's strategy, policy and fiscal events team took the lead on coordinating the department's economic strategy and response. This team had existing relationships and experience in engaging with HMT on fiscal events, so was well placed to pivot to focus on the economic response to Covid-19. The Covid-19 Hub was then established in March 2020 to operate at a more overarching level and to consider the bigger picture of the pandemic response strategy. The Covid-19 Hub provided coordination on cross-cutting issues and a single point of contact for the emerging cross-government response structures. The Hub was quickly followed by the creation of the Economic Response Directorate, also in March 2020, as a focused resource to support DCMS sectors in identifying and addressing the economic challenges arising as a result of Covid-19 and government response to the pandemic. At their crux, these teams all shared the same goal in terms of supporting the needs of DCMS sectors, including economically, and they would work together as needed. These structures are covered in further detail below.

1.48. To further support the response, the department also established the Covid-19 legal hub within DCMS in April 2020 to provide legal advice in response to Covid-19-related queries across all DCMS sectors, including advising on issues relating to legislation and guidance from CO, DHSC, BEIS and DCMS policy colleagues. A new Covid-19 Analytical Hub was also created in November 2020, covered in further detail below.

#### *Finance functions*

1.49. DCMS's cross cutting finance functions were in place prior to the pandemic. This includes the strategic finance team, whose role is to work across the department's policy, corporate and finance communities, to inform senior leaders, the Secretary of State and the Permanent Secretary of DCMS's and wider government's financial position. It also supports wider advice on the policy and operational choices available that might best manage the department's objectives. The team grew in size over the course of the pandemic and the relationship management process with HMT became more formalised.

1.50. The finance function also includes the DCMS finance business partnering (FBP) team, which provides business partnering services to the core department and to sponsor teams of public bodies. They are responsible for supporting budget holders in the core department to manage expenditure within annual budgetary control totals (and for activity and expenditure to be approved of in line with the department's delegation limits) and supporting the department's sponsorship of its public bodies through oversight of income and expenditure of the public bodies (as well as the management of providing funding to public bodies via the grant-in-aid process).

1.51. At the start of the pandemic, the finance team provided a daily update to HMT on issues of financial health affecting the department and our public bodies, to ensure timely sharing of information. During the pandemic, the team tracked the various HMT engagements on finance issues. This included where there were specific requests for additional funding from HMT's Reserve, or where individual requests were made from the department or public bodies that required approval due to the potential novel, repercussive or contentious nature of the issues. DCMS engaged with HMT on issues including:

- a) advance grant-in-aid drawdown for public bodies to support cash flow
- b) relaxation of grant terms where it would support Covid-19-related impacts
- c) use of Channel 4 revolving cash facility

- d) seeking guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) programmes relating to our public bodies
  - e) advising on business cases
  - f) seeking requests for public bodies to utilise unallocated cash reserves for Covid-19 Support
- 1.52. The team also played a key role in ensuring business cases were routinely approved by the department's finance committee. This was the case prior to the pandemic, however, the number of cases increased significantly in the early pandemic period and was sustained throughout. This was a key part of the department's assurance process for the spend incurred on pandemic interventions.
- 1.53. The finance teams also engaged as experts for governance such as the Finance Committee and Executive Board, as well as wider financial assurance and implications advice.
- 1.54. The FBP element of the finance function was structured as such that each directorate had an FBP associated with it. FBPs had a portfolio of directorates with which they would business partner. FBPs worked closely with policy teams to develop schemes to ensure they were well managed and operated in accordance with Managing Public Money and other standards the department is expected to comply with. Across the multiple schemes, FBPs were involved in discussions with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, such as HMT, other government departments, delivery partners (including public bodies), external consultants et cetera.
- 1.55. FBPs also supported policy teams leading on the individual projects through the internal and external assurance processes (for example the HMT Treasury Assurance Process), as well as Accounting Officer assessments where this was deemed appropriate. FBPs also informed briefings for Public Accounts Committee meetings.
- 1.56. For the majority of the DCMS-led funding schemes, FBPs played an important role but the policy team led on the actual interventions. However, the public bodies support funding was predominantly led by the FBP team who had the expertise in setting the principles and delivering the scheme (as it was cross cutting over a number of policy teams). The FBP led the initial engagement and information collection with public bodies, drew up the options for support and obtained approval from DCMS and HMT ministers and officials. The team subsequently worked with policy teams to review the

emerging actual positions of the in-scope public bodies and confirmed final allocations through deputy directors with the delegated authority.

- 1.57. Aside from the major interventions, the finance functions acted as the first port of call for teams where delivery had been impacted from the pandemic and engaging with HMT where we required further advice or agreement to amend existing schemes.

#### *Strategy functions*

- 1.58. As referenced above, DCMS's strategy functions in response to the pandemic comprised the strategy, policy and fiscal events team (SPFE), the Covid-19 Hub and the Economic Response Directorate (ERD). These teams worked together to support the needs of DCMS sectors.
- 1.59. In March 2020, the SPFE team was already set up to deliver the upcoming Spending Review (SR) 2020 that was planned for an indicative date of May or June 2020, ahead of the Autumn Budget 2020. The team consisted of a strategic policy branch working on cross-cutting policy, a devolution and union branch and a fiscal events team delivering on the SR.
- 1.60. While the configuration of this team did not change during the pandemic, there was a shift in focus to Covid-19-related activity, as well as carrying out the key functions of a fiscal events team [SL/15 [INQ000623607](#)]. At the start of the pandemic, the SPFE team was the central coordinating team for all Covid-19-related policy and commissions. The SPFE team had established relationships with HMT and extensive experience in delivering fiscal events such as Budgets, Spring Statements and Spending Reviews. This expertise enabled them to efficiently handle additional Covid-19-related responsibilities like delivering additional funding for DCMS sectors.
- 1.61. The SPFE team provided a cross-cutting coordination function - they fed key information to central cross-cutting DCMS teams on the economic impacts of the lockdowns on DCMS sectors, as well as engaging with the design of HMT and cross-government economic support measures [SL/16 [INQ000652357](#)]. The SPFE team also led coordination of DCMS ministers' engagement with their sectors on Covid-19, working with Private Offices, the Covid-19 Hub and policy teams to organise a programme of roundtables to gather sectors' needs and share government messaging. The SPFE team supported expert policy teams to design, secure and deliver the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), including by leading negotiations with Downing

Street and HMT, and supported the £750 million Covid-19 fund for frontline charities (announced April 2020) [SL/17 [INQ000623631](#); SL/18 [INQ000623615](#)].

- 1.62. When the Covid-19 Hub was established in March 2020 (detailed at paragraphs 1.77-1.79), the Hub team - which consisted of staff across the department who had been surged into the roles - took on the cross-cutting coordination function. SPFE then focused on economic policy and the upcoming SR, and worked closely with the Covid-19 Hub on economic priorities and particularly the crossover between fiscal events and broader Covid-19 economic priorities.
- 1.63. In addition, the Economic Response Directorate was established to support the strategic economic response to the pandemic, as the scale of economic considerations grew beyond the scope of the central team and individual sector teams. As is detailed further below, this team was created through the surging of staff in other areas of the department, as DCMS pivoted to focus on the pandemic response.

#### *Commercial function*

- 1.64. The DCMS commercial team was in existence prior to, during and after the pandemic, with procurement being led by the commercial business partners. Commercial business partners engaged with sector teams to develop a formalised process for procurements over £100,000, in line with Public Contracts Regulations 2015, which also aligned with business needs. Requirements at the time varied across the department but were predominantly professional services and consultancy based.

#### *Economic Response Directorate*

- 1.65. The Economic Response Directorate (ERD) was established in DCMS on 23 March 2020 as the scale of economic considerations grew. The department took rapid and agile action to redistribute dedicated resource to areas of pressure. This included standing down or significantly reducing business-as-usual functions (in this case the Europe and International Directorate (EUI)) and standing up new functions at pace, which involved redeploying 50-60 people at one time. Building on the generalist skillset of DCMS staff made adaptation easier, allowing staff to pivot from international work to domestic crisis work.
- 1.66. The ERD was set up to support DCMS policy teams in identifying and addressing the economic challenges faced by our sectors and specific businesses with significant issues and provided a focal point for our response to economic issues. It also sought to engage with pan-economy measures being led by HMT, working to ensure the

specific characteristics and needs of DCMS sectors were considered by HMT officials. The ERD led on economic response advice and briefing to ministers within DCMS and acted as a single point of contact concerning the economic challenges faced by DCMS sectors for other government departments. The ERD was also the single point of contact for businesses with significant issues, playing a crisis response function when initially set up.

1.67. The ERD sat within the Digital and Media Group and consisted of two deputy director-led teams with the following responsibilities.

1.68. The strategy and coordination team - led by deputy director Chris Heaton:

- a) provided strategic leadership and coordinated the work on the economic issues of Covid-19 impacting DCMS's sectors
- b) situational awareness, including tracking key economic issues and commissions
- c) supported sector team engagement with their stakeholders
- d) led on briefing for parliamentary, ministerial and official level engagements on economic response issues
- e) identified upcoming issues that are likely to arise for DCMS sectors, mapping upcoming milestones

1.69. The economic policy team - led by deputy directors Nick Russell, Euan Macmillan and Duncan Parish:

- a) economic policy development - worked across government to develop policy responses to C-19 economic issues impacting DCMS sectors and ensure the post-Covid-19 business environment supported economic growth in DCMS sectors
- b) economic policy delivery - supported sector teams in helping their stakeholders access and implement government's suite of economic policies in response to Covid-19
- c) rapid response - provided assistance to key individual stakeholders in economic difficulty and identified appropriate measures to support them

1.70. The ERD was responsible for providing briefing for the Secretary of State for meetings

with other government department ministers, including the Chancellor, such as the Economic and Business Response Ministerial Implementation Group (EBRIG). The ERD also provided briefing for and attended the official-level EBRIG meetings. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.

1.71. Discussions on establishing a team to coordinate DCMS's economic response to the pandemic began in March 2020 involving senior civil servants (largely deputy directors) from teams within the corporate strategy directorate [SL/19 INQ000623476]. The drivers for establishing a dedicated ERD were threefold:

- a) the recognition of the scale of the ask in this area - that DCMS sectors would be some of the most impacted by lockdown measures and experience the first wave of economic impact
- b) it could draw on resourcing from the DCMS international team, recognising that international work was going to pause as a result of lockdowns and therefore could surge to urgent Covid-related work - a deputy director-led skeleton international team continued to operate, drawing on 25 to 30% of the original international resource with the remainder surged to ERD
- c) a combination of skills and experience, with Rhys Bowen appointed to head up ERD with experience of working in economic policy in HMT and Emma Squire bringing sectoral knowledge to the role

1.72. A paper setting out details of the proposed structure and purpose of ERD was submitted to the Permanent Secretary on 24 March 2020 [SL/20 INQ000623478]. On 30 March detailed information on the ERD was circulated across DCMS [SL/21 INQ000623482]. This set out the following:

- a) the purpose of the ERD
- b) roles and responsibilities within the directorate including sector team leads/points of specific contact
- c) ways of working with the ERD including:
  - i) a direction for teams to add significant new economic issues affecting their sectors into the appropriate 'trackers'
  - ii) the requirement for teams to notify ERD of any requests/plans for meetings with HMT, BEIS, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

on economic issues, as well as wider discussions with other government departments or other stakeholders

- iii) clearing all advice on economic issues with senior ERD officials before submitting to ministers

- 1.73. Proposed cross-departmental communications were shared with the Executive Board on 25 March which articulated that, where appropriate, the ERD would undertake more detailed policy development and provide a rapid response function to support companies in distress, linking in with other governmental departments as required. This paper set out the senior leadership, responsibilities and key products of ERD and showed a workflow process indicating that sector/policy teams would input into ERD **[SL/22 INQ000623584]**.
- 1.74. Also in March 2020, a cross-government 'explainer' on the ERD was created and shared with other government departments **[SL/23 INQ000623472]**. This document set out the purpose, responsibilities and structure of the ERD, and the operational approach other government departments should take when engaging with DCMS on economic issues relating to the pandemic.
- 1.75. The ERD coordinated conversations on economic response issues with other government departments, particularly HMT, BEIS and DWP, working with the DCMS Covid-19 Hub where appropriate. The aim was to ensure that cross-government conversations were aligned and to inform policy development in a way that reflected DCMS's sector interests **[SL/24 INQ000623581]**. The ERD was represented at director level at the Economic Response Working Group with chairing rotated between HMT, CO and BEIS. These meetings were held weekly at the beginning of the pandemic. DCMS used the Economic Response Working Group to highlight concerns about economic policy proposals and shape the development of economic measures. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.
- 1.76. From 3 April 2020 until late June 2020, the ERD circulated daily updates to sector teams including information on cross-cutting issues, details of cross-government meetings, relevant government announcements, analysis, and emerging issues **[SL/25 INQ000623489; SL/26 INQ000623583]**. In addition, ERD circulated a Covid-19 Economic Response Sector Engagement Bulletin - this was an internal bulletin to DCMS sector teams **[SL/27 INQ000623501; SL/28 INQ000623514; SL/29 INQ000623521]**. The ERD was stood down on 19 July 2020 when the responsibilities transferred back to sector teams and the Covid-19 Hub. Please see a list of these

bulletins contained within the Annex to this statement.

#### *Covid-19 Hub*

- 1.77. The Covid-19 Hub was stood up on 9 March 2020 to provide coordination on cross-cutting issues, including the production of guidance throughout the pandemic. The Covid-19 Hub also played a role in supporting the department's economic response, working with strategy and finance teams. In March 2020, the Hub engaged with HMT for economic interventions to support DCMS sectors and identified the impacts the pandemic was having on these sectors **[SL/30 INQ000658563]**.
- 1.78. The Covid-19 Hub also worked directly with sector teams on some DCMS-led funding packages. For example, the Hub worked with the CSY directorate and the SPFE team to secure the £750 million VCSE package and subsequently to oversee the star chamber bidding process for the £163 million other government department element of the VCSE support package.
- 1.79. The Covid-19 Hub also advocated for the economic impact on DCMS sectors to be considered in the wider pandemic response, including providing evidence of the economic impact on its sectors of the difference between two-metre and one-metre social distancing **[SL/31 INQ000182251]**. The Hub later provided advice to the CO on the economic impact of October 2020 lockdowns and restrictions on DCMS sectors **[SL/32 INQ000623600]**.

#### *Science and analysis*

- 1.80. DCMS has focused in recent years on becoming a more analytically rigorous and data driven department. The establishment of a science advisory function and enhancement of our analytical capability has been a part of this coordinated effort.
- 1.81. The role of Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) in DCMS was introduced in January 2019, with Professor Tom Rodden appointed to the post. Prior to this, DCMS was a significantly smaller department and did not have a dedicated science advisory function, although it established a (now dormant) Science Advisory Council in 2015, which was intended to provide independent advice and met three to four times a year<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup>The DCMS Science Advisory Council (SAC) was established in early 2015, in lieu of appointing a CSA, to ensure the department had access to high level, independent, expert scientific advice. This decision reflected the size and lack of science capability within the department at the time. Professor Tom Rodden was appointed as the inaugural CSA in January 2019. Due to the significant shift in priorities during Covid-19, the SAC was not required to be drawn upon during the course of the pandemic and has since remained dormant while appropriate science advisory structures have been established.

The current DCMS CSA is Professor Tom Crick who was appointed in November 2023 and is the second holder of the role.

- 1.82. The CSA provides scientific and technical leadership within the department, gives direct advice to ministers and officials and oversees the use of research, evidence and external expertise. The CSA's office did not take part in any pandemic planning-related exercises, as these predated the introduction of this role. However, the CSA has taken part, when requested, in other emergency preparedness exercises conducted by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the Government Office for Science (GO-Science).
- 1.83. DCMS also used its long-standing analysis team, made up of economists, operational researchers, statisticians, social researchers and data scientists. Since 2018 DCMS has operated a 'hub and spoke' model for its analysis function: the central analysis team acts as a central hub with various 'spoke' analysis teams embedded within policy directorates in DCMS. This model allows the central analysis team and spoke analysis teams to work closely with DCMS policy officials to ensure that evidence is at the heart of DCMS's policy making process, including by assessing policy options, ensuring expected impacts and outcomes are clearly articulated, and using monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate impact, adjust policies during development and learn lessons for future policies. In order to give leadership and direction to the work of the analysis teams, the department has established two oversight mechanisms: the DCMS analytical leadership team, which was established in May 2018, and the DCMS Evidence and Analysis Board, which was established in early March 2020 and dissolved in June 2023.
- 1.84. However, the unprecedented nature of the interventions that the government put in place demanded a much more detailed understanding of how organisations in our sectors operated. We found we needed a better understanding of the lived experiences of people and organisations in our sectors so that we could make sure policy was designed to meet their specific needs.
- 1.85. Subsequently, DCMS grew our analytical capabilities in order to develop deeper insights, but also had to extract more data from our sectors on which that analysis could focus. We formally centralised resources to create the Covid-19 Analytical Hub in November 2020 and, as part of DCMS's transformation programme, we also established the stand-alone Analysis Directorate and appointed its first director in August 2021, further strengthening the department's analytical foundations. The CSA's office and central analysis team work closely together to increase access to research

and evidence and to embed the use of science and evidence in the culture of the department.

- 1.86. Our department's CSA works with other departmental CSAs, led by the Government Chief Scientific Adviser in GO-Science, to ensure a joined up approach to key government policies. We have continued to build on this, and in 2022, created DCMS's College of Experts made up of external specialists from across academia and industry to provide independent expertise and support to the department and supplement our existing relationships with experts. The College acts as a source of scientific and technical input, focusing on providing evidence and research knowledge to inform policy developed by DCMS. This is done largely through roundtables and workshops, providing ad hoc advice and document critique, and facilitating wider engagement through access to their extended networks. Membership of the College was expanded in 2025.

#### ***Sector teams***

- 1.87. During the pandemic, sector teams continued to engage with their stakeholders, and were encouraged to record these interactions with ERD and an economic response stakeholder engagement team in a tracker document [**SL/33 INQ000623485**]. The strategy functions also worked with sector teams to obtain information and intelligence from their sector entities as new funding packages became available. This information would feed into updates for DCMS ministers and submissions eventually intended for HMT where funding gaps or oversights became known [**SL/34 INQ000623518**; **SL/35 INQ000623519**; **SL/36 INQ000623580**].
- 1.88. Strategy teams sent out daily updates to sector teams including cross-cutting issues, cross-government meetings, announcements, analysis, and emerging issues. These daily updates commenced on 3 April 2020 and were sent until late June 2020 [**SL/25 INQ000623489**].
- 1.89. Many directorates also established their own Covid-19 points of contact to assist with commissions and disseminating information/updates from the centre. For example, sector teams within the media and creative industries directorate had points of contact which would feed into cross-cutting teams in DCMS. Similarly, many teams also established Covid-19 mailboxes to triage requests and information.
- 1.90. As above, DCMS built on existing relationships, formalising engagement, increasing regularity and broadening the remit of relationships and fora where needed, including

establishing the Cultural Renewal Taskforce (one of five cross-government ministerial-led taskforces set up to provide expert advice on issues of how closed sectors might be supported and reopened safely).

### *Civil Society and Youth*

- 1.91. As detailed at paragraphs 1.34-1.38, prior to the pandemic the CSY directorate already had an established practice of regular civil society stakeholder engagement, including regular meetings between CSY directorate officials and civil society stakeholders, as well as ministers meeting stakeholders individually and hosting roundtable discussions.
- 1.92. As part of the CSY directorate's regular communication with the sector before the pandemic, it distributed a newsletter which contained major announcements from the directorate, especially the launch of new programmes. During the pandemic, this newsletter continued and its content was expanded to include funding opportunities, guidance for people volunteering and relevant announcements from other government departments and public bodies, such as NHS England [[SL/37 INQ000623545](#)]. The latter announcements included information about programmes such as NHS Volunteer Responders.
- 1.93. Given the increased focus on civil society - especially volunteering - during the government's response to the pandemic, the CSY directorate received significant surged support from other teams in DCMS to meet the initial demands of responding to the pandemic. The number of staff was increased at all grades, including at director level. Staff were surged into pandemic-focused roles to support the delivery of the VCSE funding package and volunteering policy and to ensure there was adequate cover for staff sickness (due to Covid-19). This marked a new juncture in the structure of the directorate. Previously, the directorate had been divided into three deputy director-led teams focusing on specific areas: youth and social action (which included the tackling loneliness team); sector support; and the impact economy team.
- 1.94. In March 2020, a new, deputy director-led pandemic-related volunteering team was stood up to take ownership of volunteering as part of the wider response work, including delivery of CO's 'volunteering delivery plan', which coordinated volunteering-related activities across government. This consisted of surged CSY staff, especially from the social action team, and seconded staff from the voluntary sector embedded within the CSY directorate, both to provide expertise on the response. The seconded staff were brought in from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations, in

particular.

- 1.95. When developing the £750 million VCSE package, DCMS recognised the need for additional expertise to manage a fund of such a large size and procured the services of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to establish new project oversight structures<sup>13</sup>. PwC led work such as gathering data about how funding was being used, how information was managed, and supporting the independent evaluators to assess the efficacy of the VCSE funding package. This contract ran from June 2020 until 30 June 2021. Further detail is at Part D.

#### *Media and Creative Industries*

- 1.96. The DCMS media and creative industries policy teams had established relationships with sector stakeholders before the pandemic. In response to the pandemic, various working groups were set up to respond to sector issues. For example, the Broadcasting Roundtable was set up in March 2020, chaired by the Minister of State for Media and Data (John Whittingdale) and the Director for Media and Creative Industries (Robert Specterman-Green). These roundtables brought together the key players in the TV and radio broadcasting space - the public service broadcasters, Sky, COBA, Ofcom, Global, Bauer, Radiocentre, ITN, and Local TV. This forum was used to communicate key policy updates, including coverage of the three major blockers to the return of production - guidance on health and safety, travel restrictions and insurance - as well as seeking latest intel from industry on the impacts of Covid-19 and any restrictions. The roundtable initially met fortnightly and moved to monthly towards the end of 2020, and then met quarterly from June 2021. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.
- 1.97. The Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group was also set up in May 2020 and chaired by the Minister of State for Media and Data (John Whittingdale) and the Director for Media and Creative Industries (Robert Specterman-Green). It met weekly between May and July 2020 before moving to monthly between September and December 2020. It was attended by key players in broadcasting and film/TV, music, video games and audio production including: The British Film Institute (BFI), BBC, PACT, Netflix, Pinewood, Audio UK, Music Producers Guild, Advertising Producers Association. The group's output was oversight of the development of the following guidance: film and high-end TV production, TV production, music production and advertising production. These were delivered with input from DCMS, apart from

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<sup>13</sup>PwC is a multinational professional services network and one of the "big four" accounting firms

advertising production guidance, which was published but without agreed input from DCMS. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.

- 1.98. The Entertainment and Events Working Group was chaired by the Minister for Digital and Culture (Caroline Dinenage) and included representatives from theatres, music, venues, festivals and cinema sectors<sup>14</sup>. It provided a forum to discuss issues related to Covid-19 including practical measures to support the reopening of these venues and activities, with risk mitigations in place. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.

### *Tourism*

- 1.99. In support of the pandemic response, the visitor economy team surged in staff from another DCMS team and from the British Tourist Authority. Staff on the visitor economy team pivoted to reactive responses, including increased stakeholder engagement, sourcing data, analysis and preparation of several SR bids.
- 1.100. The DCMS tourism policy team used the existing Tourism Industry Council stakeholder engagement group, as well as VisitBritain's engagement group, to understand the impact of the pandemic on businesses in the tourism and wider visitor economy sectors<sup>15</sup>. The frequency of Council meetings was increased from quarterly pre-pandemic to weekly in April 2020. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.
- 1.101. From 13 May 2020, the Visitor Economy Working Group was formed, sitting beneath the Cultural Renewal Task Force, comprising all members of the Tourism Industry Council and five additional members. In November 2020, Visitor Economy Working Group meetings ceased and Tourism Industry Council meetings resumed at monthly intervals. Please see a list of these meetings contained within the Annex to this statement.
- 1.102. The Tourism Industry Council was co-chaired by the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston) and Simon Vincent, Hilton's executive vice president and president, Europe, Middle East and Africa and comprised members drawn from the accommodation, attraction, tour operator, events and local government

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<sup>14</sup>Membership of Taskforce working groups was published on Gov.uk.

<sup>15</sup>VisitBritain (VB) is the national tourism agency, responsible for marketing Britain worldwide and developing Britain's visitor economy. The Tourism Industry Council is a collaboration between government and the tourism industry focusing on improving the tourism sector and the visitor economy as a whole.

sectors with representatives of large business, small business and industry bodies. Observers from the devolved administrations joined.

- 1.103. The Visitor Economy Working Group was chaired by the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston) and the acting Deputy Director for Tourism<sup>16</sup>. The Tourism Industry Council and Visitor Economy Working Group provided a channel of communications out to industry stakeholders with the content of meetings being dispersed by members, as well as a route for feedback into DCMS. The group was a forum to share updates from other taskforces and working groups which overlapped with tourism, (for example, the Pubs and Restaurant and International Aviation Taskforces). Discussions with particular parts of the sector, (such as events and entertainment), took place in addition to those meetings. The Visitor Economy Working Group in particular was tasked with reviewing and collating guidance documents written by sector bodies.

#### *Digital and Tech Policy Teams*

- 1.104. The Digital and Tech Policy Directorate had established relationships with tech sector stakeholders before the pandemic. In response to the pandemic, the Directorate pivoted towards Covid-19 response in March 2020. Officials were surged from digital and tech policy business as usual priorities on 18 March to establish a new team to triage sector offers of support from DCMS sectors, consider the long term role of technology in the recovery and to understand the tech sector's experience of the pandemic. This team reviewed offers across the digital and tech, media, telecoms, tourism, sport, arts and heritage sectors. These included offers of devices, digital skills training and free deliveries. These were then matched to wider government requests for support, feeding into the wider CO coordination process. Some individuals were also surged to support NHSX.
- 1.105. The directorate also took forward work on the tech sector's role in the recovery, including work to develop the UK's long term Digital Strategy. The outcome of this work was published in 2022.

#### *Engagement with sectors*

- 1.106. DCMS has always maintained close relationships with its various sectors, via our many public bodies, representative groups and individual organisations, and therefore had

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<sup>16</sup>The Acting Deputy Director continued to chair the Visitor Economy Working Group, in their capacity as Head of Tourism, once a permanent Deputy Director for Tourism was appointed.

significant expertise and experience in engaging with stakeholders. The pandemic required that we further deepen these relationships, and at pace.

- 1.107. We built on existing relationships, formalising engagement, increasing regularity and broadening the remit of relationships and fora where needed. As part of this, in May 2020, we established the Cultural Renewal Taskforce, bringing together representatives from the culture, arts, creative industries, sport, tourism, media, technology, recreation and leisure sectors as well as medical advisers. The aim of the taskforce was to support the restarting of impacted sectors, helping them prepare to reopen and work safely with Covid-19. A number of other government departments and public bodies, including Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), joined meetings of the Cultural Renewal Taskforce, providing an opportunity to ensure a joined-up approach.
- 1.108. The Cultural Renewal Taskforce was supported by eight working groups which were chaired by DCMS ministers and included representatives from around 150 key sector bodies and organisations focused on broadcasting, film and production, entertainment and events, heritage, library services, museums and galleries, sport, the visitor economy and youth services. The working groups' aims were to allow sector specialists and other experts to help develop, disseminate and implement guidance, as well as identify and resolve practical, sector-specific issues related to guidance. The groups also discussed actions and updates arising from the Cultural Renewal Taskforce.
- 1.109. Both the taskforce and the working groups allowed us to bring our sectors more fully into conversations and access valuable evidence and opinions to inform our engagement with policy decisions across government.
- 1.110. As referenced above, in autumn 2019, the Executive Board set out an ambition to improve partnership working with public bodies. The overall goals of the Partnership Project remained consistent through the pandemic, but they were refined, and timeframes redesigned, so that the pandemic response could be a focus.
- 1.111. The Prime Minister announced several NPIs on 16 March 2020. The advice to stay at home had a significant impact on DCMS sectors, many of which rely on close social contact - such as the culture, creative industries, sport, tourism and volunteering sectors. Comprehensive engagement structures were put in place to ensure dissemination of central government information, such as that relating to NPIs, and to hear from our public bodies as they navigated the required changes. DCMS started

daily calls between ministers and key stakeholder organisations from across our sectors. The department also engaged regularly with its public bodies, a number of which rely on commercial revenue streams to fund their business (including national museums and heritage sites). Weekly calls with relationship managers within DCMS for each public body (referred to as "sponsors") and representatives of these public bodies were set up to provide advice and escalate problems and to ensure that information was being shared. Quarterly update calls with the Permanent Secretary were instigated; and additional ad hoc meetings were convened around key points and following government announcements.

- 1.112. The department was also involved in the collective agreement process through the 'Covid O' (operations) and 'Covid S' (strategy) Cabinet sub-committees (the main meeting structures through which collective cross-government ministerial decisions on the Covid-19 response were made from summer 2020) and the various ministerial implementation groups that preceded it.
- 1.113. DCMS continued to build on the engagement model of this period. Functional directors and senior sponsors met their public body counterparts on a monthly basis; sponsors met regularly with their working level contacts and the Permanent Secretary continued to meet with chairs and chief executives on a quarterly basis.
- 1.114. The pandemic showed the importance of clear communications channels, with DCMS taking an active role in ensuring that our public bodies were fully up-to-date with government messaging and offering guidance where needed. This led to stronger relationships and added value during the pandemic. Changes in how we worked together have been made across the organisation - with the sponsors deepening their relationships which made us stronger in responding collectively to challenges which arise, such as the impact of the energy crisis across our sectors. Our public bodies and the issues that impact them are better understood across the whole of DCMS, rather than just in individual sponsor teams.
- 1.115. The combination of existing DCMS teams pivoting to focus on the pandemic alongside the establishment of new teams specifically to focus on the Covid-19 response, including the economic response, ensured that DCMS had sufficient capacity, expertise and experience to meet its additional roles and responsibilities as a result of the pandemic. As detailed above, this was underpinned by an increasingly analytical approach and support from cross-cutting finance and corporate teams, as well as extensive experience and established mechanisms through which to engage with its sectors and cross-government stakeholders, including HMT.

***What worked well and challenges resulting from adaptation to new responsibilities***

- 1.116. The pandemic reinforced the importance of our focus on becoming a more analytically focused and data driven department. We found that for some sectors, data was not sufficiently accessible for the hugely complex and fast-paced discussions happening across government. Covid-19 analysis, such as considering the pandemic's impact on DCMS sectors, became one of the biggest demands on our analysts and, in response, we formally centralised resources to create the Covid-19 Analytical Hub, led by a deputy director, in November 2020. This made it easier to rapidly resource and undertake cross-cutting analysis in support of the complex policy work being done across the department.
- 1.117. DCMS regularly reviewed its approach at both an individual sector and policy team level, and for the department as a whole on how to improve functions and responsiveness and resilience to future emergencies. The majority of these reviews were undertaken while the pandemic was ongoing, reflecting our desire to learn and develop our response in 'real time'.
- 1.118. Reviews recognised that DCMS showed a nimbleness and flexibility in confronting such a large challenge and changing its organisation and some processes radically. They also highlighted lessons to enhance our response to a future pandemic or emergency scenario. Lessons are covered further at Part I.
- 1.119. The pandemic underscored the wider cultural and social benefits of DCMS, including a recognition of the huge economic impact of the department, especially as many of DCMS's sectors were very vulnerable to the shocks of Covid-19 and were on the front line of industries affected by early shutdowns. An example of this is the impact on employment in the tourism sector, both nationally and regionally. It emphasised to the department itself and wider government the economic value of the sectors DCMS is responsible for and its regional impact. The department's strategy teams were responsible for collecting data analysing these impacts on sectors to incredibly tight deadlines.
- 1.120. Overarchingly, the department had the leadership in place to flex to a) home working and b) delivering crisis response. This involved adapting to new ways of working, within new teams and structures, while also undertaking crisis response. This was important as it meant significant areas of business as usual activity were largely paused with the department performing a completely new function while also shifting wholesale how it

worked. This pivoting of existing teams and the creation of new teams demonstrates the department taking decisive action and working in an agile way early on. Building on the generalist skillset of DCMS staff made adaptation easier, allowing staff to pivot from international work to domestic crisis work. Working in this flexible way meant that officials were able to pivot effectively in order to prioritise critical Covid-19-related tasks, including those related to the economic response.

- 1.121. There was a recognition that DCMS had a broad remit in terms of scale and scope of the impact of economic policies on departmental stakeholders and sectors, but also in terms of the volume of stakeholders. This posed a challenge in terms of communicating and engaging with such a large number of businesses, including small and medium enterprises in particular which were numerous, especially as existing communications channels were relied upon in the initial response. The impact of economic policies varied from ensuring community theatres remained viable to ensuring telecoms infrastructure remained secure. Alongside the department's broad remit, there was a related challenge of ensuring the strategy teams were bringing the right issues to the Secretary of State's attention to ensure that priority issues were being managed.
- 1.122. With regards to flexible home working, the pandemic also demonstrated the department was able to respond flexibly to changing working requirements and had the IT infrastructure in place to support that. Prior to the pandemic, the department had limited home working but was able to adapt to substantive working from home structures almost overnight, providing the department with permanent remote working at scale.
- 1.123. There was a challenge around DCMS being alive to the impact of the pandemic on niche policy/sectoral areas under the department's remit and capturing these during the policy design and implementation process. An example of this was ensuring telecoms engineers were captured in the key workers lists and understanding the impact on areas like soft play.

## **Part B: Cooperation & joint working in the design and delivery of economic support**

### **Working with other government departments**

2.1. The schemes set out in the Module 9 outline scope are:

- a) support for business, jobs and the self-employed, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, loan schemes, business rates relief and grants

- b) additional funding for relevant public services
- c) additional funding for the voluntary and community sector
- d) benefits and sick pay and support for vulnerable people

- 2.2. Part C of this statement sets out DCMS's role and responsibilities in relation to these areas of support and specific economic interventions, including the ways in which we worked with other government departments on the economic response, primarily HMT. Part C also details funding schemes which DCMS worked on alongside other government departments, such as MHCLG on the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.
- 2.3. DCMS's role in the pan-economy measures was one of co-designer alongside HMT, CO and other government departments. DCMS, via its strategy function, including the ERD, sought to engage with pan-economy measures being led by the Treasury, working to refine these to ensure the specific characteristics and needs of DCMS sectors were considered by HMT officials. The strategy teams coordinated conversations on economic response issues with other government departments (particularly HMT, BEIS and DWP), working with the DCMS Covid-19 Hub where appropriate. The aim was to ensure that cross-government conversations were aligned and to inform policy development in a way that reflected DCMS's interests [**SL/24 INQ000623581**].
- 2.4. DCMS engaged with HMT regularly early on in the pandemic through weekly director-level calls to discuss policy development. There was also a regular deputy director-level call twice weekly to streamline conversations with HMT, prioritise key issues, understand HMT policy thinking and assess the likelihood of success for DCMS interventions [**SL/38 INQ000623586**]. The strategy function was also represented at director level at the Economic Response Working Group with chairing rotated between HMT, CO and BEIS. These meetings were roughly held weekly at the beginning of the pandemic. DCMS used the Economic Response Working Group as a vehicle to highlight concerns about economic policy proposals and shape the development of economic measures. The strategy teams' relationship with HMT was a productive one, with official level calls taking place regularly between DCMS and HMT, and ad-hoc meetings held as necessary [**SL/39 INQ000623587**]. HMT was easy to access, responsive to requests for information or meetings and receptive to DCMS's input, welcoming what was provided to build evidence for interventions, regardless of their outcome.

- 2.5. DCMS's engagement with other government departments during the pandemic was effective and benefited from this regular engagement, such as through the Economic Response Working Group. The department did not encounter any specific challenges in this engagement.
- 2.6. DCMS did not have a decision-making role in relation to the pan-economy measures and other financial packages led by HMT but took a co-designing role, shaping the development and refinement of measures through the provision of sectoral insight and data.
- 2.7. DCMS's relationship with HMT specifically is covered at paragraphs 3.77-3.86.

### **Working with the devolved administrations**

- 2.8. Many of the DCMS policy areas most affected by the pandemic are devolved and therefore the department did not regularly need to work with the devolved administrations. We maintained open communications to discuss our Covid-19 initiatives and guidance with the devolved administrations, but did not work directly with them on policy development. As such, the devolved administrations were not generally involved with the department's funding packages, For example, funding support for libraries was England only.
- 2.9. There were some DCMS-led schemes that impacted or included the devolved administrations. For example, the Film and TV Restart Scheme which was established as a UK-wide intervention. Devolved administrations were kept informed of scheme extension and closure plans. Requests for data on uptake of the scheme by the devolved administrations led to DCMS publishing a monthly data pack with further details of scheme uptake across the UK for transparency purposes. Similarly, while civil society and youth services are devolved policy matters, the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector £750 million funding package did include £60 million for the devolved nations. This was allocated directly to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland via the Barnett formula, directly from HMT to the devolved administrations, not via DCMS. DCMS has no oversight of how this funding was spent.
- 2.10. Sport is devolved and therefore the devolved administrations were responsible for their own funding packages, they were not involved in the design or delivery of England's Sport Survival Package. Scotland announced a £55 million package in December 2020 **[SL/40 INQ000623624]** and Wales launched a £17.7 million Spectator Sports Survival Fund in January 2021 **[SL/41 INQ000623623]**. The DCMS sports team did hold weekly

officials meetings with devolved administration policy counterparts which provided a useful forum to exchange updates on likely approaches to economic support, to attempt (where appropriate) to lead to comparable programmes of intervention nationwide. However, ultimately devolution dictated levels of support. DCMS does not consider that this led to any challenges in terms of the economic response.

- 2.11. Cross-cutting finance and strategy teams did give consideration to the impacts of the pandemic and the required engagement with the devolved administrations. The ERD drafted a note on 1 May 2020 updating on the economic issues impacting DCMS sectors in the devolved administrations, as well as an overview of how sector teams were engaging devolved administration counterparts on the economic response to Covid-19 [SL/42 [INQ000623589](#)]. This note included annexes showing an overview of Covid-19 devolved administration economic impacts and engagements based on returns from sector teams.
- 2.12. The note also identified that many DCMS sector teams were undertaking weekly working level calls with counterparts in the devolved administrations to understand emerging issues and funding arrangements [SL/42 [INQ000623589](#)]. It flagged that levels of engagement between the devolved administrations and DCMS sector teams varied across the department but assessed that this was proportionate considering the impacts across the Union were similar and greater engagement was occurring with the administrations in devolved sectors which were experiencing more severe impacts, for example in tourism. While inbound tourism to the UK is not devolved, meaning international travel is still the responsibility of the UK Government, there is nevertheless an economic impact on devolved administrations if borders are closed.
- 2.13. The note also considered how the cross-cutting strategy functions engaged with the devolved administrations. For example, it recommended that the Covid-19 Hub was best placed to be the central lead in the department responsible for monitoring the devolved administrations' wider approach to Covid-19, with the ERD supporting the economic aspects, the CSY directorate supporting the social aspects and the devolution team helping with coordination and guidance. This was agreed to by ERD directors.
- 2.14. The strategy function also had a devolution team which supported teams on how to engage with the devolved administrations, but did not engage with them on economic matters themselves [SL/42 [INQ000623589](#)]. Where policy teams engaged the devolved administrations, strategy teams provided support or contacts where needed, for example by helping link policy teams with Territorial Offices.

2.15. Given the fairly limited engagement with the devolved administrations relating to the economic response, there are not particularly notable examples of successful relationships between DCMS and the devolved administrations. However, as set out above, there were clear routes through which communication could effectively take place. DCMS did not experience challenges relating to the economic response in working with the devolved administrations. Challenges regarding devolution were primarily operational, for example, the application of Covid-19 regulations across the administrations, specifically in border towns.

#### **Use of informal means of communication**

2.16. DCMS use of non-corporate communication channels such as WhatsApp was very limited and did not extend to making policy or funding decisions. There were a small number of WhatsApp groups which included some senior officials and ministers. This was to facilitate speed of round-the-clock communication and maintain open lines of communication when not physically co-located and for logistical purposes. Policy and economic decisions were not taken through these interactions.

2.17. During the pandemic, there was not a specific policy in place for DCMS officials regarding non-corporate communication channels. However, all civil servants are bound by the Civil Service Code and must also follow guidance on 'Using cloud tools securely' published on Gov.uk **[SL/43 INQ000623610]**.

2.18. In August and September 2020, the Permanent Secretary, Director General for Strategy and Operations and the Information Governance considered the risks of WhatsApp being available on DCMS mobile devices and whether, as DCMS moved to a new technology platform to manage all mobile devices, WhatsApp should not be provided or should be assessed before being provided. After receiving advice on the matter, the Permanent Secretary and Director General took the decision in September 2020 for WhatsApp to continue to be made available on DCMS mobile devices **[SL/44 INQ000623634]; [SL/45 INQ000623547]**.

2.19. The drafting of Collaboration Tools Guidance was undertaken to support staff with the general use of collaboration tools, noting that it may be revised over time to create more tool specific guidance. The Use of Collaboration Tools information management guide was first published via the Knowledge Hub in February 2021 **[SL/46 INQ000623645]**. This guidance read in part:

- a) collaboration tools including those provisioned on DCMS devices or cloud-based (SaaS) tools can enable collaborative working across a range of disciplines - however, unless explicitly stated in policy, these collaboration tools are not considered to be official DCMS corporate repositories and therefore staff must adhere to the below guidance when using these tools to support their work
- b) officials must follow the DCMS document security principles **[SL/47 INQ000623642]**
- c) use the tool securely and protect the data held within it
- d) use collaboration tools in line with other departmental policies, including the DCMS IT Acceptable Use Policy and Security Handbook **[SL/48 INQ000623635; SL/49 INQ000623639]**
- e) exhibit behaviours that adhere to the Civil Service Code; do not use defamatory or abusive language or act in any way that may cause distress to an individual or reputational damage to the department
- f) support the department to continue to meet its obligations under the Data Protection Act, Public Records Act and Freedom of Information Act

***Post-pandemic***

- 2.20. WhatsApp was specifically noted as a potential source of information in scope of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry within the preservation order, published 28 June 2022, via the Knowledge Hub. This was highlighted to senior civil servants in July 2022's Information Asset Owner newsletter **[SL/50 INQ000623627]**.
- 2.21. In July 2023, the Permanent Secretary wrote to the senior leadership team that was in place during the pandemic as well as key officials in policy areas at the time, providing guidance on the remit of the Covid-19 Inquiry and asking that, if they hold material that is potentially relevant to the Inquiry, including material which has been communicated via a non-corporate communication channel, they retain it.

**Part C: Economic Policy**

**DCMS's roles and responsibilities**

- 3.1. As DCMS sectors faced closures and other restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, securing financial support was a key way for the department to support its sectors.

Pan-economy measures - meaning those which were applicable and accessible across different sectors and geographies, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) - were led by HMT. DCMS provided feedback and analysis to CO and HMT on how the measures were supporting DCMS sectors to help co-design and refine effective policy responses.

- 3.2. This work was primarily taken forward by the department's strategy function, which was active in engaging with, co-designing and refining pan-economy measures as they applied to DCMS sectors, particularly when feedback was passed on from stakeholders as to their experience in interacting with these measures, for instance when they were unable to access loans or grants. The strategy teams would ensure that ministers were engaged in the thinking on pan-economy measures and the department's approach to engaging HMT [SL/51 [INQ000623564](#)]. They would also inform DCMS ministers of the latest pan-economy schemes and alert them to any issues raised by DCMS sectors [SL/52 [INQ000652351](#)].
- 3.3. For example, DCMS's analysis contributed to the design of a large fiscal package announced by the Chancellor on 26 March 2020 [SL/53 [INQ000623632](#)]. This included a range of economic interventions, such as furlough payments for workers, £300 billion of loans and guarantees and the launch of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.
- 3.4. In autumn-winter 2020, DCMS held discussions with HMT on a government-backed events insurance scheme and in January 2021 coordinated sectorial input into a submission to HMT on the feasibility of such a scheme [SL/54 [INQ000623562](#)]
- 3.5. However, DCMS did not have a role in delivering the pan-economy measures, such as loans schemes for businesses. DCMS's role was to contribute to the design of economic policy measures early in their development and then reflect the impact of any such schemes on its sectors back to the scheme creators, namely HMT and CO. DCMS would raise any issues its sectors had in accessing the schemes in practice, or where its sectors were unable to benefit.

#### ***DCMS engagement with pan-economy interventions***

- 3.6. The below sets out a summary of DCMS's engagement with the pan-economy schemes and provides illustrative examples of the sorts of issues that were being raised by DCMS sectors and stakeholders and which the department would subsequently relay to HMT. The decisions regarding the design and delivery of the

pan-economy schemes were then taken by HMT.

- 3.7. As covered at paragraphs 1.106-1.107, DCMS had existing effective relationships and engagement mechanisms with its stakeholders prior to Covid-19. The department further strengthened these relationships during the pandemic, for example, through the Cultural Renewal Taskforce and increased frequency of engagement with stakeholders, including at ministerial level. It was through these established engagement mechanisms and a regular rhythm of engagement, as well as newly convened meetings and roundtables, that DCMS sector teams sought the views of its stakeholders on the economic interventions covered below.

***Feedback and analysis***

- 3.8. As detailed above, DCMS's strategy functions working on the economic response comprised the SPFE team, Covid-19 Hub and the ERD. The strategy teams supported DCMS policy teams in identifying and addressing the economic challenges faced by our sectors and provided a focal point for our response to economic issues.
- 3.9. They also worked with sector teams to gather information and intelligence from their sectors as new funding packages came online. This information would feed into updates for DCMS ministers and submissions eventually intended for HMT where specific funding gaps or oversights affecting particular DCMS-related organisations were identified [[SL/34 INQ000623518](#); [SL/35 INQ000623519](#)].
- 3.10. Designated 'sector lead' desk officers within the ERD aspect of the strategy function engaged regularly with sector teams to gather intelligence and identify specific funding gaps in particular sectors in order to provide relevant submissions and proposals for HMT [[SL/55 INQ000623516](#); [SL/56 INQ000652358](#)]. These desk officers were also available to provide advice to sector teams, particularly in relation to working with HMT [[SL/57 INQ000659789](#)].
- 3.11. The strategy teams jointly managed the relationship with HMT's spending team. DCMS would have calls with the HMT spending team on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings to flag urgent issues for HMT attention and to give feedback from DCMS stakeholders (for example regarding businesses in distress or problems accessing business support) [[SL/58 INQ000623492](#)]. The department also had a process for escalating those companies facing immediate difficulties through HMT's Project Birch programme. DCMS also used the calls to receive feedback from HMT about what information they needed in order to put advice to the Chancellor, which enabled DCMS

to influence HMT Covid-19 policy changes in support of DCMS stakeholders.

- 3.12. Additionally, there was also a weekly call between DCMS and HMT at director level and regular conversations at director general level as needs arose.
- 3.13. The regular engagement with HMT bolstered trust and rapid communication between the two departments. DCMS would also engage with HMT using a tracker which highlighted the top 15 or so concerns within the department in order of priority and would specify what kind of a response DCMS required from HMT, for example, whether that was to feed information into their central teams working on the economic packages or to push for sector-specific support as in the volunteering package.
- 3.14. The strategy teams communicated feedback and analysis through mechanisms such as the Covid-19 Executive Board by submitting papers that outlined risk assessments for DCMS sectors. An example is the paper which set out the ERD and central analysis team's engagement across DCMS, with other government departments and sector stakeholders to understand and evaluate the impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors. The evidence base underpinning this paper was developed through mapping analysis and information gathered through sector teams and cross government engagement against CO scenarios [SL/59 [INQ000623588](#)]. This mechanism of feedback and analysis via the ERD was in place until summer 2020 when the ERD was stood down. Thereafter, feedback and analysis was fed back via sector teams into CO and HMT or via the DCMS Covid-19 Hub.

#### ***Use of data and statistics***

- 3.15. Data and evidence were core to understanding impacts, formulating a policy response and providing advice to DCMS governance, ministers, and other government departments. Structures evolved throughout the pandemic but in general DCMS uses a central analysis team and operates a 'hub and spoke' model for its analysis function. Embedded analysts in policy directorates (the 'spokes') provided data and evidence to their policy teams and central analytical teams (the 'hub') provided data and evidence to support the strategy teams, drawing on spoke team analysis where necessary.
- 3.16. During February to March 2020, analysis and advice on the potential impacts and mitigations for a Covid-19 outbreak were delivered by policy directorates, with increasing central oversight and support as risks and impacts escalated. After initially focusing on the impacts for tourism it moved on to consider the impacts on workforce and participation of widespread illness. This largely involved rapidly compiling existing

data and building bespoke models to estimate impacts, rather than developing new data sources. As it became more likely that a large-scale outbreak was imminent, the focus became understanding the impacts on DCMS sectors of banning large gatherings [SL/60 [INQ000623599](#)]. From November 2020 we also created a separate Covid-19 Analytical Hub (distinct from the central analysis team) to lead on Covid-19 analysis, coordinating with the spoke teams as necessary.

- 3.17. Primarily, the data and evidence which DCMS based its feedback and analysis on, which it then provided to HMT, was drawn from engagement with the sector and stakeholders. Through the structures detailed above, sector teams engaged with stakeholders to understand the impact the pandemic was having, including in relation to funding. DCMS would gather these views, on both pan-economy measures and sector specific challenges (for example the impact on conferences, business events and trade shows) and feed it into the strategy teams and to ministers to be relayed to HMT as required.
- 3.18. DCMS central teams would commission data on DCMS sectors which would then be used as an evidence base to make decisions. Regular reporting provided the HMT with data points on the sector, the impact the pandemic had, how many businesses/organisations had filed for insolvency as well as intel from sector bodies [SL/61 [INQ000652065](#)].
- 3.19. Typically, any submission to ministers on Covid-19 impacts or mitigations would include a summary of the relevant data and often a more detailed analytical annex to set out how impacts had been estimated or modelled. Similarly, responses to cross government commissions, such as those from CO or BEIS, would often be underpinned by the relevant data and evidence we held. Papers for internal DCMS governance boards would also usually contain a summary of the latest data and evidence and on occasion would discuss our approach to analysis and estimating impact too [SL/59 [INQ000623588](#)].
- 3.20. The analysis hub led on various pieces of analysis and modelling to understand impacts and inform decisions, including:
  - a) economic shock modelling as a result of the closures of DCMS sectors
  - b) modelling on the reopening of DCMS sectors
  - c) modelling on options to partially reopen DCMS sectors during the 'roadmap to reopening', and the economic implications of these options

- 3.21. This included using timely data sources to understand the fall in economic activity from initial lockdowns and other measures to understand the impacts of future lockdowns and staged re-opening, undertaking financial resilience analysis using Companies House and FAME data to understand potential failures of businesses and organisations in DCMS sectors, and primary data collection (largely surveys) of businesses to understand directly the impacts on them<sup>17</sup>.
- 3.22. As detailed above, during the pandemic various teams across DCMS engaged with sector organisations, requesting the provision of economic data in order to be able to prioritise information to submit to the DCMS Secretary of State for decisions on approaching HMT with specific funding requests.
- 3.23. DCMS analysis was, for the most part, focused on estimating the impact of different Covid-19 mitigations and support packages on economic activity and public participation in DCMS sectors. DCMS engaged with public bodies and asked them to provide forecasts of their potential deficits, information on how they were mitigating these and what residual pressure remained.
- 3.24. After the first Covid-19 lockdown was announced in March 2020, analysis was ramped up to focus on:
- a) sector intelligence and situational awareness - developing comparable metrics and timely data sources to understand impact
  - b) analysis to understand the financial resilience of DCMS sectors and organisations
  - c) analysis to understand how various pan-economy support measures impacted DCMS sectors and where there were gaps in coverage
  - d) analysis of potential DCMS specific support packages
- 3.25. In particular, balance sheet analysis to understand financial resilience involved working with analysts at BEIS to explore data sources such as Companies House and FAME that had previously had limited use in DCMS. Throughout 2020 and 2021 analysis continued to model the impact of lockdowns and different Covid-19 restrictions, such as capacity constraints, on the ability of businesses to operate and their financial resilience.

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<sup>17</sup>FAME (Financial Analysis Made Easy) is a comprehensive database that provides detailed financial information and company data for over 11 million UK and Irish companies, including both public and private entities, allowing users to research, compare, and analyse companies and industries.

- 3.26. The Covid-19 Analytical Hub also operated a real-time monitoring dashboard on the economic and social effects of the pandemic on DCMS sectors. Once established, this dashboard allowed policy colleagues across the department to have access to up-to-date and sector specific information for their policy areas.
- 3.27. With regards to the economic impact specifically, DCMS developed the Commercial Viability Model in 2021, which estimated the impact of NPIs on industry stakeholder turnover by using a combination of industry data, sector-level financial information and individual case study settings to model the effect of each relevant NPI on turnover<sup>18</sup>. The Commercial Viability Model also estimated the impact on profitability, as measured by Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation. Results from this model were used in briefings to ministers and submissions, including those about the Events Research Programme.
- 3.28. As set out in detail above, DCMS strategy teams compiled data to understand the impacts of economic measures on DCMS sectors. For example, a CBILS evidence base spreadsheet set out issues from industry stakeholders regarding the CBILS scheme (for example issues with lenders and/or interest rates) which underpinned advice on CBILS [[SL/62 INQ000182290](#)]. A future risks register captured the risks that were expected to affect DCMS sectors to inform the economic response policy work by strategy and sector teams. These risks included, for example, change in consumer behaviour, dependency on footfall and delays to the production of shows and events.
- 3.29. DCMS used a range of sources, including external data. For example, the department used data gathered through the Business Impact of Covid-19 survey which was a regular survey set up by the Office for National Statistics to look across sectors<sup>19</sup>. DCMS also used other external sources of data, including the Moving Communities Dashboard<sup>20</sup>. This was a monitoring dashboard set up to track (in real time) the recovery and continuing performance of the national leisure sector. This received data from leisure facility operators and tracks financial sustainability, throughput of participants (including their demographic data), social value, and now - in the context of the cost of living crisis and the consequent Swimming Pool Support Fund - energy

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<sup>18</sup>This information was principally provided by 'FAME', a dataset which allows DCMS analysts to conduct large scale financial analysis from the aggregated data the service provides. Use of the FAME dataset allowed the creation of an Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation of the affected sector's baseline for modelling purposes.

<sup>19</sup>The Business Impact of Covid-19 survey ran from March to November 2020. It has since been superseded by the Business Insights and Conditions Survey.

<sup>20</sup>The Moving Communities service measures physical activity levels and other key performance metrics across delivery programmes and facilities.

cost data. It was updated in real time and was available to DCMS, Sport England, local authorities and pool operators<sup>21</sup>.

- 3.30. Additionally, the DCMS Coronavirus Impact Business Survey was launched on 23 April 2020 and closed on 22 May 2020 [**SL/63 INQ000623528**; **SL/64 INQ000623526**; **SL/65 INQ000623527**; **SL/66 INQ000623617**]. The survey was run simultaneously through DCMS stakeholder engagement channels and via a YouGov panel. A total of 3,936 responses were received from DCMS stakeholder engagement channels (2,369) and via YouGov (1,567). The purpose of the survey was to highlight the characteristics of organisations in DCMS sectors whose viability was under threat in order to shape further government support. To do this, the survey captured the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on respondents, as well as their experience of and eligibility for government support packages.
- 3.31. The tourism team gathered data and evidence from a range of sources in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism sector. The team was allocated an analytical budget from the DCMS budget to tender for detailed UK forecasts pertaining to the sector. The team identified funding to source additional data on hotel occupancy rates around the UK. VisitBritain pivoted its reporting to provide a weekly sentiment tracker that provided useful insights on intentions of British people to travel domestically. The insolvency service provided the team with a regular update of businesses entering administration and insolvency, while the Civil Aviation Authority website listed Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL) business failures. The tourism team gathered evidence from other countries to provide international exemplars of economic support and recovery measures to the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston). Nevertheless, the lack of robust, sector-wide data was noted and specifically an absence of useful regional and local-level data to understand how the sector was coping.
- 3.32. VisitBritain and VisitEngland supported the team to gather data and evidence to help them identify the financial health of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), so that a portion of the Discover England Fund could be reallocated to the DMO Resilience Fund. At the time of the pandemic, there were 150 DMOs in England. Their role was to develop tourism in their local area through marketing, managing funding, providing business support and developing a destination management plan. Some organisations were wholly funded by the private sector, largely through subscriptions

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<sup>21</sup>The Swimming Pool Support Fund made available a total of £80 million from 2023 - 2024 to local authorities in England as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools.

from local businesses. Others were wholly funded through the public sector, via local authorities. Some were funded by a combination of private sector and public sector funding.

- 3.33. The department also generated data, including through the Events Research Programme (ERP). The ERP was a large science-based programme in England which worked to inform policy and its implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme facilitated scientific research into large events and facilitated large gatherings of spectators with pre-event testing, building evidence on how sectors could reopen in a safe and commercially viable way. Between November 2020 and February 2021, DCMS teams undertook the initial stages of development for what became the ERP, following a limited programme of performing arts, sport and business pilot events conducted in July to September 2020. The Venues Steering Group, a DCMS stakeholder group, was established in August 2020 (following the first performing arts pilots) to provide feedback on the development of plans to enable the reopening of music and arts venues. Subsequently, between April and July 2021, the ERP staged 31 pilot events in England across a range of settings and sectors. Some of the pilots took place over multiple days, and the programme comprised a total of 120 separate events or performances, with over two million participants attending.
- 3.34. The ERP's governance included a Senior Steering Board, established to oversee the programme and report to the Prime Minister and Secretaries of State for DCMS, BEIS and DHSC. The board was chaired by two external Chief Advisers. A Programme Board, chaired by me as the Senior Responsible Officer for the programme, oversaw and was accountable for delivery of the overall programme, which was run day-to-day by a programme director, Martyn Henderson. A DCMS deputy director-chaired Delivery Board, with vice chairs from DHSC and BEIS, was also established to ensure risks and issues were identified by those best placed to resolve them, and that they had a clear escalation route to the Programme Board as necessary. These Boards were supplemented by an independent Science Board, chaired by Professor Dame Theresa Marteau, which met weekly. Other government departments, including CO, PHE, DfT, HMT and HO, also frequently attended the Boards.
- 3.35. Findings from the ERP were shared within government and published on Gov.uk, as well as in several scientific journals [SL/67 [INQ000182285](#)]. Additionally, the Covid-19 Analytical Hub took the scientific findings of the ERP and modelled the economic effect of differing designs of Covid-19 restrictions on large gatherings and events. This analysis also informed the manner in which large gatherings and events were

reopened and policies around Covid-19 secure certification. For example, the Covid-19 Analytical Hub provided information on the ERP's findings to DHSC and CO to inform their development of a certification policy impact statement as part of their advice to DHSC ministers. DCMS also provided analysis on the estimated reduction in turnover for its sectors in the event of vaccine-only certification [**SL/68 INQ000498432**; **SL/69 INQ000498433**].

- 3.36. The department's proposed approach to reopening in 2021 sought to ensure that those venues which had been affected by capacity caps which were in place during the tier system in 2020 would be economically viable, once open. In late January 2021, when CO began considering a lockdown exit strategy, DCMS recommended an increase to the previous percentage capacity caps and advocated a move away from absolute numbers [**SL/70 INQ000182255**]. This was supported by findings from Phase I of the ERP.

***Engagement with and feedback on the pan-economy measures***

- 3.37. The below sets out a summary of DCMS's engagement with the pan-economy schemes, noting that DCMS did not have involvement with them all. Those with which DCMS did not engage are referenced at paragraph 3.71.

*Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Bounce Back Loans Scheme*

- 3.38. The Chancellor announced a 100% government-backed loan scheme to address issues with access to existing loan schemes in response to representations from DCMS and other government departments [**SL/71 INQ000182277**]. DCMS sectors, including tourism, museums, the arts, charities and smaller elements of the digital and technology sectors, have varied business models but a common issue of not being conducive to high profits or large cash reserves.
- 3.39. DCMS raised issues regarding the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) schemes in submissions to ministers. The department also raised them with HMT in officials' meetings and in submissions, and DCMS provided additional feedback to HMT and ministers on later changes to the CBILS schemes. The issues raised by DCMS included:
- a) CBILS was potentially inaccessible to certain DCMS sectors, particularly those with mixed income business models (for example grants, both central government and local authority, philanthropy et cetera) as CBILS eligibility

requires at least 50% trading income. These issues were raised in a briefing for the Economic Response Working Group meeting [**SL/72 INQ000623480**]

- b) on 22 April 2020, DCMS provided a written update to HMT setting out ongoing issues in accessing CBILS (this followed a note previously sent on 14 April), summarising concerns and issues raised by DCMS sectors and suggesting ways to amend the scheme to make it more accessible - ultimately, the decision on whether to explore and/or implement these suggestions was within the remit of HMT [**SL/71 INQ000182277**]
- c) in May 2020, in response to HMT questions, tourism trade bodies reported that no applicants to the CBILS scheme had been successful in their applications, citing slow responses from lenders, perceived risks of lending to the sector, excessive security requirements, high interest rates and short repayment terms as issues - though tourism is devolved, the CBILS scheme was national, resulting in DCMS receiving correspondence from stakeholders based in the devolved administrations, for example, from a holiday company in Scotland who expressed difficulty in accessing the CBILS scheme [**SL/73 INQ000623512**].
- d) DCMS strategy teams also raised feedback with the Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBLs) with the DCMS Secretary of State and ministers, largely positive, and later discussed the BBLs in relation to the other loan schemes [**SL/52 INQ000652351**; **SL/74 INQ000623503**; **SL/75 INQ000623530**] - subsequently, when it was anticipated the schemes could end, the ERD produced a paper noting the effects of closure on DCMS sectors [**SL/76 INQ000623532**]

3.40. The feedback DCMS provided was based on engagement with sectors and stakeholders who reported impacts of economic policies. DCMS monitored stakeholder views on HMT's announced changes on CBILS, including through direct correspondence received from business owners. For example, the tourism team received correspondence from stakeholders regarding the CBILS scheme [**SL/77 INQ000623513**; **SL/78 INQ000623515**].

3.41. The DCMS central analytical team also conducted analysis on FAME data to understand how many firms would be excluded from CBILS qualification and the impact of changes to CBILS [**SL/79 INQ000182272**; **SL/80 INQ000623582**].

3.42. DCMS's intervention helped to ensure that a proportionate approach was taken regarding organisations' eligibility and the assessment of their commercial viability to access the scheme. We also engaged on other key elements of the BBLS, in particular the requirement for a fixed reasonable interest rate for the term of the loan and fixing the repayment term at six years. Following discussions with DCMS, HMT also carried over the eligibility requirements for charities from the CBILS scheme.

*Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility*

3.43. The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) scheme went some way to covering more businesses within DCMS sectors, particularly larger firms that didn't meet the eligibility requirements for CBILS. Meanwhile, the Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF) plugged what DCMS identified as the 'missing middle' which referred to UK businesses that were not eligible for either the CBILS or the CLBILS.

3.44. DCMS was aware of issues including that organisations that did not have investment grade credit ratings could not access the Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF). For DCMS, this could include some telecoms companies (such as TalkTalk which was rated at BB-), and some major tourism companies (for example Specialist Leisure Group), some private equity owned creative industry businesses, and companies that are not publicly listed, including many art market businesses and the majority of the cultural sector **[SL/72 INQ000623480]**.

3.45. DCMS feedback was based on engagement that sector teams had with their stakeholders who reported impacts of economic policies **[SL/62 INQ000182290]**. The DCMS central analytical team also conducted analysis on FAME data to understand how many firms would be excluded from CBIL qualification **[SL/79 INQ000182272; SL/80 INQ000623582]**.

3.46. Following evidence received from our stakeholders regarding their difficulties in providing security against loans, DCMS advocated for the removal of the requirement for businesses to place a personal guarantee against directors in relation to the loans **[SL/81 INQ000182280]**.

3.47. DCMS engaged HMT on the extension of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, giving consideration to its design and evidence of which businesses were unable to access it, so that larger businesses could apply for a loan of up to 25% of

their turnover (capped at £200 million).

- 3.48. This benefitted larger companies across DCMS sectors who were not investment-grade rated and therefore could not access the Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility (a support measure aimed at supporting liquidity among bigger businesses) and who needed more funding than was available through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme<sup>22</sup>. This followed DCMS analysis and stakeholder engagement which estimated that between 300 and 600 DCMS sector organisations fell within this 'missing middle' [**SL/79 INQ000182272**].
- 3.49. Following DCMS engagement, HMT also prohibited lenders requiring personal guarantees on loans of less than £250,000 and capped personal guarantees at 20% of the outstanding balance on loans of more than £250,000. DCMS also engaged with HMT to ensure the relaxation for registered charities of an initial requirement for eligible businesses to earn 50% of their income through trading. This enabled charities to take advantage of the scheme.

#### *Business Rates Relief*

- 3.50. As with all pan-economy schemes, DCMS's role was one of co-designing and refining measures with other government departments including HMT and CO to ensure sectoral interests and concerns were reflected. DCMS assessed that some businesses explicitly excluded from business rates relief such as markets, art galleries and gambling businesses faced the same economic pressures as many other DCMS sectors including low income, generation, forced closures and running costs [**SL/82 INQ000652062**].
- 3.51. Through DCMS's usual stakeholder engagement mechanisms (as detailed above), DCMS sectors reported challenges when accessing the Business Rates Relief scheme. This was primarily due to a lack of understanding among DCMS stakeholders of the scope of the scheme, omission of specific businesses from the guidance and cases of inconsistent application of the scheme by local authorities.
- 3.52. DCMS engaged with HMT and MHCLG on live music venues, markets and art galleries. Regarding the pressures on gambling businesses, the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston) wrote to HMT to outline

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<sup>22</sup>An investment grade credit rating is a rating that indicates that a bond has a relatively low risk of default. To be considered an investment grade issue, the company must be rated at 'BBB' or 'Baa' or higher by credit rating agencies Standard and Poor's or Moody's. Anything below these ratings, including BB-, are considered non-investment grade, meaning it carries a higher probability of default compared to investment-grade bonds.

concerns about the exclusion of some institutions from the business rates relief scheme and to request an extension of the VAT cut and Business Rates Relief **[SL/83 INQ000623491; SL/84 INQ000623563]**. Based on engagement with sectors, DCMS maintained a log of stakeholder queries and intelligence, including questions around the business rates scheme **[SL/85 INQ000652063; SL/86 INQ000623585]**.

- 3.53. As a result of DCMS engagement with HMT and MHCLG, live music venues, markets and art galleries (where art is for sale or hire) were expressly listed as eligible for business rates relief in subsequent guidance from MHCLG and the Local Government Association. Following a successful intervention by the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston), this measure was also updated to cover gambling businesses **[SL/87 INQ000623493]**.

#### *Small Business Grants Fund and Funding to Local Government*

- 3.54. The Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund was introduced to support those small businesses in England which had been ineligible for other schemes, following representations from stakeholders at both ministerial and official levels. It was administered by BEIS and MHCLG. DCMS was an advocate on behalf of its sectors. An additional £617 million funding was secured for local authorities to provide grant funding for non rates payers. Tourism (B&Bs) and users of shared office space were identified as a priority **[SL/88 INQ000623541]**.
- 3.55. Feedback was gathered as part of DCMS's standard stakeholder engagement routes, as detailed above, which included feedback from sector teams and businesses on the measures being put forward. DCMS had received feedback from its sectors, including hospitality, leisure, and museums, that businesses were being refused access due to the lack of clarity of the scope of the fund. For example, a gap was identified in relation to recording studios and the provision of Local Authority Discretionary Grant funding **[SL/89 INQ000652068]**. DCMS officials raised the issue and the fund's guidance was updated on 23 May 2020 to clarify the scope of the fund and its administration. Clarity was also provided for DCMS sectoral stakeholders on eligibility, including a specific mention in MHCLG guidance.
- 3.56. The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLG) ran from February to October 2020 and was administered by BEIS. DCMS monitored the uptake and impact of the fund's eligibility criteria on its sectors. The department prepared analysis which was sent to the DCMS Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) on the impact on DCMS sectors **[SL/90 INQ000623524; SL/91 INQ000623546; SL/92 INQ000623548]**. For example,

DCMS drew on a survey undertaken by Arts Council England which identified that of 844 charities only 78 of those had applied or were about to apply for the RHLG, with over 730 charities stating that they would not be applying. A DCMS review of the 844 charities indicated that a significant number of them, perhaps in the low hundreds, had rateable values over £51,000 which therefore put them above the fund's threshold. Information was provided to ministers on the operation of this fund [**SL/93 INQ000652064**].

#### *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme*

- 3.57. DCMS strategy teams were involved in engaging with HMT on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and its application to DCMS sectors [**SL/94 INQ000623490**; **SL/95 INQ000659790**; **SL/96 INQ000623481**, **SL/97 INQ000623529**]. The role for DCMS was to understand the impact and accessibility of the scheme for those in its sectors, raising challenges with HMT and CO as required. DCMS identified four sectors as being at greatest risk economically due to Covid-19 (potentially resulting in a greater number of applications to the scheme from those sectors): creative industries; hospitality and tourism; and sport and live events [**SL/94 INQ000623490**].
- 3.58. As with other economic measures, there was a regular rhythm of feedback from sector teams and businesses on the measures being put forward. This would involve HMT proposing a measure that DCMS strategy teams would communicate to sector teams to seek feedback about challenges or exceptions/edge cases which we would then feed back to HMT and CO to reiterate.
- 3.59. Issues and questions about the scheme were identified in briefings with ministers [**SL/94 INQ000623490**; **SL/95 INQ000659790**]. For example, the strategy teams provided an update to ministers in March 2020 highlighting feedback received from DCMS sectors [**SL/96 INQ000623481**]. Such issues included whether furloughed workers could carry out minimal activities required to maintain facilities/buildings/objects, and DCMS sponsored bodies also raised concerns that they could not use reserves to 'top up' furloughed salaries as private sector companies could.
- 3.60. The CJRS eligibility cut off date was extended to 19 March 2020. Later guidance issued by HMT addressed concerns raised by DCMS, such as regarding shielders returning to work [**SL/97 INQ000623529**]. Other issues specifically relating to the CJRS and sport (as well as other measures) were raised with the Secretary of State

(Oliver Dowden) following a request for information on the economic effect on the sports sector [**SL/95 INQ000659790**].

#### *Self-Employment Income Support Scheme*

- 3.61. The strategy teams provided a submission to ministers regarding the initial reaction to HMT's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), raising initial issues with the scheme including timing, salary threshold, new businesses and for owner-managers [**SL/96 INQ000623481**]. DCMS provided further feedback in mid-April, which reflected that while feedback from DCMS sectors to the self employed income support was broadly positive, stakeholders had raised a number of issues related to the scheme, such as the scheme only being open to those who were self-employed in the financial year 2018-19, while the number of newly self-employed individuals across DCMS sectors was believed to be high [**SL/98 INQ000623495**].
- 3.62. DCMS also engaged with HMT regarding the SEISS particularly concerning freelancer workers in the creative industries [**SL/99 INQ000623499**; **SL/100 INQ000623502**]. A further update for the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) in mid-May noted the significant effect that stopping SEISS would have on DCMS sectors [**SL/101 INQ000652352**].
- 3.63. Within DCMS sectors there was a prevalence of freelancers who operate on short-term 'Pay As You Earn' (PAYE) contracts and who were not eligible for either the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme or the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. DCMS's sectors and stakeholders made the department aware of their concern and obstacles in accessing the support. For example, at a Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) hosted CEO roundtable for TV and radio at the end of March 2020, a number of attendees raised the issue of how to ensure that freelancers who were paid through PAYE did not unintentionally fall through the cracks of two furlough and freelance assistance schemes [**SL/102 INQ000623486**]. Following this, media organisations wrote to the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) on 3 April 2020 setting out the key issues for the sectors (i.e. freelancers on PAYE fixed term contracts did not qualify for the Self-Employment Scheme). Other issues included the furlough scheme (unavailable to freelancers who were not on a payroll on 28 February 2020); Personal Service Companies (such freelancers did not qualify for either scheme); and Universal Credit (freelancers not qualifying).
- 3.64. DCMS provided evidence to HMT to support decisions on supporting PAYE - this advice was sent from the ERD to the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) and the

Minister of State for Media and Data (John Whittingdale) [**SL/98 INQ000623495**]. This set out that feedback from DCMS sectors to the self employed income support scheme was broadly positive. However, stakeholders had raised a number of issues related to the scheme. The advice set out priority areas for discussion with HMT to ensure that funding schemes were appropriate for DCMS sectors. The submission to the Minister of State for Media and Data (John Whittingdale) on 16 April was followed up with a SEISS input into the Economic and Business Response Ministerial Implementation Group briefing which set out more evidence in support of the arguments in the submission. This included evidence of the impact on DCMS sectors of measures such as ineligibility for CJRS and SEISS for those who operate on short term PAYE contracts and the recently self-employed.

- 3.65. Separately on 1 April 2020, the Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee (Julian Knight) wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Steve Barclay) setting out similar issues with the schemes.

*Funding to Local Government - National Leisure Recovery Fund*

- 3.66. On 22 October 2020, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick) announced that £100 million of the £1 billion of additional support being provided to local authorities would be used to introduce a new fund to support leisure services in the public sector. Sport England opened the fund for applications on 14 December 2020 [**SL/103 INQ000623626**]. The National Leisure Recovery Fund (NLRF) aimed to help local authorities to meet the additional costs of operating their services and was focused on the period from 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021. Applicants were asked to provide financial, operational and staffing information, and plans for recovery.
- 3.67. DCMS had a significant role in working with HMT to secure approval of the scheme, which included demonstrating the level of crisis which leisure centres faced [**SL/104 INQ000652359; SL/105 INQ000652067**]. DCMS also provided views on the design of the scheme, which we agreed with Sport England, and chaired the grant assurance panel.
- 3.68. The allocation of the funding was announced by the Minister for Sport, Tourism, Heritage and Civil Society (Nigel Huddleston) on 20 March 2021 [**SL/106 INQ000623074**]. The National Leisure Recovery Fund distributed this funding via Sport England to 266 local authorities with outsourced publicly-owned leisure centres and gym facilities by March 2021. The fund was administered by Sport England once

it was secured on their behalf from HMT by DCMS - DCMS did not have any involvement in the delivery but were involved in allocation decisions alongside Sport England and MHCLG.

- 3.69. In addition to the NLRG, which provided economic support to local authorities who outsourced the operation of their leisure services to a private operator, MHCLG also launched the Sales, Fees and Charges income scheme which provided funding to local authorities to compensate income losses where leisure provision was delivered in-house by local authorities. DCMS had no direct role in this scheme.

*Changes to insolvency rules*

- 3.70. DCMS was focused on ensuring, where relevant and applicable, the measures in the BEIS Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill additionally covered the 19,805 Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) within the same timeframe. This was captured in a submission to the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) on 17 April 2021 which focused on government insolvency measures regarding DCMS sectors. The submission recommended that the Secretary of State agree that DCMS should seek that the measures be extended to include CIOs and that DCMS should work with BEIS to achieve this outcome [SL/107 [INQ000623496](#)].

*Schemes which DCMS did not have any role or engagement with*

- 3.71. DCMS's engagement with pan-economy measures and schemes is set out above. There were a number of additional interventions included in the Module 9 scope which were undertaken by other areas of government and which DCMS didn't have a role in designing or delivering. These are:
- a) additional funding for public services essential to the economy, such as support provided to rail and bus networks and operators to ensure that essential transport infrastructure was maintained during the pandemic
  - b) benefits, sick pay and support for socially and economically vulnerable groups including those with protected characteristics, including statutory sick pay and uplift to Universal Credit
  - c) the Eat Out to Help Out scheme

### ***Support and engagement with HMT***

- 3.72. As set out above, DCMS engaged frequently with HMT in relation to the pan-economy measures, providing feedback gathered from engagement with DCMS sectors.
- 3.73. The strategy teams acted as a conduit facilitating conversations between HMT and the department. An example of successful advocacy for HMT support was the financial assistance provided to voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in response to Covid-19 [SL/108 [INQ000623618](#)]. Strategy teams also supported the star chamber bidding process for the £163 million element of the support package which was allocated to other government departments to distribute to voluntary sector organisations<sup>23</sup>.
- 3.74. DCMS also engaged directly with HMT through official and ministerial meetings. And the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) had meetings with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to discuss the spending review alongside impacts of Covid-19 and measures that could be taken to help DCMS sectors [SL/109 [INQ000623636](#)]. SPFE, working closely with other teams, led the drafting of a number of letters sent by the Secretary of State to the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to discuss additional sector support measures [SL/110 [INQ000623565](#)] .
- 3.75. DCMS also worked with HMT in order to secure funding to design and deliver sector-specific funding packages, covered in further detail below, including:
- a) £750 million package of support for the VCSE sector
  - b) £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund
  - c) £500 million Film and TV Production Restart Scheme
  - d) £600 million Winter and Summer Sport Survival Packages
  - e) £100 million National Leisure Recovery Fund
- 3.76. DCMS's policy support role to HMT in these instances was to highlight gaps in support for its sectors, providing evidence to HMT to understand the need for specific and targeted funding streams. In order to secure funding for such schemes, DCMS gathered evidence on the specific needs of its sectors. As

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<sup>23</sup>A star chamber is an informal, high-level meeting of cabinet members and senior officials used to discuss and scrutinise important issues like spending plans, often looking to ensure efficiency and value for money

above, the development of funding cases and business cases was a key way in which the department would set out the need for financial support to HMT, though information was also provided through responses to commissions for ideas, such as an exercise run to find Capital Investments which could be accelerated.

*Relationship with HMT - what worked well and challenges*

- 3.77. DCMS strategy teams engaged directly with HMT, specifically on matters related to pan-economy measures and identifying issues with measures for DCMS sectors, particularly in relation to those organisations/individuals who may be struggling to qualify for financial support [**SL/111 INQ000623500; SL/112 INQ000623522**]. The strategy teams also worked with DCMS's finance function in interactions with HMT [**SL/113 INQ000623473; SL/114 INQ000623474; SL/115 INQ000623479**].
- 3.78. From DCMS's perspective, the government's objectives were clear, with the primary mission to try to support the economy through a massive shock, which was particularly challenging without a sense of how long the pandemic would last. From the economic support angle, this meant supporting businesses who were (i) financially viable; and more importantly, (ii) would remain financially viable even taking into account behavioural changes brought on by the pandemic (for example the shutting down of certain DCMS sectors and social distancing). It was also clear that supporting the economy through that shock would go beyond the business level to also supporting at an individual level (for example through furlough).
- 3.79. The approach taken by HMT to the economic response was transparent and collaborative. DCMS was involved in the rhythm of interdepartmental meetings led by HMT which provided an insight into the economic measures being scoped. As set out above, this included director and deputy director-level meetings as well as the Economic Response Working Group.
- 3.80. At the working level, DCMS's relationship with HMT was a productive one, with official level calls taking place regularly and ad-hoc meetings held as necessary [**SL/38 INQ000623586**]. HMT was easy to access, responsive to requests for information or meetings and receptive to DCMS's input, welcoming what was provided to build evidence for interventions, regardless of their outcome.
- 3.81. The sharing of information, data and analysis (both ways) was sufficient to understand the decisions made by the respective departments/ministers and the basis for these decisions. DCMS was sharing a lot of information and analysis to support HMT to make

an informed assessment of the impact of economic measures being designed on DCMS sectors. This applied to a range of sectors from businesses to third sector organisations too so required extensive information sharing to capture impact at granular levels. For example, HMT commissioned DCMS for data on the Covid-19 impact on DCMS sectors which the strategy teams coordinated. In the early phases of the pandemic DCMS and HMT also had a shared policy tracker which DCMS would use to report live issues to HMT and they would in turn provide responses [**SL/116 INQ000623523**]. Due to the close interdepartmental relations that had formed, the sharing of information, data and analysis between DCMS and HMT had improved when compared to prior to the pandemic.

- 3.82. Likewise, HMT's communication with DCMS on decisions on fiscal events and economic policy were often communicated clearly. Regular meetings and strong relationships between DCMS and HMT at an official level were key to communication. An example of clear communication from HMT includes an external comms Q&A document which included the rationale behind economic policies which had impacts on DCMS sectors [**SL/117 INQ000623608**].
- 3.83. DCMS and HMT's approach to interdepartmental relations and the sharing of information, data and analysis was different in some respects in comparison to the approach prior to the pandemic. The early days of Covid-19 was a more intense working environment and this manifested in day-to-day operations. There was more iterative working, with DCMS seeking to share the best possible information in real time which required building up information, data and analysis capabilities and processes.
- 3.84. There was also a recognition that HMT was under pressure and performing an incredibly difficult task to very tight deadlines and under uncertainty, as it was difficult to design policy, estimate costs, and assess the impact of these policy measures against these deadlines. There was an awareness that HMT was therefore dependent on other departments, including DCMS, to provide the best and latest evidence base upon which to base policy decisions. As such, the approach taken towards developing economic measures was more one of co-designing, refining and incremental efforts compared to prior to the pandemic.
- 3.85. DCMS judges that decisions around economic policy in response to the pandemic were communicated clearly from the Chancellor and/or HMT. There was a reasonable stream of communications and DCMS was involved in relevant meetings where decisions were either made or communicated so there was awareness of the

measures being designed. HMT's approach to communicating decisions was a formal one with key meetings led by HMT providing an insight into the economic measures being scoped.

- 3.86. As reflected above, the pandemic underscored the wider cultural and social benefits of DCMS, including a recognition of the huge economic impact of the department, especially as many of DCMS's sectors were very vulnerable to the shocks of Covid-19 and were on the front line of industries affected by early shut downs.

### ***Economic support schemes***

#### *VCSE sector funding package*

- 3.87. This £750 million package ran from April 2020 - March 2021. The funding aimed to ensure that charities and other VCSE sector organisations could continue day-to-day work during the pandemic and meet any increased demand to support people in need. This funding package is covered in detail at Part D. The support package was made up of multiple distinct funding streams including the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, Community match Challenge and a Hospices Fund.
- 3.88. Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) analyses were produced for elements of the funding package [[SL/118 INQ000623570](#); [SL/119 INQ000623534](#); [SL/120 INQ000623544](#)].

#### *Culture Recovery Fund (CRF)*

- 3.89. On 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) announced the £1.57 billion CRF support package. The funding total was later topped up by an additional £390 million package, which included funding for a third round of the CRF core measures. This was announced at the Spring Budget on 3 March 2021. The aims of the fund evolved over the course of the three rounds in response to the changing needs of the sector, transitioning from an initial focus on survival (CRF 1), towards reopening and recovery (CRF 2), and a combination of these aims (CRF 3).
- 3.90. The Culture Recovery Fund was the branding for a package of measures, which included core items (such as the grants, loans, and capital grants schemes), as well as items announced as part of the "branding" but managed separately (such as the freedoms bodies funding described below)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Freedoms Bodies are a group of public bodies who have been granted exemptions from, or modifications to, a discrete number of financial and operating requirements.

- 3.91. The pre-existing expertise of public bodies was used in the delivery of these funds, and while overall consistency was sought, public bodies delivered the programmes in a way that fit their own systems, processes, and the needs and working-styles of their sectors. The government took steps to include extra levels of assurance and oversight on the fund. Specifically, a Culture Recovery Board was established, which comprised 12 members, including an independent chair, a representative of each of the public bodies, the Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, a senior DCMS official, and five independent board members.
- 3.92. The key strands were broadly:
- a) resource grants in 3 rounds - delivered by the Arts Council England, the British Film Institute (BFI), and the National Heritage Memorial Fund/National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Historic England
  - b) capital grants in 2 rounds - delivered by the Arts Council England, Historic England, and the National Heritage Memorial Fund/National Lottery Heritage Fund for round 1 only
  - c) loans in 2 rounds - delivered by the Arts Council England
- 3.93. The funding was a mix of grants and loans. Around 5,000 applicants/organisations and sites received funding. Overall, the core schemes within the package made 7,689 grant awards and 37 loan awards across 3 rounds of funding<sup>25</sup>. The decision to include both grants and loans in the scheme reflected an understanding that some organisations in need of support would in normal times be able to produce surplus commercial income (allowing them to repay a loan) while for others this would not be possible.
- 3.94. An evaluation found the CRF met its overall objectives, was efficiently implemented and demonstrated value for money [SL/121 [INQ000596101](#)]. It strengthened the financial health of organisations awarded funding, improved their resilience, and raised their future survival prospects to a degree that could not have been achieved by just relying on the broader package of government support.
- 3.95. Public Sector Equality Duty analyses were carried out as part of the business cases. Since public bodies were accountable for the grant programmes (below the headline business-case level), they also had a responsibility as public bodies to conduct PSED

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<sup>25</sup>These figures were produced by public bodies and published in an aggregated data-release by DCMS (though caveats should be noted about how different public bodies grant-management systems can lead to minor variations in overall totals)

assessments [SL/122 [INQ000652066](#); SL/123 [INQ000652059](#); SL/124 [INQ000659792](#); SL/125 [INQ000652061](#)].

#### *Film and TV Production Restart Scheme*

- 3.96. On 28 July 2020, the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme was publicly announced. The scheme launched on 16 October 2020 with a £500 million allocation. The scheme aimed to help to get TV and film productions across the country back up and running, by giving productions confidence that they would be supported if future losses were incurred due to Covid-19.
- 3.97. DCMS appointed insurance broker Marsh as the administrator for the scheme to onboard productions and manage claims. Productions needed to provide evidence of eligibility including BFI certification. The scheme was overseen by a steering board which would, as required, give final approval of any large applications and claims escalated by Marsh. The steering board consisted of representatives from DCMS policy, commercial and finance teams, UK Government Investments and the BFI. Originally the Scheme was due to close on 31 December, but scheme registration was extended multiple times, finally allowing registration until 30 April 2022 for losses incurred up until 30 June 2022.
- 3.98. The scheme's total paid in compensation claims was £40.7 million. The scheme collected £36.4 million in registration fees from producers and delivery costs were £5.1 million. As a result, the net cost to the government was £9.4 million for delivering the scheme.
- 3.99. In total, the scheme supported a total of 1,259 productions with budgets totalling over £3.06 billion, protecting 100,700 jobs.
- 3.100. An equalities assessment was a feature of the business case, which notes that the BFI Diversity Standards encourage equality of opportunity and addressing of under-representation in the screen industries. Conditionality was included in the terms and conditions of the scheme that any business applying for the scheme would need to meet BFI Diversity Standards and Principles to Tackle and Prevent Bullying, Harassment and Racism. Post event assurance was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of these terms.

### *Rugby Football League support and Winter and Summer Sport Survival Packages*

- 3.101. Early in the pandemic, the Rugby Football League (RFL) contacted the government to request emergency financial support due to the impact of lockdown, namely on the cancellation of matches and the subsequent loss of spectator revenue. DCMS worked with HMT and Sport England to refine the request to create a business case for a package of financial support
- 3.102. In May 2020, DCMS announced a £16 million emergency loan, provided by HMT, to help rugby league manage the financial impact of Covid-19 in light of the season being suspended due to social distancing measures. The loan was paid in two stages. The first stage saw DCMS directly providing the RFL with a short-term loan of £3 million to address immediate financial needs of professional clubs. The second stage comprised a loan scheme run by Sport England, administered through an Special Purpose Vehicle and managed by Sporting Assets. Clubs were required to repay any funding they received in stage 1 as part of receiving money through stage 2.
- 3.103. In parallel, as the scale and impact of the pandemic became clearer, DCMS realised that wider professional sport would suffer severe financial consequences from the ongoing requirement to play behind closed doors with no spectators. DCMS therefore worked with Sport England and HMT, as well as seeking external consultancy support from Deloitte, to assess the need for support and consider how this could be provided.
- 3.104. On 19 November 2020, the government announced a £300 million Sport Winter Survival Package (SWSP) to provide a lifeline to organisations that would otherwise not have survived the winter as a result of the restriction on spectators. On 3 March 2021, the Chancellor announced a further £300 million for a summer phase of the Sport Survival Package (SSP) to continue the support.
- 3.105. The SSP funding package had 3 main objectives:
- a) to ensure as many sports or sports clubs survive the period of restrictions preventing spectators from attending professional matches
  - b) to minimise the long-term damage to participation and investment in grassroots and women's sport
  - c) to minimise the cost of the intervention to the Exchequer
- 3.106. A total of 1,685 sports organisations benefited from the funding package. Support was awarded to 15 sports: football, rugby union, rugby league, netball, badminton,

basketball, ice hockey, tennis, athletics, horseracing, non-ticketed events, motorsport, cycling, hockey and surfing.

#### *Live Events Reinsurance Scheme*

- 3.107. The scheme was established to see the government act as a 'reinsurer', stepping in with a guarantee to make sure insurers could offer the products that event companies needed. It was announced on 5 August 2021 and launched on 22 September 2021 with up to £800 million capacity. The scheme closed on 30 September 2022.
- 3.108. Through negotiations with insurers and risk-sharing with the government, £750 million of capacity was available on launch of the scheme, later increased to £800 million when an additional insurer joined. DCMS procured Marsh/Oliver Wyman to administer and deliver the scheme. The six participating insurers were: Hiscox, Dale, Beazley, Arch, Ark and Munich Re.
- 3.109. A total of 169 events received coverage across 87 policies over the lifetime of the scheme, insuring £117.4 million in costs. The only claim was settled at £0.19 million. The scheme generated £5.9 million in income for the Exchequer from premiums paid by event organisers, generating a net surplus which was used largely to set-up and administer the scheme.
- 3.110. A PSED assessment was undertaken and the intervention to support the contingency market through a reinsurance scheme was not considered to raise any issues relevant to the public sector equality duty [SL/126 INQ000623578]. The assessment noted that the temporary business support scheme would have no impact on those with protected characteristics.

#### *National Leisure Recovery Fund*

- 3.111. On 22 October 2020, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick) announced that £100 million of the £1 billion of additional support being provided to local authorities would be used to introduce a new fund to support leisure services in the public sector.
- 3.112. Sport England opened the fund for applications on 14 December 2020. The fund aimed to help local authorities meet the additional costs of operating their services and was focused on the period from 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021. The National Leisure Recovery Fund distributed this funding via Sport England to 266 local authorities with outsourced publicly-owned leisure centres and gym facilities by March 2021.

- 3.113. The fund was administered by Sport England once it was secured on their behalf from HMT by DCMS. DCMS did not have a role in the facilitation or delivery of the scheme.
- 3.114. The business case for this intervention considered equalities impacts. For example, it noted that higher proportions of people from ethnic minority groups, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, women and younger people use public gyms, indoor sports facilities and pools, given they are local and affordable. It identified that without support for the public provision of leisure, certain demographics may be priced out of using local gyms and pools.

#### *Sport England Emergency Funding*

- 3.115. On 31 March 2020, Sport England announced £195 million of funding for the sector. The funding came from Sport England's existing National Lottery allocation and their existing government funding in the year and was not new funding but rather pivoting of funding programmes. The organisation receives £250 million in National Lottery and Exchequer funding per year. Sport England made the decision to repurpose this existing funding to respond to the pandemic - this was a decision taken independently by Sport England which did not require DCMS approval.

#### *Radio support - transmission fees*

- 3.116. Working with Arqiva, DCMS brokered an agreement for radio transmission fees to be waived for six months, announced in June 2020 [SL/127 [INQ000623633](#)]. It is estimated that the total cost of the waived and reduced fees to Arqiva was circa £6.5-8.5 million. It was later announced in December 2020 that fees would be discounted to 50% for a further six months - the value of DCMS contribution to this separate scheme was £584,199. DCMS also provided additional direct funding of £66,000 to support the small number of commercial stations that are not customers of Arqiva.
- 3.117. A PSED assessment was not undertaken given that the support schemes covered all UK licensed commercial radio stations (including stations targeting ethnic minority groups) and therefore no groups were excluded. The value of grants were linked to annual transmission costs and comparable support was given to small local commercial radio stations that did not contract for transmission services from Arqiva (the UK's national transmission operator).

### *Radio support - radio funding*

- 3.118. DCMS repurposed the £400,000 core funding for the Community Radio Fund, administered by Ofcom in 2020-21, to provide small grants to community stations facing financial challenges as a result of the pandemic, and provided an additional £200,000 to reflect the sector's role in tackling loneliness during the winter of 2020-21, announced in April 2020 [**SL/128 INQ000623613; SL/129 INQ000623602**]. As this involved repurposing existing Community Radio Funding administered by Ofcom, a separate PSED assessment was not done, but equalities considerations were included in the business case for the additional £200,000.
- 3.119. In addition, DCMS also provided £300,000 via the Audio Content Fund to support stations taking steps to tackle loneliness and isolation within their communities [**SL/130 INQ000623076**]. This was part of the £7.5 million loneliness fund, a funding stream within the VCSE £750 million funding [**SL/130 INQ000623076**]. As above, equalities impacts were considered in the business case for the £300,000 [**SL/129 INQ000623602**].

### *British Film Institute funding*

- 3.120. On 25 March 2021, the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) and the Minister of State for Digital and Culture (Caroline Dinenage) agreed that the British Film Institute (BFI) could roll over their existing five-year funding strategy to a sixth year, so that it would end in March 2023 rather than March 2022 [**SL/131 INQ000623567**].
- 3.121. This was due to the impact of Covid-19 on their existing programmes and targets, plus a need for additional time to develop their next BFI Strategy and for the new Chair to input.
- 3.122. In addition, the BFI received £2.3 million in May 2021 as part of the £90 million support for government sponsored bodies announced by the Chancellor at the Spring 2021 Budget (announced alongside the £300 million top up for the CRF). This funding included support for the BFI's Southbank venue and their costs for administering the CRF for independent cinemas.
- 3.123. The BFI separately repurposed £4.6 million of National Lottery funding to support the sector across the pandemic, from supporting productions with unexpected Covid-19 costs, to preserving cashflow to keep businesses open and freelancers paid. Critical relief was also offered to cinemas and festivals that had to close their doors temporarily.

- 3.124. The majority of this support was existing funding which BFI was able to roll over or repurpose, for which a PSED would not have been required. However, DCMS did consider equality impacts as part of its wider work on cultural recovery [**SL/132 INQ000623533**].

*Zero-rating of VAT for e-publications*

- 3.125. DCMS successfully engaged with HMT to bring forward the zero-rating of VAT on e-newspapers from December to May 2020 - this was announced on 30 April 2020 [**SL/133 INQ000623629**]. This aimed to reduce the cost of access to online publications during the pandemic, when many people were confined to their homes and schools were closed. Guidance setting out how this works in practice was published on Gov.uk [**SL/134 INQ000623628**]. DCMS had worked closely with the press/publishing sector (including the Publishers Association and the Professional Publishers Association) to develop an evidence base on the need and impact of this intervention during 2019, including a report from Frontier Economics, and analysis of European comparisons [**SL/135 INQ000623630**].
- 3.126. The estimated cost of the scheme was £175 million in the first full year. The scheme was announced at the March 2020 Budget and was not intended as a response to the effects of the pandemic. However, the subsequent fast-tracking of the introduction of the relief from December to May 2020 was in response to the effects of the pandemic.
- 3.127. The equalities impacts of zero-rating e-publications was published on Gov.uk as part of His Majesty's Revenue and Customs' policy paper [**SL/133 INQ000623629**].

*Zero-rating of websites*

- 3.128. Zero-rating is a practice where a mobile operator does not count certain data usage against a user's data cap. This means that specific apps, websites or services can be used without affecting the user's data allowance. In January 2021, DCMS supported the zero-rating of Oak National Academy's online learning resources. DCMS's digital infrastructure team worked with DfE to convene a roundtable on 5 January 2021, jointly chaired by the Minister of State for Media and Data (John Whittingdale) and the Minister for School Standards and attended by Oak National Academy and the UK's four major mobile network operators (EE, Vodafone, Three and O2). Following the meeting, all four organisations zero-rated Oak National Academy, with the transfer of the educational content to a separate platform, and EE and Vodafone also zero-rated BBC Bitesize.

- 3.129. Likewise, working with the four main mobile operators, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Victims' Commissioner for England and charities, we identified and zero-rated those websites which were most visited by victims of crime and domestic abuse. The mobile operators made a commitment that these measures would be in effect until at least 31 October 2020, though some continued to zero-rate the websites beyond that date [[SL/136 INQ000623640](#)].

#### *Digital Lifeline Fund*

- 3.130. The Digital Lifeline Fund aimed to enable digitally excluded people with learning disabilities to access technology and digital skills support to improve health and wellbeing and mitigate the negative impacts on Covid-19 on disabled people. DCMS provided the £2.5 million for the fund. Launched in February 2021 and running to March 2021, the fund was designed and delivered by Good Things Foundation, in partnership with Ability Net. It was supported by Learning Disability England, Voluntary Organisations Disability Group and Digital Unite. The foundation also engaged 146 community and coordination partners in the project. The Digital Lifeline Fund provided 5,500 people with devices in under four months, and 2,354 pieces of adaptive hardware were distributed.
- 3.131. The published evaluation noted that in addition to alleviating digital exclusion, the fund helped to mitigate, or reduce inequalities that people with learning disabilities experience.

#### *Dormant assets*

- 3.132. The Dormant Assets Scheme aims to reunite people with their financial assets, including bank and building society accounts and insurance and pensions products. Where this is not possible, the money is unlocked for important social and environmental initiatives across the UK. Dormant assets funding allows the government, in partnership with firms from the financial services sector, to support long-term, innovative programmes that Exchequer money is unlikely to fund. Policy responsibility for the Dormant Assets Scheme is shared between DCMS and HMT.
- 3.133. In May 2020, £150 million of dormant assets funding was released to help charities, social enterprises and individuals in need of support during the Covid-19 outbreak. This included accelerating the release of £71 million of new funds and repurposing £79 million that had already been made available. The scheme's ability to respond quickly to the changing needs of the youth, financial inclusion and social investment sectors

is testament to its ongoing relevance and the importance of its continued success. The £150 million funding supported a number of organisations, including Better Society Capital, Youth Futures Foundation and Fair4All Finance.

- a) £10 million was brought forward for the Youth Futures Foundation to help organisations that support unemployed, disadvantaged young people across the country into jobs - it launched an Emergency Levelling Up Youth Fund to support young people from hardest hit communities; and expanded their Development and Impact grants programme to rapidly increase youth employment provisions
- b) £45 million deployed by Better Society Capital, which allowed better access to investment including emergency loans for charities, social enterprises and some small businesses which faced cash-flow problems and disruption to their trading following the Covid-19 outbreak
- c) Fair4All Finance used £65 million to support affordable credit providers to increase access to fair, appropriate products and services for those struggling financially, providing them with an alternative to high cost loans - this included an expanded Affordable Credit Scale-up Programme and other initiatives for those in financially vulnerable circumstances
- d) £30 million went to Access, the Foundation for Social Investment, which supported social enterprises helping people in vulnerable circumstances - it was made up to £10 million available for emergency support through social lenders while also developing a wider programme of recovery finance for the social sector (both initiatives worked alongside Better Society Capital and other social lenders, enabling a wider range of organisations to access affordable and flexible finance)

3.134. The Government Equalities Office undertook a PSED assessment of the broader Dormant Asset Scheme which included the £150 million Covid-19 response funding. This assessment included consideration of the impact on the pandemic on groups, particularly young people.' **[SL/137 INQ000623554]**.

#### *Covid-19 Rapid Response Loan Fund*

3.135. The Covid-19 Rapid Response Loan Fund was publicly called the Resilience and Recovery Loan Fund (RRLF). The Resilience and Recovery Loan Fund, managed by Social Investment Business, enabled social lenders to provide emergency loans to

social enterprises and charities that were experiencing disruption as a result of Covid-19<sup>26</sup>. Loans could be used to provide working capital until normal business resumed, cover delays in trade payments, or meet the increased demand for services, without requiring personal guarantees and charging no fees or interest for 12 months.

- 3.136. The fund was launched in April 2020, with Better Society Capital (BSC) providing £25 million in funds, with loans backed by the government's Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and issued through Social Investment Business working with Big Issue Invest, CAF Venturesome, Charity Bank, Resonance, Social Investment Scotland, Social and Sustainable Capital and Wales Council for Voluntary Action.
- 3.137. In August 2020, Access, the Foundation for Social Investment, also provided £4 million of grant funding for this scheme.
- 3.138. The RRLF funding was distributed to over 80 charities and social enterprises across the UK in order to help these organisations keep their services going at a crucial stage of the pandemic.
- 3.139. The DCMS role was extensive and included agreeing with BEIS the need for and mechanics of the fund, agreeing and releasing dormant assets funding to support it and working with the external partners named above to get it up and running at speed.
- 3.140. DCMS did not undertake a PSED for this work as it was run by BSC using dormant assets funding.

#### *Local Connections Fund*

- 3.141. The £4 million Local Connections Fund was announced in December 2020 (separate to the £750 million VCSE package). The fund was made up of £2 million from DCMS and £2 million from The National Lottery Community Fund. For DCMS, the £2 million was existing funding within the CSY directorate's budget which was repurposed. It had already been earmarked for loneliness and was used to specifically tackle Covid-19-related loneliness during the pandemic.
- 3.142. The programme provided microgrants (usually between £300 and £2,500) to small, local charities and grassroots groups that were working to tackle loneliness by helping people feel more connected within their communities in a safe and secure way. The funding was particularly aimed at small organisations working with communities that were more vulnerable to social isolation. Almost 1,700 projects were funded,

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<sup>26</sup>Social Investment Business is a charity providing finance to third sector organisations.

benefitting an estimated 820,000 people (at an average of £2.24 per person). Projects included befriending schemes for socially isolated older people.

#### *Horseracing Cashflow and Hardship Support Package*

- 3.143. In April 2020, support for horseracing was announced [**SL/138 INQ000623620**]. The Horserace Betting Levy Board made a contribution of £20 million to support racecourses - this funding was mainly released from the Horserace Betting Levy Board's reserves and £6.5 million of the contribution came through repurposing the Capital Credit Scheme [**SL/139 INQ000623625**]. DCMS provided approval for the Horserace Betting Levy Board to repurpose the funding [**SL/140 INQ000623622**].
- 3.144. In addition, £8 million was provided by the Racing Foundation to support individuals in the sport. As can be seen in the report undertaken as part of an external Board Effectiveness Review in 2024, the money was made available as i) loans ii) early payment of already committed race day services grants and iii) repurposed capital credit scheme. The board's existing criteria for loans and grants would have applied.
- 3.145. A PSED assessment was not undertaken for this funding as it was using existing Horserace Betting Levy Board reserves to mitigate lower income at racecourses when racing was stopped or took place behind closed doors.

#### *Kickstarting Tourism Package*

- 3.146. The £10 million Kickstarting Tourism Package was introduced in the summer of 2020, which provided English tourism businesses with funding to adapt to the pandemic. It gave small businesses in tourist destinations grants of up to £5,000. This fund was led by MHCLG with no involvement from DCMS, though it did benefit DCMS sectors.

#### *Destination Management Organisations Resilience Fund*

- 3.147. The Covid-19 Destination Management Resilience Fund was designed to help alleviate the financial pressure many Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) faced at the beginning of the pandemic. DMOs played a central role in engaging with tourism businesses to communicate government's public health and economic support package to the many thousands of tourism businesses across England. The fund helped pay employees who could not be furloughed under the Job Retention Scheme because there was still a requirement for them to undertake this work.
- 3.148. At the time of the pandemic, there were 150 DMOs in England. As detailed above, some DMOs were wholly funded by the private sector, others were wholly funded

through the public sector, via local authorities, and some were funded by a combination of private sector and public sector funding. DMO performance was assessed as highly variable with commercially-funded DMOs tending to perform better than publicly funded ones [SL/141 [INQ000623555](#)]. DMOs were only eligible to apply for this fund if 50% or more of their operating costs were generated through commercial revenue streams and if this income was at high risk due to Covid-19.

- 3.149. As a result of the pandemic, DMOs that relied on private sector funding were vulnerable due to losses of commercial income. However, they were considered to play an important role in sourcing industry intelligence, representing the needs of industry businesses, administering grants, programmes and projects in the tourism sector that benefitted local areas and regions, enabling higher levels of inbound tourism and attracting investment.
- 3.150. For these reasons, the £1.33 million DMO Resilience Fund was developed to support DMOs at the beginning of the pandemic. The £1.33 million was reallocated funding from the £5.45 million 2020-21 allocation of the Discover England Fund. The fund aimed to support eligible English DMOs to continue to provide vital business support and advice to tourism businesses by granting them limited, short-term funding so that they could maintain core activities, in order to be able to work on longer-term recovery activities. The fund supported 56 DMOs [SL/142 [INQ000623638](#)]. The maximum grant under the fund was £20,000, through an application process administered via VisitEngland. VisitEngland produced guidance notes for DMOs, which included project monitoring requirements. A list of DMOs supported through the fund was posted on the UK Parliament website in July 2020 [SL/143 [INQ000623637](#)].
- 3.151. The PSED was considered in advice to ministers regarding the fund, and noted that there were no anticipated adverse equality impacts [SL/144 [INQ000623494](#)].

*Destination Management Organisation Emergency Financial Assistance Fund*

- 3.152. The Destination Management Organisation Resilience Fund provided support to Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) at the start of the pandemic. The DMO Emergency Financial Assistance Fund provided emergency financial assistance of £925,000 to eligible DMOs at risk of closure, for core staffing and operational costs, enabling them to maintain their operations in the later stages of the pandemic (October 2020 - March 2021).
- 3.153. This funding was repurposed from VisitEngland's Discover England Fund (DEF)

whose objective was to 'improve the English tourism offer by supporting the development of bookable tourism products aimed at international visitors'. The DCMS finance team confirmed that HMT approval was not needed for further repurposing of the DEF.

- 3.154. DMOs were eligible to apply for grant awards of up to £100,000 through VisitEngland. Eligibility and prioritisation criteria, and monitoring requirements were provided to DMOs within the Emergency Fund Guidance Notes. There were 15 recipients of this fund.
- 3.155. While a full PSED assessment was not undertaken for this funding, a paper summarising the package noted that DCMS did not consider there to be any adverse impacts'.

*Public Bodies/Freedom Bodies funding*

- 3.156. In the decade preceding the pandemic, many of DCMS's public bodies had successfully pursued a more commercial model. For instance, museums currently receive less public funding than their counterparts in other countries. The public bodies were therefore facing a similar challenge to the rest of their sectors, though the issue of their finances is separate to the wider cultural support package (the CRF) which was being developed in parallel. The public bodies were therefore faced with financial risks which potentially undermined their future operations and were having to consider drastic action until the levels of financial support extended to them through general and bespoke government schemes was clear.
- 3.157. Public bodies were first supported through provision of advanced grant-in-aid funding for the first quarter of the 2020-2021 financial year and the ability to access the Job Retention Scheme.
- 3.158. In 2020-21, the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund incorporated an agreement for funding up to £99.3 million to support DCMS's freedoms bodies - although it was branded as part of the Culture Recovery Fund package, it was managed separately **[SL/145 INQ000623595]**. The methodology was for a percentage uplift to be applied to each affected public body's baseline annual resource grant-in-aid figure, depending on the ratio of their pre-Covid-19 income assumptions of Exchequer funding to self generated income. Each was therefore allocated an uplift up to between 10 per cent to 25 per cent of their baseline.
- 3.159. In 2021-22, DCMS secured a further £90 million through the spending review to

mitigate the financial impact of Covid-19 on freedom bodies. This was also at times branded as part of the Culture Recovery Fund, and included in the total £390 million announced for the CRF at Spring Budget 2021, though it was managed separately [SL/146 [INQ000623594](#)]. In 2021-22, the mechanism for allocating this funding was that public bodies had to first achieve a 5% savings target. DCMS would then mitigate against any residual losses (capped at 40% of the body's pre-Covid-19 unrestricted income levels).

- 3.160. In 2022-23, a further £32.72 million was allocated to public bodies for Covid-19 support, as secured through the 2021 spending review [SL/147 [INQ000623612](#)]. This funding was allocated proportional to the institution's financial position and broadly brought most public bodies to a neutral budget position in 2022-2023. DCMS retained £3.77 million to target specific cases where recovery was not uniform across the group.
- 3.161. Equalities considerations were factored into the advice provided to DCMS ministers on allocations and no adverse impacts were identified.

*Arts Council England drawdown*

- 3.162. On 24 March 2020, Arts Council England announced a £160 million emergency funding package. DCMS worked with the Arts Council England to agree a drawdown on their reserves and to provide some flexibility to reprofile and allocate their funding early. The HMT spending team was sighted and the DCMS Permanent Secretary agreed to the package as DCMS Accounting Officer [SL/148 [INQ000623475](#)]. Arts Council England commissioned and published an evaluation of this group of interventions.
- 3.163. This package consisted of:
- a) £90 million made available for National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Creative People and Places (CPPs) lead organisations
  - b) £50 million made available for organisations outside of the National Portfolio
  - c) £20 million made available to creative practitioners and cultural workers
- 3.164. This was an Arts Council England-led programme, and as such the Arts Council England was responsible for ensuring it was adhering to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **Part D: Economic support for the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector**

4.1. The £750 million package of support for the VCSE sector was announced on 8 April 2020. This £750 million package was made up of multiple different funding streams and was intended to be a one-off funding award, allocated and distributed quickly in order to target those areas where it was most needed at the time. This was new funding from HMT, with £200 million allocated by HMT to DHSC for hospices, and £60 million to the devolved administrations. The rest was allocated to DCMS, who then either distributed it via the various funding streams outlined in this section or allocated it to other government departments.

### **Data on the VCSE sector**

4.2. DCMS commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), in partnership with RSM UK, to carry out an evaluation of the £750 million funding package<sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup>. The evaluation aimed to assess the impact of the funding on grantholders, and on people and communities in need (impact evaluation); as well as assessing how well the scheme worked and if it was implemented as intended (process evaluation). The evaluation also set out key lessons and practical recommendations to inform government interaction with the VCSE sector and how it can best implement future emergency funding initiatives [[SL/149 INQ000623597](#); [SL/150 INQ000623592](#); [SL/151 INQ000623591](#); [SL/152 INQ000623064](#)]. The evaluation took a theory-based, mixed methods approach, combining primary research and secondary data analysis covering eight of the funding package's nine funding streams<sup>29</sup>. It was published in April 2022.

4.3. Overall, the evaluation found strong evidence to conclude that the funding package did contribute to the financial position of grantholders which supported over 14,000 organisations.

4.4. In total, surveyed grantholders reported that they were able to help approximately four and a half million service users between them. When scaled to the total amount of funding received across all the funding streams covered in the primary research, this brings the estimated number of service users reached to 14.9 million. Combined with

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<sup>27</sup>NatCen is a UK based, not-for-profit social research charity.

<sup>28</sup>RSM UK is a provider of audit, tax, and consulting services

<sup>29</sup>The devolved administrations fund was out of scope for this evaluation as the UK Government was not involved in administering or managing the fund.

the estimate from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund evaluation (which was part of the funding package, but evaluated separately), this brings the total estimated number of services users reached by the funding package to 21.5 million<sup>30</sup>.

- 4.5. Although DCMS was the initial data controller for the fund, NatCen and RSM UK took on the role of the data controllers for the purposes of the evaluation and they hold the relevant data **[SL/153 INQ000623592]**.
- 4.6. An independent impact evaluation of the Coronavirus Community Support Fund was undertaken by Ipsos MORI and published in September 2021<sup>31</sup> **[SL/154 INQ000606579]**. The Coronavirus Community Support Fund was evaluated separately as it was the largest portion of the £750 million package and was delivered by an intermediary grant maker - The National Lottery Community Fund - as opposed to a government department. Among the key findings the evaluation showed that: 82% of grantholders used the funding to enable them to adapt to deliver new and/or existing activities; 48% used the grant to continue to operate; 44% used the fund to respond to increased demand.
- 4.7. A wide range of beneficiaries received support with the most common groups being: people with mental health conditions; people with long-standing illnesses or disabilities; children and young people; and people who faced financial hardship. Through extrapolating the survey results up to the funding programme as a whole, Ipsos MORI estimated that 6.58 million beneficiaries were reached by Coronavirus Community Support Fund grantholders.
- 4.8. Ipsos MORI are the controllers of the data utilised for this evaluation.

#### ***Youth Covid-19 Support Fund evaluation***

- 4.9. NatCen carried out an independent evaluation of the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund which involved analysing application data, a survey with successful grantees, focus groups, interviews and case studies of successful organisations **[SL/155 INQ000623058]**. This evaluation was separate to that of the wider support package as the fund was discrete, with a different grant administrator (PwC) and outcomes. While PwC supported NatCen's access to grantee data, DCMS retains the responsibility of

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<sup>30</sup>It should be noted that some double counting may have occurred where individuals used multiple services. Furthermore, the level of support provided to service users was highly varied, ranging from one-off information provision to more sustained engagement over a number of months.

<sup>31</sup>Ipsos MORI is a market research company that conducts surveys and research on public and social policy.

data controller.

- 4.10. The evaluation showed that 1,171 organisations of greatly varying sizes and incomes applied to the fund of which 555 organisations were successful. A key achievement noted by the evaluation was that the fund for met the objective of improving the financial sustainability and viability of grantees, by covering essential costs (such as rent and staffing costs, as well as the cost of adapting spaces and services to make them Covid-19 safe) which would not otherwise have been covered.
- 4.11. Between November 2020 and March 2021, the National Audit Office (NAO) undertook an investigation exploring DCMS's distribution and oversight of the £513 million of the £750 million package for which DCMS was responsible<sup>32 33</sup>.
- 4.12. This investigation considered how the DCMS allocated funds, how financial support could be accessed by the sector and where financial support was received. As an initial factual report, the investigation did not consider how individual charities may have benefited, nor the impacts on charity service users. It also did not consider whether the package, or the DCMS's administration of it, offered value for money to taxpayers. The NAO's report was published in March 2021 and is available to view on its website.

#### ***Geographical distribution of the funds***

- 4.13. It was vital for the funding to be demand-led to ensure it reached those who needed it most, so rather than setting specific allocations by geographic and/or service area, DCMS:
- a) ensured the objectives put in place with each grant partner mirrored the department's overall aims and expectations
  - b) placed the onus on charities and experienced funding partners to award funds to areas of greatest need
- 4.14. In addition, it can be very difficult to collect specific beneficiary and location data given the way charities operate. Due to the pressures on charities during the pandemic, it was important to limit reporting requirements.
- 4.15. However, DCMS did publish the grant data it was responsible for across the various funding streams on the 360 Giving website, to ensure transparency **[SL/156**

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<sup>32</sup>The NAO is the UK's independent public spending watchdog.

<sup>33</sup>The NAO investigation and report did not include the £200 million awarded to DHSC for hospices or the £60 million awarded to the devolved administrations.

**INQ000623619]**<sup>34</sup>. This data shows the postcode location of specific charities receiving funding.

- 4.16. The majority of funding streams were distributed in England only, including the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund. The Community Match Challenge, Big Night In (see paragraphs 4.30-4.37) and some other government department funds provided grants to organisations across the UK. Devolved administrations received £60 million to distribute directly in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This funding was not administered or managed by the UK Government and was not in scope of the evaluation for the £750 million VCSE funding package.

***How the funding was divided***

- 4.17. Over 16,700 VCSE organisations received a share of the funding from the £750 million VCSE support package. Over 10,000 of those received part of the £513 million distributed by DCMS. This included several thousand new grantees. The majority of the intermediary grantmakers, such as The National Lottery Community Fund, Comic Relief, Children in Need, and the National Emergencies Trust, had worked with DCMS (or the Office for Civil Society when based in CO) in some form. These organisations were trusted grantmaking bodies, with the expertise, reach, resources, and capacity to quickly distribute funds as onward grants. A notable exception was the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, which was a new relationship for DCMS at this time. Given the lack of available data, it is difficult to determine how many of the onward grantees, which form the majority of organisations that received a share of the £513 million, had existing relationships with DCMS.
- 4.18. Owing to the need to distribute funds through specialist intermediary grantmaking organisations, DCMS distributed approximately £438.4 million of its £513 million funds through direct award or existing funding streams. However, direct awardees such as The National Lottery Community Fund (for the Coronavirus Community Support Fund), Children in Need, Comic Relief and others had open application processes for onward grant distribution. The £7.5 million Winter Loneliness Fund was distributed via three existing funding schemes, helping to expedite the distribution of these funds. This decision was taken on the basis that funds needed to be distributed to VCSE organisations as quickly as possible to be impactful over the winter period, ahead of the third lockdown in January 2021. The process for developing the Winter Loneliness

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<sup>34</sup>Charity that helps organisations publish and use open grants data so that people can understand the funding context, make informed decisions, and work together to support communities and good causes as effectively as possible.

Fund took place in mid-to-late December 2020. Two of the three existing funding schemes held light-touch onward competitions, to identify the most impactful interventions that could be funded to support people in their homes over the winter **[SL/157 INQ000623593]**.

- 4.19. The Community Match Challenge (CMC) was an exception and the £84.6 million of this funding was distributed following an open application process. The twenty funding partners that received CMC funding were selected based on their ability to demonstrate through their application that they had raised appropriate levels of donations to receive DCMS match funding.

### **Schemes**

- 4.20. The figure of £750 million for VCSE funding was agreed through negotiations between DCMS and HMT **[SL/158 INQ000623557; SL/159 INQ000623468]**.

- 4.21. The objectives of the funding were to:

- a) ensure essential services were provided to vulnerable people through increased community support
- b) provide critical frontline services to vulnerable groups affected by Covid-19
- c) reduce the closure of charities providing essential services to vulnerable people by ensuring they had the financial resources to operate, thereby reducing the burden on public services
- d) provide key services specific to supporting the Covid-19 response, to reduce the burden on the NHS or other public services **[SL/160 INQ000623484]**

### ***Other government departments***

- 4.22. The VCSE sector covers a range of sub-sectors and service delivery areas. In the early days of the government's Covid-19 response, government departments were considering the likely funding needed to maintain service delivery. In order to prevent potential duplication and to streamline the process of departments bidding to HMT for new funding, DCMS (as government lead for the VCSE sector) worked with HMT and co-ordinated a cross-government process for all of the VCSE sector. DCMS designed a proforma application for other government departments to apply for funding and initial assessments of each bid were undertaken by policy, legal, finance and analytical teams.

- 4.23. DCMS engaged with government departments to ensure that the full range of policy considerations for funding were taken into account by following the star chamber system. A star chamber panel session was held in April 2020 and departments were invited to answer questions on their bids. This gave DCMS the opportunity to scrutinise those departments bidding for funding and enabled special advisers from DCMS, HMT and Downing Street to feed in views collectively. Final decisions on the awards were made jointly by DCMS and HMT ministers.
- 4.24. £163 million was awarded to eight government departments as follows:
- a) BEIS - £12 million to fund advice services through the Citizens Advice Bureau
  - b) Defra - £24 million to support zoos for continued animal care (£11,200,000) and to support frontline and food distribution projects (£12,800,000)
  - c) DfE - £21.8 million (£6.92 million to safeguard vulnerable children including care leavers through charities including Barnado's and the NSPCC), (£8 million to support disabled and critically ill children through the Family Fund Trust), (£560,000 to support children and families in kinship, fostering, adoption or care leaver provision) and (£5.6 million to support front line charities to continue to deliver existing services to children and families
  - d) Home Office - £6.24 million to fund support for vulnerable children, £1.44 million to support victims of modern slavery, and £1.6 million to support community based services for victims of domestic abuse
  - e) MHCLG - £4.9 million to support charities within the homelessness and rough sleeping sector (£4.8 million) and faith umbrella bodies (£100,000) and £8 million for the provision of safe accommodation services
  - f) The Ministry of Defence and CO - £4.8 million to support armed forces charities
  - g) MoJ - £2.8 million to support provision of specialist advice services and £20 million to support domestic abuse and sexual violence community based services
- 4.25. Funds were allocated either directly, through an intermediary or by establishing a dedicated fund to act as grant-maker and distributed across a total of 24 sub-funds.
- 4.26. All departments were required to provide match funding of a minimum of 20% of their allocation and the funding was subject to agreement and compliance with the terms

and conditions set out in each department's award letter and in each department's memorandum of understanding provided by DCMS [SL/161 INQ000623505; SL/162 INQ000623504; SL/163 INQ000623507; SL/164 INQ000623506; SL/165 INQ000623508; SL/166 INQ000623549; SL/167 INQ000623511; SL/168 INQ000623510; SL/169 INQ000623517; SL/170 INQ000623509; SL/171 INQ000623535; SL/172 INQ000623537; SL/173 INQ000623538; SL/174 INQ000623540; SL/175 INQ000623561; SL/176 INQ000623536; SL/177 INQ000623539; SL/178 INQ000623552].

- 4.27. Although DCMS coordinated and oversaw the process through which this funding was allocated, responsibility for managing and distributing the funds was assumed by the responsible department. Objectives for the funds were in line with the overarching objectives of the £750 million package.
- 4.28. Invitations to submit applications were sent to departments in March and award letters were sent in May 2020.
- 4.29. DCMS was allocated £3.2 million through this funding stream to support organisations tackling loneliness, (including through the Winter Loneliness Fund which I discuss in more detail at paragraphs 4.48-4.51).

### ***Big Night In***

- 4.30. The Big Night In was a British telethon appeal, broadcast by BBC One on 23 April 2020, with the aim of raising money to support those affected by the pandemic. It was the first joint initiative between two BBC telethon charities - Children in Need and Comic Relief. At the same time the Chancellor announced the £750 million VCSE funding package, the government committed to matching pound for pound the amount raised via the Big Night In, resulting in £37 million government match funding of public donations received during the appeal.
- 4.31. A business case setting out this approach was produced by DCMS, and as this was part of the wider funding package, HMT agreed that a formal Treasury Assurance Process was not required [SL/179 INQ000623609; SL/180 INQ000623569; SL/181 INQ000623520; SL/182 INQ000623497]. DCMS led the oversight group for this funding [SL/183 INQ000623543].
- 4.32. The first £20 million of match funds went directly to the National Emergencies Trust, with the remainder of the match funds distributed evenly between Comic Relief and

Children in Need<sup>35</sup>.

- 4.33. The Children in Need sub-fund of the Big Night In funding responded to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised children who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, including: those who were affected by poor mental health and wellbeing; disabled children and young people facing self-isolation restrictions; and those affected by domestic abuse and bereavement while in the home **[SL/184 INQ000623094]**.
- 4.34. The Comic Relief sub-fund also focused on supporting families and communities to meet the needs of young children **[SL/185 INQ000623097]**. The sub-fund focused on ensuring the sustainability and continued operation of organisations that were providing essential services to young people, at a time when VCSE organisations were facing increasing demand for their services and financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.
- 4.35. These schemes were designed, implemented and administered by the National Emergencies Trust, Comic Relief and Children in Need. As these schemes were only provided with match funding from the VCSE funding package (namely because the schemes already existed), these organisations also set their schemes' objectives.

#### ***Community Match Challenge***

- 4.36. £85 million was allocated to the Community Match Challenge to match-fund the fundraising efforts of philanthropic groups, foundations and grant-making organisations<sup>36</sup>. Based on sector insight and the recognition that such organisations were delivering essential services to a range of beneficiaries during the pandemic, but would not be eligible for other funds, the VCSE funding package team within the CSY directorate asked ministers for permission to establish a match fund.
- 4.37. The objective was to stimulate and enhance further generous donations from those wishing to support their communities during those challenging times. The funds matched 100% of the funds successful applicants raised between 18 July 2020 and 31 August 2020. The target of the fund was to award grants in the range of £5 million to £20 million, although bids under £5 million were considered. The Community Match Challenge Fund launched on 18 July 2020 and closed for bids on 2 August 2020.

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<sup>35</sup>National Emergencies Trust is a charity established to coordinate charitable fundraising and distribution in the event of a domestic disaster or emergency.

<sup>36</sup>Launched by the government in July 2020, the Community Match Challenge, invited philanthropists, foundations and grant making organisations to put forward new funding with the offer of government match funding

Funds could be spent until 31 March 2021. The fund aimed to support a range of service users based on their needs, including older people, disabled people, children and young people, carers, low income families, homeless people, victims of domestic abuse and people with learning disabilities.

#### ***Coronavirus Community Support Fund***

4.38. £199 million was allocated to the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF). The fund aimed to provide support for vulnerable people affected by the pandemic and to reduce closures of essential organisations such as charities and social enterprises. The fund was administered by The National Lottery Community Fund<sup>37</sup>. The scheme was designed by DCMS following confirmation from HMT of the £200 million package.

4.39. The CCSF had two primary objectives:

- a) to increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the Covid-19 crisis, through the work of civil society organisations
- b) reduce temporary closures of essential charities and social enterprises, ensuring services for vulnerable people impacted by Covid-19 had the financial resources to operate [SL/186 INQ000623553]

4.40. The fund opened for applications on 22 May 2020 and closed on 17 August 2020. Grants were awarded through to the end of November 2020 and all successful grantholders were given six months to spend their allocation.

#### ***Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership***

4.41. £4.8 million was allocated to the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP). The funding had three main objectives, set through co-design between DCMS and the VCSEP:

- a) establish effective, informed and connected local level practice between VCSE organisations and with statutory bodies where appropriate, enabling small and medium sized VCSE organisations to increase effectiveness
- b) establish a data collection and management system to capture unmet needs at a local level and in aggregate, enabling more effective allocation and use of VCSE and other resources locally and nationally

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<sup>37</sup>The National Lottery Community Fund (the largest grant making body in the UK) is a DCMS public body

- c) broker, match and coordinate volunteer demand and supply from government departments and VCSE organisations to increase effectiveness of volunteer resources [SL/187 [INQ000623531](#); SL/188 [INQ000623556](#)]

- 4.42. DCMS managed the grant and established regular steering group meetings to oversee how the funding was used [SL/189 [INQ000623590](#)]. This included weekly reporting and monitoring meetings, which consisted of a review of the key performance indicators and milestones for the grant funding.
- 4.43. The purpose of the funding was to ensure demand for voluntary services were met at a local and national level. As such, the funding for the VCSEP was designed to be used according to need - DCMS and the VCSEP took decisions about how and where funding was distributed when need arose, based on intelligence gathered by the National Coordination Cell (NCC)<sup>38</sup>.
- 4.44. The funding was administered by VCSEP and was distributed to 200 local and 30 national partner organisations, with the aim of supporting the coordination of the emergency voluntary response to Covid-19 [SL/190 [INQ000623550](#)]. The funding ran from 1 May 2020 to 31 March 2021. £1,226,819 covered costs incurred between 1 May 2020 and 1 July 2020; £3,576,270 was paid in arrears for work carried out between 1 July 2020 and 31 March 2021.

#### ***Youth Covid-19 Support Fund***

- 4.45. £16.5 million was allocated to the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund (YCSF), which distributed the funding to a mixture of grassroots youth clubs, uniformed youth groups, national youth and umbrella organisations based in England. The fund aimed to enable youth organisations to continue operating, targeting those which were impactful but struggling.
- 4.46. The overall aim of the YCSF was to enable youth organisations to continue operating in the short-term and to preserve the ecosystem of the sector in coming years. The main objectives of the Fund were to:
  - a) support youth organisations that were struggling financially due to the Covid-19 pandemic

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<sup>38</sup>The National Coordination Cell was a part of the VCSEP and managed day-to-day by Volunteering Matters, a member of the VCSEP. Its role was to coordinate requests for support made by the government on behalf of the VCSEP. It provided a focal point for directing VCSEP support to where it was needed most.

- b) improve organisations' financial stability to ensure that they remained viable and continue operating

4.47. The Fund was particularly focused on smaller, grassroots organisations that were greatly impacted by the pandemic. Funding was available for a period of six months between November 2020 and March 2021 and was awarded retrospectively.

#### ***The Winter Loneliness Fund***

4.48. The Winter Loneliness Fund distributed £7.5 million across three existing schemes:

- a) £5 million to Arts Council England for arts and library services
- b) £2 million to extend the government's Loneliness Fund originally launched in May 2020
- c) £500,000 distributed between the Audio Content Fund and the Community Radio Fund alongside existing funding<sup>39 40</sup>

4.49. The fund aimed to tackle loneliness among vulnerable groups, particularly in the context of winter and lockdowns.

4.50. Its main objectives, designed following an assessment of user needs over the winter of 2021 based on intelligence from key stakeholders (especially VCSE sector partners), were:

- a) to support the delivery of services aimed at addressing loneliness
- b) help organisations adapt services during Covid-19 restrictions
- c) collect evidence on Covid-19 and loneliness

4.51. The three schemes were administered within DCMS. The Winter Loneliness Fund was developed following the success of the previous Loneliness Fund in tackling social isolation during the pandemic, alongside a recognition that the lockdown in winter 2021 could further exacerbate negative experiences of loneliness **[SL/191 INQ000623568]**.

#### ***Devolved administrations***

4.52. £60 million was allocated by HMT directly to devolved administrations. DCMS had no

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<sup>39</sup>The Audio Content Fund is a scheme which was originally supported by a grant from DCMS. It is a not for profit organisation which funds independent producers making public service content for commercial and community radio.

<sup>40</sup>Fund which supports the core costs of running Ofcom-licensed community radio stations.

responsibility or oversight for how this funding was spent.

### ***Hospices***

- 4.53. £200 million was allocated by HMT directly to DHSC specifically for hospices. The fund aimed to alleviate the financial pressures on hospices during the Covid-19 pandemic and to enable them to provide palliative care and Covid-19 clinical services, for both inpatient care in hospices and care in the community. DCMS had no responsibility or oversight for how this funding was spent.

### **Design of the VCSE funding package**

- 4.54. The £750 million VCSE funding package was not announced until 8 April 2020 due to the significant amount of work put into its development in the preceding weeks. Before the first lockdown began on 26 March 2020, DCMS officials had begun to gather evidence about the size and scale of funding that would be needed to meet acute service users' needs.
- 4.55. The initial assessment of £1 billion of funding took into account issues such as likely financial damage from the pandemic for VCSE organisations and increased levels of demand for their services. Part of that assessment was based on engagement with VCSE sector representatives and the Chief Medical Officer on 13 March 2020 and a call between the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) and VCSE leaders on 31 March 2020 [SL/192 [INQ000623483](#)]. This assessment was presented as advice to ministers on 18 March 2020 and informed ministerial decision making about the size and scale of the funding [SL/193 [INQ000623471](#)]. The assessment was adjusted down to £750 million, based on ministerial steers and following negotiations with HMT.
- 4.56. From the beginning of the first national lockdown in March 2020, the VCSE sector estimated a significant income loss with charity shops closed and fundraising events cancelled. At the end of March 2020, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) predicted that the charity sector would lose £3.7 billion of income within 12 weeks of the first national lockdown [SL/194 [INQ000623644](#)]. At the same time, the sector saw a significant increase in demand for its services, with an estimated 45,000 charities providing front-line support to those affected by the outbreak [SL/197 [INQ000623558](#)]. A combination of departmental research and modelling and sector engagement highlighted this impact to DCMS ministers, who were clear about the importance of supporting the VCSE sector through this period.

- 4.57. The fund was England only and so the devolved administrations were not consulted on its design. HMT was responsible for the transfer of the funding allocated to the devolved administrations **[SL/186 INQ000623553]**.
- 4.58. The initial funding package was designed to support the VCSE sector in the short term **[SL/193 INQ000623471]**. However, as it became clear that further support would be needed as the pandemic (and lockdown measures) continued, aspects of the funding package were adjusted to meet that need. For instance, the Community Match Challenge fund was designed in July 2020; the Winter Loneliness Fund was designed to meet the ongoing needs of people experiencing loneliness over the winter of 2020 and 2021.
- 4.59. Alternative schemes and/or means of providing support were not considered. The £750 million package was considered to be the most expedient approach to distributing funds to a wide range of organisations that were providing essential services to the most vulnerable in society during the pandemic.
- 4.60. A fund of £1 billion was proposed to DCMS ministers by CSY officials via three submissions **[SL/195 INQ000623560; SL/196 INQ000623559; SL/197 INQ000623558]**. The final figure of £750 million was reached through negotiations with the Treasury **[SL/158 INQ000623557]**.
- 4.61. To inform decision making on fund values and allocations, the CSY directorate considered data drawn from the Civil Society Almanac, charitable accounts and The National Lottery Community Fund, as well as data from sector representatives<sup>41</sup>. The data used included material such as sector income (for example, annual income from donations, trading, grants) to help predict potential reductions in income due to the effects of the pandemic; once lockdown was announced and before furlough schemes came into force, data about the size of the sector workforce was accessed, to better understand potential shortfalls in labour. Initial estimates for the number of vulnerable people likely needing support were based on data published by the Office for National Statistics and NHS England. This included estimates of the number of people with chronic and/or long-term health conditions, who would need ongoing support in their homes while shielding, and demographic data broken down by age to determine how many people over 60 would need to shield, and thus would need support. These were used to make rapid predictions on the level of need, both in terms of loss of income

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<sup>41</sup>The Civil Society Almanac is published annually by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in the UK, to provide an overview of the state of the voluntary sector, including details on the number of voluntary organisations, their workforce, financial data, and impact on society.

and demand for key sector led services.

***Decisions on which organisations should receive support***

- 4.62. Some organisations were considered absolutely critical to supporting the most vulnerable people and, as such, were pre-selected for support by DCMS and other government departments. For example, St John Ambulance is a key part of the VCSEP and was acknowledged as being essential in providing medical support in the UK. It has the ability to deploy trained first aid professionals and assist the NHS. Given its key role, and noting that the pandemic would have caused financial distress to the organisation, it was considered that there was a significant risk to this important support. Citizens Advice, sponsored by BEIS (and awarded funding from the £750 million by BEIS, which was not managed by DCMS), were similarly considered essential support providers for vulnerable people navigating issues such as personal finances and tenancy issues during the pandemic. Those decisions were based on discussions with ministers, HMT and officials around the objectives of the funding and recognition that were key delivery partners, such as those named here, for achieving those objectives. DCMS's approach was not to pre-select a host of charities, but rather other government departments put in their own bids for charities operating across their sectors, based on their superior intelligence and understanding of these organisations.
- 4.63. The strategic objectives were the same for all bids: providing key services specific to supporting the Covid-19 response; reducing burdens on the NHS or other public services; or providing critical frontline services to vulnerable groups affected by Covid-19 and associated measures (for example, social-distancing).

***Guidance***

- 4.64. Once awarded, each funding partner was responsible for making final decisions to award onward funding, and each had rigorous assessment processes in place. To ensure funding went to the organisations set out in the original bids, memorandums of understanding were set up between DCMS and the relevant government departments. No guidance was issued to departments beyond this.
- 4.65. DCMS was involved in the decision making process of only one funding partner, The National Lottery Community Fund, on the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF). This was because it was the first funding scheme established, the largest value, and potentially high risk, as a lot of awards would be given to organisations with limited experience of managing government funds, including non-registered or new

organisations and were being given as part of rapid, emergency funding. The final decision making authority was held by The National Lottery Community Fund as outlined in the grant agreement.

### **Coverage**

4.66. As part of the design of the VCSE funding package, officials modelled different scenarios based on the level of support that was required for vulnerable people. Vulnerable was taken to mean any individual acutely affected by the pandemic and the resultant lockdowns. This included a significant range of people, including:

- a) the elderly and people with acute and chronic illnesses that could be exacerbated by the disease, who were required to shield for extensive periods of time (and thus not leave their homes, requiring in-home support)
- b) people of all ages for whom lockdown measures and redundancies could exacerbate pre-existing issues or cause novel, acute problems, such financial hardship, the experience of loneliness and other mental health issues, and people at risk of domestic violence

Initial modelling assumed that support would be required for a period of twelve weeks for up to 17.96 million of people with health conditions that would require them to socially distance for up to twelve weeks. This advice was provided to ministers on 18 March 2020 [[SL/198 INQ000652355](#)]. As the extent of the support required for the VCSE sector changed and ministerial and HMT negotiations developed, the scope of the funding was refined to support a wider group of vulnerable people. However, this focus on vulnerable people meant that some VCSE organisations would not be eligible for support funding from the £750 million package. In the design of the CCSF, officials acknowledged that an estimated 48,000 organisations were supporting vulnerable people but might be financially impacted by the pandemic [[SL/186 INQ000623553](#)]. Only these 48,000 organisations would be eligible, to the exclusion of over 100,000 registered charities that were not supporting vulnerable people. This was to ensure that funding flowed to the organisations providing the most essential services to people in need during the pandemic.

### **Value for money**

4.67. Individual schemes through the £750 million VCSE funding package underwent value for money assessments commensurate with their size. For instance, the CCSF value for money assessment was more comprehensive (due to its £200 million size) than the

smaller Winter Loneliness Fund [**SL/186 INQ000623553**; **SL/157 INQ000623593**]. Initial value for money estimates were based on the commonly-used (within DCMS) methodology of cost-benefit analysis for which the general process is: to estimate a number of organisations and services that would be supported by the funding; estimate a number of organisations and services that would fail in the absence of funding; and then put a value against the continuing existence of those organisations and services. This methodology enables DCMS analysts to confidently predict the value of the impact that funding will have for beneficiaries. Value for money for the £750 million was also independently assessed as part of the overall evaluation. The evaluation was generally positive about value for money.

### **Implementation and delivery**

- 4.68. DCMS had oversight or responsibility for £513 million of the funding package. DCMS did not have any responsibility or oversight for how the funding allocated to DHSC for hospices or to the devolved administrations according to Barnett Formula calculations funding was spent<sup>42</sup>.

#### ***The National Emergencies Trust***

- 4.69. The CSY directorate has an established practice of regular civil society stakeholder engagement, which includes regular meetings between CSY officials and civil society stakeholders, as well as ministers meeting stakeholders individually and hosting roundtable discussions.
- 4.70. In 2018, DCMS sought to cooperate more closely with the voluntary and community sector and began working with the Charity Commission of England and Wales and partners on developing the voluntary and community sector's capability to respond to major incidents. DCMS also sought to improve its engagement with the voluntary and community sector. The primary mechanism for achieving this was the provision of start-up funding for the independent registered charity, National Emergencies Trust, which was launched in November 2019. The National Emergencies Trust was set up as a charity to coordinate fundraising and distribution of funds in the event of a domestic disaster or emergency, including major terrorist incidents. In the event of such an incident, the National Emergencies Trust collaborates with charities and other bodies to raise and distribute money and support those affected. The National Emergencies

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<sup>42</sup>Mechanism used by the UK Government to determine changes in funding allocated to the devolved administrations it adjusts spending in England. It ensures devolved administrations receive a proportionate share of any changes in UK Government spending on comparable services.

Trust went on to launch the Coronavirus Appeal in March 2020, which provided funding to over 14,000 projects to support people during the pandemic and as part of its Coronavirus Appeal, the National Emergencies Trust received match funding from the Big Night In funding stream (part of the £750 million support package). However, DCMS did not provide further funding for the enlargement of the National Emergencies Trust and was not involved in any process to alter or enlarge the National Emergencies Trust during the pandemic.

### ***Communication***

- 4.71. The original £750 million funding package was announced on 8 April 2020 at one of the daily press conferences the government was holding at the time, followed up by a Gov.uk communications page announcement [[SL/199 INQ000578225](#)].
- 4.72. For the schemes administered by DCMS, the relevant application information was uploaded to Gov.uk, with the onward grantee then taking forward their own communications for their portion of funding. The relevant information included eligibility criteria and supporting information to guide organisations through the application process. This is the standard practice for all grant competitions and grant awards programmes. This ensures that all information about the scheme, including contact information for further information, is available on a publicly-accessible forum, helping to promote confidence and certainty for all applicants. For schemes 'owned' but not delivered by DCMS, communications were the responsibility of the grant makers. Other government departments were also responsible for their own communications.
- 4.73. There were no communications specifically aimed at socially and economically vulnerable people as the packages were not aimed at direct applications from individuals.

### ***Accessibility***

- 4.74. Each scheme had a different mechanism through which charities could access funds, such as competitions and direct awards from DCMS's partners. An overview of how each scheme ran its competition is below.
- 4.75. DCMS took a dual approach to designing the funds. We frequently consulted with our partners through the Civil Society Stakeholder Group and infrastructure bodies such as the VCSEP. DCMS also consulted sources such as Nottingham Trent University's VCSE Barometer Survey, which provided monthly updates about the current health of the sector. These sources enabled DCMS to design funds that would target

organisations working with vulnerable people in the most need during different phases of the pandemic response, but were also at significant risk of closure due to financial pressures, increase in demand for their services, and reductions in paid workforce and volunteers.

- 4.76. The second approach was a user-centred design. As laid out in this statement, DCMS consulted a range of data sources and intelligence passed on by partners (including local authorities, emergency services, and the NHS) to better understand user needs and ensure funding could adapt and reach as broad a range of beneficiaries as possible. For instance, the Winter Loneliness Fund was based on current intelligence from charitable partners about the potential negative impacts of another lockdown over the Christmas period.

*Coronavirus Community Support Fund*

- 4.77. The National Lottery Community Fund ran an open competition to which VCSE organisations could apply - 45% of organisations receiving CCSF funding were new applicants to The National Lottery Community Fund **[SL/200 INQ000623611]**.

*Community Match Challenge*

- 4.78. DCMS ran an open competition to appoint partners for this funding. The chosen partners then made onward grants - depending on the model of the partner organisation, some of these were to existing grant holders and some were via open competition.

*Big Night In*

- 4.79. As set out in paragraphs 4.30-4.35, this fund was made up of government match funding of public donations which was distributed by Comic Relief, Children in Need and the National Emergencies Trust.

*The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership*

- 4.80. This fund was distributed across VCSEP member organisations by the British Red Cross<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup>The British Red Cross co-chairs VCSEP along with the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, a registered charity and national membership body for local support and development organisations in England.

*Winter Loneliness Fund*

- 4.81. Funds were distributed through three existing schemes to expedite the delivery of the funding. This fund built on previous funding and was announced in December 2020, aimed at reducing social isolation through small grants to small charities. The tackling loneliness strand had a light-touch competitive process, which afforded the DCMS team the ability to fund projects that have a proven track record of successful delivery.

*Youth Covid-19 Support Fund*

- 4.82. Awards were made via a competitive process.

*Other government departments*

- 4.83. DCMS invited 11 departments to apply for funds to support charities relevant to their sectors. Ten departments submitted 53 applications, seeking £277 million in financial support - £117 million more was available through this scheme. Many of the applications named individual charities that departments intended to award funds to, some of which had previously been named in the government's 8 April 2020 announcement.

*Communication and consultation with VCSE organisations*

- 4.84. On 13 March 2020, the Minister for Civil Society (The Baroness Barran) chaired a forum with over 40 leaders from the VCSE to examine the response to Covid-19, and the potential impact on charities and social enterprises. Professor Jenny Harries, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, briefed attendees on the latest medical advice and answered a range of questions **[SL/201 [INQ000623470](#); SL/202 [INQ000623469](#)]**.
- 4.85. On 19 March 2020, the Secretary of State (Oliver Dowden) attended a meeting with key sector stakeholders regarding the response to Covid-19 **[SL/203 [INQ000623606](#)]**.
- 4.86. On 25 March 2020, the DCMS Director General for Volunteering (Scott McPherson) chaired the first civil society Covid-19 meeting with a range of leaders from the VCSE sector **[SL/204 [INQ000623477](#)]**.
- 4.87. The Director General for Volunteering also chaired a cross-government department meeting with Directors General on 2 April 2020 to explore managing the funding process for the VCSE funding package in relation to other government departments **[SL/205 [INQ000623488](#)]**.
- 4.88. Two regular weekly calls were set up - one with stakeholders and the Minister for Civil

Society (The Baroness Barran) and the other with stakeholders and policy officials. These meetings provided the opportunity to receive sector intelligence, identify areas for collaboration and share the latest government advice [**SL/206 INQ000623487**; **SL/207 INQ000623498**]. This forum eventually became the Civil Society Stakeholder Group.

### ***Transparency***

- 4.89. This was an early and supportive package to back charities involved in the Covid-19 response so we were always going to have to make some significant assumptions and predictions.
- 4.90. There was, from the very beginning, an essential need to balance between speed and transparency, especially as this was emergency - and extraordinary - funding. There is a long-established practice in the CSY directorate of publishing the criteria by which bids for grants will be judged. This is to ensure the utmost transparency in public spending. Overall, at least £306 million of the package was to be awarded to charities through open competition with clear criteria published for applicants. However, the underlying assumptions that underpinned the development of the economic support package required different delivery practices.
- 4.91. Early assumptions made in the development of the fund included: 1) that almost 18 million people in the vulnerable groups were expected to be socially distancing, of which officials estimated that at least 1.8 million people would require immediate in-home support due to lack of wider support networks (i.e. as rapidly as possible once their shielding period had begun) [**SL/193 INQ000623471**]. This number turned out to be much larger once a full lockdown for all citizens was called; and 2) that a significant portion of VCSE organisations were at risk of closure, given that £27 billion of annual income for charities comes from sources (public fundraising, trading and investment income), that were considered to be at significant risk due to the immediate effects of the pandemic. Health and social care charities, which were assumed to be on the forefront of the response to the pandemic, rely predominantly on income from these sources. Within that context, great emphasis was placed on ensuring continued and impactful support to vulnerable people and releasing funds as quickly as possible.
- 4.92. DCMS did recognise that there were criticisms about the lack of transparency at that time. The Public Accounts Committee (PAC), in its publicly-available report acknowledged that the department was working at pace in exceptional circumstances and reflected on all lessons learned from delivering this unprecedented economic

support.

- 4.93. The Permanent Secretary confirmed at the time that she was satisfied that civil servants and special advisers had all necessary codes of conduct in the distribution of the Covid-19 Charities Funding. The Permanent Secretary also agreed that the ultimate decisions about funding were made by ministers. In response to the PAC, the Permanent Secretary letter also confirmed that the department followed government's functional grant standard throughout the funding package [SL/208 INQ000623571].
- 4.94. Independent evaluation of funding was undertaken and a full list of grants was published on the 360 Giving website for transparency reasons.

#### ***Review of allocations by DCMS***

- 4.95. Once awarded, each funding partner was responsible for making final decisions to award onward funding. For those funds which DCMS oversaw, grant partners reported ongoing monitoring to DCMS in accordance with the conditions of their grant agreements, as standard with DCMS grants. Where partners were awarded contracts to administer funds, such as the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund, these were similarly overseen and monitored by DCMS.
- 4.96. DCMS was involved in the decision making process of only one funding partner, The National Lottery Community Fund, on the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF). This involvement included the review and assessment of all bids to the CCSF, to ensure that all bids met the criteria for funding and to flag any potential risks to The National Lottery Community Fund staff. This was because it was the first funding scheme established, the largest value, and potentially high risk. The final decision making authority was held by The National Lottery Community Fund as outlined in the Grant Agreement.

#### ***Guidance***

- 4.97. DCMS issued guidance to our public bodies and intermediary grant makers on issues such as error, fraud and eligibility criteria for the scheme as a whole.

#### ***DCMS review of awards proposed by The National Lottery Community Fund***

- 4.98. From the launch of the funding package, DCMS reviewed all proposed awards by The National Lottery Community Fund. In July 2020, DCMS changed the process so it only reviewed proposed awards worth £10,000 or more.

- 4.99. DCMS was more involved in the decision making process of the Coronavirus Community Support Fund when compared to the other schemes as it was the first funding scheme established during Covid-19, the one of largest value, and came with a potentially high risk. As stated in the grant agreement, funding applications were assessed based on a set of agreed criteria, and organisations whose work might undermine public trust in the integrity of the programme and government's Covid-19 response were subject to additional review [SL/209 INQ000623525]<sup>44</sup>. DCMS provided additional strategic review and assurance through a process of 'rapid review', by which all The National Lottery Community Fund proposed funding decisions were reviewed with the aim of identifying organisations which failed to meet this public trust criterion<sup>45</sup>. This criterion was applied to the work of the organisations as a whole, not only on activities funded by the grant. Flagged funding decisions were then returned to The National Lottery Community Fund with a short rationale as to why they had been identified. The rapid review process was later amended at the beginning of July 2020, so that only grants of £10,000 or more underwent this process in order to balance risk with the demand the process placed on the programme.
- 4.100. Alongside the 'rapid review' process, a joint panel between DMCS and The National Lottery Community Fund was established, whose purpose was to review grant funding recommendations made by The National Lottery Community Fund and draw out any matters for The National Lottery Community Fund to consider in decision making, as part of the fund. The joint panel met to discuss funding proposals which met the pre-agreed threshold of £300,000, or are considered to be noteworthy or contentious. Proposed funding decisions considered noteworthy or contentious were identified in the following two ways: by The National Lottery Community Fund directly during assessment or; by DCMS when undertaking a 'rapid review' process as set out above.
- 4.101. The joint panel was chaired by the DCMS Director General for Volunteering (Scott McPherson). In addition to the chair, the panel had eight members, nominated by DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund. Though the joint panel could highlight matters related to the proposed funding decisions of The National Lottery Community Fund, the decision-making power remained with The National Lottery

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<sup>44</sup>Undermining public trust was taken to mean any organisations that had a track record of activities that had come under criticism from the public and/or press and/or proposed any activities as part of receiving funding from DCMS that might attract public and/or press criticism in the future.

<sup>45</sup>The exact criterion (from the grant agreement) was 'Funding proposals that raise policy issues, are of particular strategic interest or whose work is noteworthy, and where grant award might undermine public trust in the integrity of the Programme and government's Covid-19 response, will be referred to the The National Lottery Community Fund and joint panel'.

Community Fund.

### ***Allocation process***

- 4.102. For funds run by other government departments, DCMS transferred Accounting Officer responsibility to that department. The relationship between DCMS and those departments was underpinned by memoranda of understanding but it would not have been proportionate for DCMS to review all individual allocations. Similarly only high-value awards by the intermediary grantmaker were reviewed.
- 4.103. DCMS was involved in the decision making process of only one funding partner. As the CCSF was the first funding scheme established, the largest value, and potentially high risk (a lot of awards being given to organisations with limited experience of managing government funds, including non-registered or new organisations) DCMS agreed with The National Lottery Community Fund that their higher-value or contentious funding proposals would be shared with DCMS, and reviewed to identify any that could benefit from further consideration before a final decision was taken.

### ***Lessons learned***

- 4.104. A full evaluation was undertaken for the £750 million VCSE Covid-19 emergency funding package [SL/152 [INQ000623064](#)]. This identified a series of lessons which will help inform how emergency funding packages can be designed and delivered in future. These lessons include:
- a) drawing on the networks and expertise of established and new funders, which was identified as a success of the funding package
  - b) a desire from funding leads for the government to place more trust in the sector and those organisations working within it, including in existing grant systems and processes
  - c) flexibility is a key strength, with many funding partners highlighting the flexibility of the packages to use funding to meet needs where they arose

### ***The National Lottery Community Fund***

- 4.105. Ministers carefully considered the change from £310 million to £200 million for The National Lottery Community Fund's Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), and the decision was made so that we could assess emerging and unmet needs in the sector. This change also successfully leveraged an additional £85 million in matched

funding through the Community Match Challenge, and funded youth and loneliness projects over the winter. DCMS was clear from the outset with The National Lottery Community Fund that the amount awarded would be continuously reviewed to ensure we were supporting the sector where needed. DCMS balanced the capacity demands on managing while also seeking to expand the reach of support funds available to a wider network.

4.106. There were several considerations that influenced DCMS's decision to distribute the £200 million (of the CCSF) through The National Lottery Community Fund [**SL/186 INQ000623553**]. These include:

- a) The National Lottery Community Fund is the largest grantmaking organisation in England, with coverage throughout the country, with a proven track record of distributing large grants
- b) The National Lottery Community Fund had the staff resource, experience, and capacity to distribute grants at speed during the early critical phase of the pandemic. This included having the appropriate counter-fraud, monitoring, and post-event assurance processes for a fund of this size
- c) The National Lottery Community Fund was the only grantmaking organisation of its size and reach that:
  - i. had significant experience and understanding of government grantmaking practices, expectations, and accountability (i.e. accountability to DCMS ministers)
  - ii. was a trusted partner of government, being one of DCMS's public bodies

4.107. DCMS did consider alternative delivery partners, such as the Charities Aid Foundation, Comic Relief and the Prince of Wales Charitable Trust. However, upon assessment, DCMS concluded that these delivery partners would require considerably more work to set up the fund. Given the speed with which the funds needed to be distributed, The National Lottery Community Fund was seen as the only viable option.

4.108. In late 2020, The National Lottery Community Fund's allocation was reduced from £200 million to £199 million because DCMS funded some evaluation costs and there was an underspend on the scheme, so after deducting administration and evaluation costs, £199 million was available for charities. The National Lottery Community Fund

estimated an administrative fee of £10.85 million (3.5% of the total fund). This was on the lower side of the range by industry standards, where we would normally see 3% to 5% of the total cost for the administrative charge for managing the fund.

- 4.109. The £200 million CCSF funding package was independently evaluated. The process evaluation assessed the performance of The National Lottery Community Fund and was positive about how the organisation performed [**SL/210 INQ000606581**].
- 4.110. Funds returned by The National Lottery Community Fund included underspent grants where grantees were unable to spend the full award amount and any funds recovered from fraud or error. This was remitted to DCMS and returned to HMT via the DCMS finance team. DCMS had no role in any further allocation of these funds once returned to HMT.

#### ***Fund distribution***

- 4.111. By the end of July 2020, the cumulative disbursement was £86.36 million out of the £188.8 million (or 45.7%) earmarked for onward recipients; by the end of October 2020, the cumulative disbursement was £144.45 million (76.5%); by the end of January 2021, the cumulative disbursement was £188.42 million (99.8%); by the end of February 2021 the cumulative disbursement remained at £188.42 million (99.8%) [**SL/211 INQ000623542; SL/212 INQ000623551**].

#### ***Unspent funds***

- 4.112. The policy rationale for the 31 March 2021 deadline was based on standard government accounting procedures - all funds needed to be used by the end of the fiscal year or be returned to HMT. At 31 March 2021 £1.57 million of the funds were unspent due to some organisations being unable to spend their total allocation before the March deadline.

#### ***Speed of distribution of the funds***

- 4.113. DCMS and its public bodies are highly experienced grantmakers and the department does not agree with the assessment set out by the Inquiry that the funding was not distributed quickly enough. Given the size and scale of the package, funds were disbursed at a pace that enabled the greatest flexibility in how organisations could use the funding, providing simplicity in the application process, while maintaining robust monitoring and evaluation methods and meeting the needs of VCSE organisations

and, by extension, vulnerable people facing acute pressures due to the pandemic. The evaluation ultimately found that in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, the funding package achieved its objectives, in no small part thanks to these characteristics.

- 4.114. At the same time, the fund needed to be distributed in line with effective counter fraud and monitoring processes, to ensure all funds were used correctly and in accordance with public spending protocols. DCMS used the Spotlight system to conduct due diligence on applications to the VCSE funding package.
- 4.115. In addition, the specific CCSF evaluation found that: Grant award decisions were made in an average of 61 days and funding was distributed within an average of 9 days of decisions being made. These processes were quicker for simple grants (up to the value of £10,000) than standard grants (over the value of £10,000). Most successful grant applicants were satisfied with the speed at which award decisions were made [**SL/210 INQ000606581**].

#### ***Monitoring and data***

- 4.116. PwC maintained a data log on behalf of DCMS that monitored the distribution of the funds on a weekly basis. This required weekly engagement, through monitoring meetings, with grant delivery partners, which were expected to provide financial updates (i.e. monetary data) accounting for their rate of distribution. This data log informed weekly notes provided to DCMS, to support the monitoring of the funds [**SL/212 INQ000623551**]. The final drawdown schedule shows payments were drawn down in line with expectations [**SL/213 INQ000623566**].

#### ***Unintended gaps***

- 4.117. DCMS found no evidence of concerns about gaps in support. The funding was agile and comprehensive and met a broad range of user needs. It was designed to be demand led so that those most in need received assistance. Priority was given to organisations that met the publicly-available criteria for funding, namely that they worked directly to support vulnerable people at risk of acute impacts from the pandemic. Although DCMS does not have evidence that this is the case, it is possible that some organisations were unaware of funding, were considered too contentious to receive funding, or were rejected for funding due to not meeting the criteria. However, £750 million was a relatively small pot of funding for a sector that draws in over £50 billion of income per annum (compared to the £1 billion for arts organisations, which has an income closer to £4.5 billion per annum). Decisions ultimately had to be made

to ensure that the funding was distributed efficiently and to have the maximum impact for vulnerable people.

### ***Monitoring of support***

- 4.118. As I discuss in paragraph 4.116, PwC maintained a data log on behalf of DCMS that monitored the distribution of the funds on a weekly basis. A full evaluation was undertaken by NatCen Social Research, in partnership with RSM UK Consulting LLP, after the fund's closure.

### ***Fraud and error***

- 4.119. DCMS's Executive Board recognised that the pace of funding increased the risk of fraud and it agreed to tolerate higher levels of risk, subject to a series of mitigations including, in particular, post event assurance. The executive board agreed on the importance of post event assurance as a control to help mitigate, but not eliminate, the risk of fraud and error.
- 4.120. We reassessed the fraud risk landscape in light of:
- a) the development of our Covid-19 funding schemes which aimed to follow CO's guidelines on post event assurance
  - b) the progress made on post event assurance
  - c) the assurance provided by the DCMS Finance Committee and Covid-19 Sub Committee
  - d) intelligence gathered from DCMS's public bodies, CO's counter fraud intelligence team and the CO Crimestoppers hotline
- 4.121. Prior to (and since) the rescue measures being implemented, we also measured levels of fraud and error via the Consolidated Data Return - quarterly reports on the levels of prevented, detected and recovered fraud across the DCMS family (core DCMS and certain public bodies) to the Public Sector Fraud Authority.
- 4.122. Total Covid-19 support packages provided by DCMS amounted to more than £3 billion. DCMS has not detected significant amounts of fraud and error in its Covid-19 expenditure. We do not currently have any losses identified that would require disclosure in our accounts.

- 4.123. Key public bodies which distributed Covid-19 funding were recently asked to provide a response to the Covid-19 Counter Fraud Commissioner on the levels of fraud and error that they detected and these are summarised below:

*Arts Council England*

- 4.124. Few cases of fraud were identified in the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) schemes - the extent of fraud and error related activity was assessed to be 1.2%.
- 4.125. Only one case of confirmed fraud was identified in the first round of CRF funding, where an applicant organisation had ceased trading prior to submission of their CRF application, resulting in a grant offer of £223,822 being withdrawn prior to the funding being released.
- 4.126. The Arts Council England itself has identified £9.7 million of dual funding, of which approximately £8.5 million has been recovered. Arts Council England is currently attempting to recover around a further £1.4 million of debts relating to CRF funding (primarily caused by dual funding). A total of eight CRF grants, totalling £1.1 million were withdrawn as a result of initial fraud investigations.

*Sport England*

- 4.127. Across all Covid-19 funding programmes, Sport England identified £335,250 in fraudulent activity. Of this, £200,000 (59.6%) was successfully prevented or recovered, leaving a net loss of £135,250.

*Sports Survival Package*

- 4.128. The loan programme invested £218 million across 83 separate loans. Of these loans, two possible incidents of fraud were identified among borrowers in SSP, representing less than 2% of borrowers in the loan book. Investigations into both cases have now closed, concluding that neither was deemed a case of fraud.

*Tackling Inequalities Fund (Together Fund)*

- 4.129. Within this £20 million fund, there have been two confirmed fraud cases with a net loss of £125,000. However, £200,000 of fraud has been prevented and there is an active ongoing fraud case which is likely to recover in the region of £86,000.

*Community Emergency Fund (CEF)*

- 4.130. Within this £28 million fund, there have been three confirmed fraud cases with a

combined net loss of £10,250.

- 4.131. The remaining six programmes - Sector Partner Fund (£5 million), Innovation Fund (£1 million), Return to Play Fund (£17 million), One Year Extensions (£115 million), National Leisure Recovery Fund (£98.2 million), Stimulating the Sector Fund (£24 million) reported no cases of fraud.

*The National Lottery Community Fund*

- 4.132. The National Lottery Community Fund is the largest funding partner to receive money from DCMS and processed the largest volume of transactions for the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF). Although a report from BDO (Binder, Dijker, and Otte) found a fraud and error rate of 6.4%, BDO sampled higher risk grants where there is inherently a great risk of fraud. Therefore the overall true rate would be lower than this figure<sup>46</sup>.
- 4.133. To date, The National Lottery Community Fund has had 113 proven fraud cases with a total of £225,858 recovered.

*Historic England*

- 4.134. With the distribution of a total of £87.6 million of Covid-19 support grants, Historic England agreed a post-event assessment plan with DCMS and CO which involved checking 100% of the grants forming the main funding scheme, and 50% in the smaller schemes with lower funding levels.
- 4.135. Given the numbers of grants checked, it is statistically unlikely (with up to more than 90% confidence) that there was material fraud not detected by this testing.
- 4.136. Each case of detected or suspected fraud identified was examined, leading to a total of four instances:
- a) a halted attempt to divert £9,000 of valid grants to a fraudulent recipient before payment was made
  - b) fraudulent supporting evidence for £2,440 in an otherwise valid claim - payment was stopped, and Historic England worked with the recipient body to investigate the rogue member of staff for gross misconduct

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<sup>46</sup> BDO is an international professional services network of public accounting, tax, consulting and business advisory firms.

- c) identified error totalling £734 where irrecoverable VAT was miscalculated
- d) an over-offer of £734 to one grant recipient where the error was detected before the final payment was made and rectified by reducing the final payment.
- e) identification of a breach of post-award conditions of an otherwise valid grant of £28,500 - action was taken to enforce the grant conditions, so no repayment was necessary

4.137. As all Covid-19 funding related fraud and error was identified before payment was made, the issue of recovery did not arise.

*National Lottery Heritage Fund*

4.138. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) was awarded a total of £172.8 million for Covid-19 funding programmes across 1,074 grants. 10 organisations (that received a total of £2,041,000 across 21 Culture Recovery Fund grants for heritage funding) were investigated following an external allegation of fraud or a concern raised internally during monitoring. However, no fraud was confirmed following the investigations, although one repayment is being sought, as a result of a recipient organisation's failure to report on expenditure.

*British Film Institute*

4.139. The British Film Institute (BFI) undertook post-award assurance of its Covid-19 funding schemes, but did not identify any fraud or error.

4.140. As the information above highlights, DCMS's public bodies continue to pursue debts arising from either fraud or error in their funding. If further losses are identified, we will seek to pursue them, though our specific approach to recovery would be dependent on the nature of any particular case.

4.141. We will also consider the value for money of our current work piloting specialist law firms to understand the return on investment in seeking recovery of Covid-19-related debts arising from fraud and error. Public bodies are responsible for making their own declarations for funding that they distributed but DCMS does support and advise them on investigation and recovery routes.

**Lessons learned**

4.142. It is standard practice in DCMS - and across government - to evaluate independently

the efficacy, efficiency and impact of funding programmes to ensure there is the utmost impartiality in the assessment. DCMS officials also undertook a reflection exercise for internal use only, given the unprecedented nature (size and scale) of the £750 million VCSE funding package. The lessons were captured as part of a video ethnographic approach to understand the impact of the work, with positive experiences detailed **[SL/214 [INQ000623643](#)]**. The reflections included an account of how the package successfully supported the VCSE sector to meet the increasing demand caused by the pandemic. It also included impact accounts from organisations that benefited from the funding.

- 4.143. It does highlight that there were issues working with some partners, such as the need to adopt new processes for those that had never worked with government before. It also refers to how government officials needed to be more agile in their approach to this funding package, compared to other grant funds in the past.
- 4.144. Civil society policy is a devolved matter and as such, there was no expectation that the funding package would be UK-wide. DCMS and the government did not have any oversight or management of funding support distributed by devolved administrations, which was awarded according to the Barnett Formula.
- 4.145. In addition to the VCSE reflection exercise mentioned in paragraph 4.142, a cross-department lessons learned exercise relating to grants capability building was undertaken in February and March 2021 **[SL/215 [INQ000623574](#); SL/216 [INQ000623577](#); SL/217 [INQ000623576](#); SL/218 [INQ000623575](#); SL/152 [INQ000623064](#)]**. The aim was to flesh out commonalities of legacy work across teams and ensure continuity across systems for 2021 and beyond; and to identify where efforts and resources can be pooled for greater efficiency (more information on wider departmental lessons learned is included in Part I). Specifically in relation to the VCSE funding, some key lessons were:
- a) drawing on the networks and expertise of established and new funders
  - b) flexibility is a key strength
  - c) the importance of planning for and building post event assurance into grant programmes
  - d) upskilling relevant officials on this, particularly in raising awareness of the full life cycle of a grant scheme, and the planning involved with post event assurance

- e) the importance of a fraud risk assessment
- f) keeping grant partners as up to date as possible and flagging expectations early

### **Part E: Inequalities, impact assessments and vulnerable groups**

- 5.1. As a public body, DCMS is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained within Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. DCMS's public bodies are also required to abide by the duty.

#### ***Guidance***

- 5.2. DCMS officials took responsibility for complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as introduced in the Equality Act 2010. The Covid-19 Hub provided cross-cutting leadership on policy to mitigate/prevent the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on some demographic groups.
- 5.3. Guidance and training were available to provide support on the application of the duty, ensuring that staff had access to relevant information, best practices and compliance requirements. Guidance on ministerial submission templates also included example paragraphs, with accompanying guidance, dealing with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

#### ***Impact assessments***

- 5.4. The DCMS Covid-19 Hub established a workstream focused on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on specific demographic groups in autumn 2020. I attended the cross-government Director General Disproportionate Impact Steering Group which began in autumn 2020. Through this group, DCMS fed back on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 (for example on young people) and advocated for how DCMS's sectors could help address this (for example volunteering, tackling mis- and disinformation) [[SL/219 INQ000623601](#)].
- 5.5. DCMS also advocated for keeping sectors open to support vulnerable groups (such as the youth sector, libraries, grassroots sport). For example, the Covid-19 Hub advocated for the impact of reducing or restricting different sectors on their workforces and audiences [[SL/219 INQ000623601](#)]. As part of this, DCMS considered how funding could be spent and used departmental underspend to fund two proposals (£3.5 million to expand two reading programmes to reduce loneliness and £2.5 million for a digital inclusion programme) [[SL/220 INQ000182286](#)].

## **Part H: Long Covid**

- 6.1. DCMS was not involved in any work related to Long Covid or other long-term sequelae. Regarding the £750 million VSCE package specifically, the funding was announced in April 2020, which was before Long Covid had been identified as an ongoing condition.

## **Part I: Lessons Learned and Reflections**

### **DCMS funding packages**

#### ***Youth Covid-19 Support Fund***

- 7.1. DCMS commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to monitor and evaluate the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund. The report was published in August 2021 [SL/155 INQ000623058].
- 7.2. The evaluation considered who applied for the fund, who was granted funding and the extent to which the fund met its objectives. Largely, grantees appreciated the YCSF and the use they were able to make of their awards. The principal achievement was that, for grantees, it improved the financial sustainability and viability of organisations, and it allowed organisations to avoid making experienced staff redundant or having to place them on furlough.
- 7.3. The report highlights some difficulties in applying to the fund, and the fund's administration as areas to learn from. These related to confusion around eligibility criteria, too much accountancy vocabulary used in the application process and it being too long or complex, and concern about the late announcement and payment of awards. However, it was recognised that DCMS, PwC, UK Youth, and national offices of uniformed services had worked together to address these issues.
- 7.4. In focus groups and interviews, grantees, DCMS and the grant delivery partners suggested a range of future improvements to address the challenges that participants faced. These included ensuring fund administrators have a good understanding of the youth and voluntary sector which is considered when designing the application form. DCMS also suggested that a youth sector organisation or organisations could be invited to review and reword unfamiliar or difficult terms. Participants suggested that the length of the application form should be relative to the size of the award and some participants preferred a simpler template that PwC had shared. PwC suggested building on this approach for future funds. However, they also noted that it was important to help organisations to understand that some level of financial information was necessary for due diligence.

7.5. DCMS recognised the importance of ensuring fund delivery partners have a good understanding of the youth sector when designing delivery models for both capital and revenue funds. This principle was adopted across many youth-focused funds including the Youth Investment Fund (YIF), a £300 million plus investment into capital facilities for youth provision launched in 2022. Social Investment Business was appointed to deliver in partnership with other sector bodies including the National Youth Agency. This ensured that experience in working with young people and community organisations who will benefit from the funding was embedded into the programme. This programme also responded to guidance recommendations by developing proportionate guidance and due diligence, with larger awards requiring a more rigorous application process.

***Community Coronavirus Support Fund***

7.6. DCMS commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake an impact evaluation of the Community Coronavirus Support Fund (CCSF). The report was published in September 2021 [[SL/154 INQ000606579](#)].

7.7. The report found that CCSF grantholders were successful in reaching those disproportionately affected by the pandemic, instilling confidence in the successful distribution of CCSF grants to organisations able to engage intended beneficiaries of the fund. There was good evidence that CCSF grantholders delivered support appropriately to beneficiaries, offering different methods of engagement and acting as an intermediary by delivering the support to improve outcomes for people and communities. Funding was used to reduce the number of staff on furlough, recruit staff or volunteers, increase staff or volunteer hours and train staff or volunteers. As a result, beneficiaries reported better mental health and wellbeing, reduced loneliness and increased social contact.

7.8. These outcomes stemmed from grantholder reports and a small number of interviews with beneficiaries, meaning short term outcomes, such as basic needs being met, clearly evidenced the CCSF contribution. Other outcomes were more speculative of CCSF contribution, due to lack of direct measurement or other factors such as alternative funding sources or local/statutory services also contributing to positive outcomes.

7.9. The report suggests there is strong evidence that the CCSF contributed to “a reduction in temporary closures of some essential charities and social enterprises”, and “financial health, capacity and capability of organisations during the pandemic”.

7.10. The key findings from the evaluation for the CCSF focus on overarching lessons for future emergency response funding. To date, DCMS has not issued any further emergency response funding and as such, has not had the opportunity to implement any recommendations. However, DCMS does recognise the utility of the findings for the design and management of future funding packages.

***Film and TV Production Restart Scheme***

7.11. DCMS commissioned RSM UK to undertake an evaluation of the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme. The report was published in January 2022 [SL/227 INQ000652340].

7.12. The report found the Scheme to have been successful in reaching its intended target audience across the UK and in allowing production to restart. Contributing factors included the widespread awareness of the Scheme and the involvement of sector representatives and industry bodies in its design. Stakeholders reported that DCMS was responsive, open to feedback and listened to the sector's needs meaning that the Scheme was aligned with industry requirements and able to target production companies most in need.

7.13. While considered a strength of the Scheme, several stakeholders noted a few areas in which further expertise would have been valuable, for example, more specific industry input and legal expertise would have been beneficial in the formulation of the Scheme rules to ensure they were clear for production companies. Likewise, some stakeholders felt that the Steering Board would have benefitted from more TV sector expertise to enable faster decision-making.

7.14. The report found that delays in processing applications were mostly due to a lack of or incorrectly submitted documentation. Survey respondents suggested the provision of a definitive list of required information and documents to improve the application process. The Scheme was extended beyond original timeframes owing to its success; however this put strain on some delivery mechanisms, resulting in inefficiencies in the application process. The report highlighted the online application portal used by the Australian Temporary Interruption Fund which provides a streamlined and intuitive applicant journey as a good example<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> Scheme announced by the Australian government in 2020 which aimed to support local film and television producers to start filming again in circumstances where new productions had been halted by insurers not providing coverage for Covid-19.

- 7.15. Some stakeholders suggested that extensions and updates could have been announced further in advance, and for longer periods to aid clarity and confidence in the industry. This could be considered a learning more widely for emergency schemes in a crisis context.
- 7.16. DCMS has also identified a learning from the Film and TV Production Restart Scheme, noting that a shared register of key guidance changes and decisions and their date would have been helpful. The guidance also stipulated a test approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency but it was not always possible to confirm this for all tests on the market, and it was challenging to agree a different wording for this with DHSC officials managing multiple other priorities.
- 7.17. DCMS agreed with the recommendations of the report and made changes as a result, including a briefing sheet for applicants and FAQs to reduce complexity and delays during applications and claims processing and to help production companies make informed decisions. The British Film Institute's (BFI) role on the steering board was also clarified, and the scheme was extended to provide continued certainty.
- 7.18. Future schemes with the sector should involve sector representatives and industry groups in their design, delivery and promotion. Sector legal representation should also be included. It is useful to maintain FAQs and briefing sheets so applicant journey complexity is reduced. An online application and claims process should also be considered.

### ***Digital Lifeline Fund***

- 7.19. DCMS commissioned the Good Things Foundation to undertake an evaluation of the Digital Lifeline Fund. The report was published in March 2022 [**SL/221 INQ000623604**].
- 7.20. The evaluation noted that during the pandemic, many health services were only available online, and while some people with learning disabilities were able to use technology to access these services, many were unable to do so due to barriers such as lack of digital skills, a lack of in-home support and lack of access to technology or the internet. The report highlighted that cross-sector collaboration meant the Fund was able to reach target groups at scale, and quickly. Through partnering with community and specialist providers, a non-stigmatising, trust-based approach was established. Feedback was positive, with partners expressing that they liked that devices were given (not loaned) and new (not old or refurbished), and the report noted the grant of

£100 per person was welcomed, contributing to time and costs of providing support. The fund supported 5,500 people in under four months, partnering with 146 community organisations to deliver 2,354 pieces of adaptive kit for additional needs.

- 7.21. In addition to alleviating digital exclusion, the Digital Lifeline fund helped to mitigate, or reduce inequalities that people with learning disabilities experience. For example, feedback noted that receiving a device helped users to feel happier and more relaxed. Many users also noted that having a device had facilitated positive outcomes in relation to their physical and mental health by helping them to stay active, as well as maintaining or forging new connections with others which helped them to feel less lonely and isolated. After 3-4 weeks, 68% of participants reported feeling more confident, 64% had improved digital skills and 52% felt less lonely.
- 7.22. Feedback noted that device set up was a challenge, and suggestions included virtual workshops to do a live 'set up', as well as allowing additional time for device set up before distribution, and follow ups with participants. Online resources, like 'Learn My Way', could be improved to better support those with learning disabilities, and grants could be increased to cover extra time needed to engage people with more complex support needs.
- 7.23. Finally, the report noted several areas where support could be extended. These included extending to family carers, social care staff, self advocacy groups, to improve digital access. Similarly, promoting free support (for example AbilityNet, Good Things Foundation, Learn My Way) to care providers and community groups, and spreading the word about free accessibility Apps was also suggested.
- 7.24. The evaluation concluded with five recommendations including to embed digital inclusion into government policies and programmes, recognise the value of community-based learning and development, and to take action to reduce data poverty and address barriers to device ownership.
- 7.25. The government published the Digital Inclusion Action Plan on 26 February 2025 which sets out the first steps being taken towards the government's ambition of delivering digital inclusion for everyone across the UK, regardless of their circumstances [**SL/222 INQ000623616**]. DCMS is included in the plan as a department with key responsibilities for digital inclusion and noted as a core member of the newly established Digital Inclusion Ministerial Group.

- 7.26. The Action Plan addresses the recommendations of the Digital Lifeline Fund Evaluation and is building a programme of work that will lead to a step-change in how the government addresses digital inclusion. The first five actions as set out in the Action Plan (reflected below) aim to kickstart the government's ambition to improve digital inclusion.
- 7.27. The government's first five actions - over the next year the government will:
- a) launch an ambitious Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund to support local initiatives that increase digital participation. We will launch this fund in the spring and intend to deliver in partnership with local leaders and devolved governments
  - b) enhance support for the framework that helps people and businesses get the essential skills they need to get online safely and with confidence
  - c) pilot a proof-of-concept multi-department device donation scheme with the Digital Poverty Alliance to provide re-purposed government laptops to those that need them
  - d) make government digital services easier to use with a renewed focus on digital inclusion, for example by improving the whole experience for users and increasing the number of services that use Gov.uk One Login
  - e) measure what works on digital inclusion, identify where the need is greatest, and establish the economic and social value of upskilling adults with digital skills
- 7.28. The Action Plan is supported and endorsed by 10 Industry Pledges, which demonstrate the significance of partnership to promote and empower digital inclusion, and the shared responsibility to tackle this important issue. The Action Plan also outlines the government's leadership actions to deliver on its ambitions in the long-term. Including:
- a) establishing the Digital Inclusion and Skills Unit in DSIT to drive work across government
  - b) establishing the Digital Inclusion Ministerial Group, with membership across government departments, to ensure digital inclusion is at the heart of everything the government does
  - c) establishing the Digital Inclusion Action Committee, external advisory committee, chaired by The Rt Hon. the Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top

- d) leveraging the Expert Exchange Programme to bring external expertise, for example from local authorities, into DSIT to help shape our approach on digital inclusion

7.29. Government is working closely across other government departments, with the VSCE sector, industry, devolved administrations and local authorities to ensure future interventions are targeted to and based on individuals' needs.

***Voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE) funding package***

7.30. DCMS commissioned NatCen Social Research to carry out an evaluation of the £750 million funding package. The report was published in April 2022 [**SL/153 INQ000623592**].

7.31. The NatCen Social Research report noted that the funding package achieved its overall aim, and that grantholders successfully used the funding to address liquidity issues and to meet the needs of service users. A key contribution was the speed in decision-making on applications, and the pre-existing relationship between applicants and funding partners. The report notes that the “funding package's success in achieving its aims can in part be ascribed to the government's approach in partnering with established funders, such as the BNI Partners and other government departments, to mobilise support to the most vulnerable communities”. Additionally, some funding streams “leveraged additional match funding to the sum of over £100 million for grantholders”, which involved new partnerships between funders and government.

7.32. The report identified three key lessons: the need for greater appreciation of the sector's contribution, the need for greater trust in the sector and carrying flexibility further. Participants highlighted the need for government to better appreciate and understand the role and value of the VCSE sector, and felt that the expectation was for the sector to feel grateful for the package of support they received. Sector representatives did recognise that the sector also has a role to play in better communicating its value to government.

7.33. Funding stream leads felt they had established successful grantmaking and compliance systems over many years, and that additional checks on these processes were an unnecessary use of time. The report highlighted that the sector has developed ways of working and processes which should afford more trust in existing knowledge

and learning, particularly in terms of mobilising and validating support packages to the sector.

- 7.34. Finally, the report recognised how the funding package provided flexibility to meet needs as they arose, such as addressing immediate costs. It was felt funding could have been more impactful if it was available for a longer duration, noting that funding had to be spent by the end of March 2021. If funding could have been available for longer, grantholders felt they would have been able to even better address needs.
- 7.35. When considering recommendations, the report suggested that government should continue partnering with established funders in the sector but that funders should have a proportionate degree of autonomy in relation to processes, funding mechanisms and due diligence arrangements to ensure that specific needs and communities are also represented. With large scale funding schemes, government should engage intermediaries regarding the design of interventions with consideration given to those able to reach smaller organisations or able to advocate for particular communities. This ensures funding can reach the most vulnerable, and can benefit smaller charities. To strengthen the reach and impact of funding packages, both in emergency response and general funding mechanisms, government should consider the feasibility of introducing “match funding” programmes for larger funding packages, while also being cautious to ensure smaller organisations can benefit.
- 7.36. NatCen suggested the CSY directorate will benefit from refreshing the focus and role of the Civil Society Stakeholder Group, potentially serving as a forum to increase collaboration between devolved nations to address evolving sector needs, particularly medium and longer term needs only now emerging. It would be beneficial to reflect on how best to replicate the streamlined application requirements under this package with longer-term funding processes. Feedback highlighted that the application process felt proportionate and less complex, particularly in comparison to other pre-pandemic funding applications.

#### ***Culture Recovery Fund***

- 7.37. DCMS commissioned an evaluation of the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) in January 2021. The evaluation was undertaken by a consortium led by Ecorys including Ipsos UK, BOP Consulting and economist George Barrett with the final report being published on 4 July 2022 [[SL/223 INQ000623596](#)].

- 7.38. The report concluded that the CRF was broadly implemented well, supporting a large number of organisations and having a positive impact on their financial health, with the number of organisations it likely prevented from failing estimated at between 620 to 830 and safeguarding up to 20,500 jobs. This outweighed the costs of implementing the programme, with every £1 spent leading to between £1.98 and £3.66 in benefits.
- 7.39. The report also set out the intangible benefits that the programme generated, such as enabling more risk-taking cultural endeavours, supporting the mental health of people working in the cultural sector, and providing wider cultural opportunities for the public during a time of national crisis.
- 7.40. The programme has highlighted lessons for future support funds should a similar crisis ever arise, including the need to be more prepared with more up-to-date data on the cultural sector, and focusing on how different government support schemes interact with each other. It also reflected on some lessons learnt and some of the public critiques around the fund, including striking the correct balance between speed and rigour of delivery, the issues faced by freelancers who were unable to access other types of government support, the value of “expression of interest” stages to minimise nugatory applicant activity, the quality and range of data available to DCMS at the early stages, and the potential for use of instruments beyond grants.

#### ***Winter and Summer Sport Survival Packages***

- 7.41. DCMS commissioned Ecorys and Ipsos MORI to undertake an evaluation of the Sport Survival Packages. The report was published in March 2023 [**SL/224 INQ000623605**; **SL/225 INQ000647730**].
- 7.42. The report highlights that applicants generally understood and accepted the criteria for the initial needs assessment, finding the process simple and straightforward. However, applicants did report a large volume of information was required for the application, much of which had to be generated under pressure. Overall, organisations were satisfied with the funding awards, finding grant terms easy to understand but loan agreements (especially for larger awards) more complex. Feedback highlighted that funding recipients often found the monitoring and reporting process onerous and time consuming, and would have preferred a more tailored approach. Largely, organisations were positive about the support received from both Sport England and valued the strong working relationships with staff.

- 7.43. Applications were reviewed on a case by case basis and were rigorously assessed, with the terms of the loans approved by an independent board, made up of senior personnel with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to scrutinise decisions. The report has highlighted some lessons learnt for Sport England, including the need to be more prepared with a greater understanding and more systematic data on the financial situation of professional sport clubs as well as a clearer understanding of how they contribute to the economy and society. Sport England should continue to monitor the financial situations of supported clubs, clubs that received grants, and other sport organisations including national governing bodies. There is a particular opportunity for monitoring of club finances to be improved through ensuring that data is recorded consistently by sport bodies, and that it can also be shared easily between partners to continue to monitor financial performance and inform the development of appropriate interventions.
- 7.44. The department, through Sport England as its loan agent, continues to monitor closely the financial performance of the organisations to ensure that taxpayer money is protected. DCMS has now introduced a system to tailor its monitoring and reporting requirements depending on the risk of the borrower. We have also improved our focus on clear and regular communication with borrowers, through Sport England, to ensure borrowers are educated appropriately on their obligations.

#### ***Live Events Reinsurance Scheme***

- 7.45. DCMS commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a review of the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme. The report was published in February 2025 [**SL/226 INQ000623621**].
- 7.46. The report found that the Live Events Reinsurance Scheme was well-designed with strong engagement and appropriate governance arrangements that allowed the department to effectively leverage the capabilities of the insurance industry. The design of the reinsurance product included several provisions to minimise unnecessary risks to the taxpayer including a risk sharing agreement with insurers. While some insurers believed the delivery process was burdensome, the report acknowledged that this was appropriate to ensure the appropriate use of public funds and did not materially affect use of the Scheme.
- 7.47. Overall, use of the scheme was more limited than expected due to its introduction being too late for a number of outdoor events in summer 2021, as well as the limited scope of risks covered. The report concluded that there was no evidence that the

Scheme crowded out any private activity or that it had any material unintended consequences in distorting competition in insurance markets. The Scheme also generated net income for the Exchequer with only one claim settled for £190,000 against total premium income of approximately £5.9 million.

7.48. The report's recommendations focused on a number of areas. It emphasised that the effectiveness of such schemes were heavily reliant on when they were introduced and focusing on when risks were at their highest. It does acknowledge that the work was undertaken at pace and it was important that the value for money of the Scheme was adequately tested. The report highlighted a need to harness the expertise built through the construction of this Scheme. This included a stronger understanding of the insurance sector, use of the private sector in delivering similar schemes, and differences in how risk should be priced in relation to any future publicly supported insurance product.

7.49. The department welcomed the report and its findings that the intervention was well-designed, with appropriate governance and decision-making procedures. The department took this unique action in response to the impact of the pandemic to support the reopening of the live events sectors while also protecting taxpayers' money. The provision of policy interventions in the insurance industry is primarily the responsibility of HMT.

7.50. Given the unique and complex nature of this policy intervention, the department has taken on board the evaluation findings and will look to apply those lessons learnt for future applicable policy interventions.

### ***Reflections***

7.51. DCMS moved quickly, developing new approaches and reprioritising work to respond to an unprecedented and rapidly evolving situation. The department was largely successful in its efforts to provide financial support, prevent business failure and preserve jobs. Important lessons were also drawn from the experience, and our various evaluations show where improvements could be made:

- d) streamlining funding application and delivery processes, including exploring online application systems
- e) developing a more nuanced comprehension of specific sectors and sub-sectors
- f) improving data collection methods.

g) fostering stronger cross-departmental collaboration

7.52. These lessons were hard-learned and important to have to hand when planning for a future pandemic scenario. I believe that DCMS is well-positioned to leverage its strong stakeholder relationships to generate valuable insights that can help to shape the government's economic response to future crises. If we were faced with a Covid-19-like situation, I believe that the knowledge and experience built during the pandemic would see a swift and efficient response from DCMS that would support our sectors effectively.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

**Signed:**

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Personal Data

**Dated: 16 September 2025**

**Annex - DCMS Meeting Chronologies**

Secretary of State and official-level Economic and Business Response Ministerial Implementation Group (EBRIG) meetings with DCMS attendance

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
16-Mar-20	EBRIG (M)
19-Mar-20	EBRIG (O)
23-Mar-20	EBRIG (M)
26-Mar-20	EBRIG (O)

27-Mar-20	EBRIG (M)
31-Mar-20	EBRIG (M)
2-Apr-20	EBRIG (O)
7-Apr-20	EBRIG (M)
9-Apr-20	EBRIG (O)
15-Apr-20	Extraordinary EBRIG (O)
16-Apr-20	EBRIG (M)
20-Apr-20	EBRIG (O)
23-Apr-20	EBRIG (M)
27-Apr-20	EBRIG (O)
30-Apr-20	EBRIG (M)
4-May-20	EBRIG (O)
12-May-20	EBRIG (O)
14-May-20	EBRIG (M)
21-May-20	EBRIG (O)

DCMS Economic Response Working Group meetings

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
25-Mar-20	Economic Response Working Group
1-Apr-20	Economic Response Working Group
8-Apr-20	Economic Response Working Group
22-Apr-20	Economic Response Working Group
29-Apr-20	Economic Response Working Group
6-May-20	Economic Response Working Group
13-May-20	Economic Response Working Group
20-May-20	Economic Response Working Group
27-May-20	Economic Response Working Group
3-Jun-20	Economic Response Working Group
10-Jun-20	Economic Response Working Group
17-Jun-20	Economic Response Working Group
24-Jun-20	Economic Response Working Group
3-Jul-20	Economic Response Working Group
8-Jul-20	Economic Response Working Group
15-Jul-20	Economic Response Working Group
21/07/2020	Economic Response Working Group
28/07/2020	Economic Response Working Group

Covid-19 Economic Response Sector Engagement Bulletins

*Additional instances of the Covid-19 Economic Response Sector Engagement Bulletin other than the three already exhibited by DCMS have not been identified.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Bulletin</b>
27-Apr-20	Covid-19 Economic Response Sector Engagement Bulletin (INQ000623501)
5-May-20	Covid-19 Economic Response Sector Engagement Bulletin (INQ000623514)

21-May-20	Covid-19 Economic Response Sector Engagement Bulletin (INQ000623521)
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Broadcasting Roundtable meetings

Date	Meeting
26-Mar-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
1-Apr-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
8-Apr-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
15-Apr-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
29-Apr-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
13-May-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
27-May-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
10-Jun-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
1-Jul-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
30-Sep-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
4-Nov-20	Broadcasting Roundtable
17-Feb-21	Broadcasting Roundtable

Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group meetings

Date	Meeting
21-May-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
28-May-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
4-Jun-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
11-Jun-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
18-Jun-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
25-Jun-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
2-Jul-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
30-Jul-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
24-Sep-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
5-Nov-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group
9-Dec-20	Broadcasting, Film and Production Working Group

Entertainment and Events Working Group meetings

Date	Meeting
28-May-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
29-May-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
3-Jun-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
10-Jun-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
17-Jun-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
24-Jun-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
7-Jul-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
31-Jul-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group

17-Sep-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
6-Nov-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
8-Dec-20	Entertainment and Events Working Group
28-Jan-21	Entertainment and Events Working Group
4-Mar-21	Entertainment and Events Working Group
15-Jun-21	Entertainment and Events Working Group

Tourism Industry Council meetings

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
24-Feb-20	Tourism Industry Council
25-Mar-20	Tourism Industry Council
1-Apr-20	Tourism Industry Council
8-Apr-20	Tourism Industry Council
15-Apr-20	Tourism Industry Council
22-Apr-20	Tourism Industry Council
29-Apr-20	Tourism Industry Council
6-May-20	Tourism Industry Council
13-May-20	Tourism Industry Council / Visitor Economy Working Group
3-Nov-20	Extraordinary TIC meeting
10-Nov-20	Tourism Industry Council
2-Dec-20	Tourism Industry Council
15-Dec-20	Tourism Industry Council
7-Jan-21	Extraordinary TIC meeting
23-Feb-21	Tourism Industry Council
18-Mar-21	Tourism Industry Council
13-May-21	Tourism Industry Council
16-Jun-21	Tourism Industry Council
22-Jul-21	Tourism Industry Council
15-Sep-21	Tourism Industry Council
23-Nov-21	Tourism Industry Council
3-Feb-22	Tourism Industry Council
28-Apr-22	Tourism Industry Council
29-Jun-22	Tourism Industry Council

Visitor Economy Working Group meetings

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
20-May-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
26-May-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
3-Jun-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
10-Jun-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
17-Jun-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
24-Jun-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
1-Jul-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
8-Jul-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
15-Jul-20	Visitor Economy Working Group

22-Jul-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
4-Aug-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
18-Aug-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
2-Sep-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
15-Sep-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
6-Oct-20	Visitor Economy Working Group
20-Oct-20	Visitor Economy Working Group