



Daily Report

Tuesday, 7 January 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 7 January 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:54 P.M., 07 January 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ David Duckenfield

Sir Christopher Chope:

[31]

To ask the Attorney General, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the (a) first, (b) second and (c) third prosecution against Mr David Duckenfield on manslaughter in relation to the Hillsborough tragedy; and if he will make a statement.

Michael Ellis:

This was a complex and harrowing case. Every effort was made to build a robust case for prosecution, in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors and the case was handled by a team of experienced specialist prosecutors.

As it involved the prosecution of more than one defendant, it is not possible to state definitively the total costs in relation to the prosecution of David Duckenfield alone. In June 2017, David Duckenfield, the police commander in charge of safety during the Hillsborough stadium disaster, was charged with gross negligence manslaughter. At trial in April 2019, the jury was unable to reach a verdict against David Duckenfield, while a second defendant, Graham Mackrell, was convicted of a health and safety offence. In November 2019, after a retrial at Preston Crown Court, the jury found David Duckenfield not guilty.

The CPS estimates the cost of legal counsel fees and other prosecution costs for the prosecution of both David Duckenfield and Graham Mackrell to be approximately £1.97 million. CPS records do not capture the cost of the time spent by internal CPS staff on this case.

The CPS cannot comment on costs incurred by the police, HM Courts and Tribunals, or any other partners in this case. Nor can the CPS comment on the private prosecution referred to in the question, which was brought against David Duckenfield by the Hillsborough Family Support Group in 2000.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Boeing 737

Andy McDonald:

[124]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment she has made of the effect of Boeing's decision to stop production of the 737 Max aircraft on the UK's aviation and aerospace industries.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are in close contact with Boeing as well as key UK suppliers. Boeing has confirmed that their decision to temporarily suspend 737 production is the least

disruptive to the long-term health of their production system and supply chain. Due to the diversification of the UK supplier base, we would not anticipate this stop in production to have a significant impact on the UK aerospace industry overall but will consider the potential impact on individual companies. Boeing is working with its suppliers in the UK to minimise operational disruption and provide as much certainty as possible. We will continue to maintain close dialogue with Boeing and suppliers to monitor the situation as they continue to assess the appropriate duration of the suspension.

■ Carbon Emissions

Royston Smith:

[\[159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps she will take to ensure the UK meets its target of zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to delivering our target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and end the UK's contribution to climate change.

We are a world leader in cutting emissions, having reduced emissions by 42% since 1990 while growing the economy by 72%.

We recognise the need to go further and, since legislating for net zero in June, the Government has continued to bring forward ambitious plans to support clean growth across a range of sectors. This includes a £250 million Clean Steel Fund, £400 million of investment in new charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, and up to £1 billion additional funding to develop and embed the next generation of cutting-edge electric vehicle technologies.

Under the leadership of the newly created Cabinet Committee on Climate Change, chaired by the Prime Minister, we will be setting out ambitious plans throughout 2020 to strengthen our global leadership and seize the economic opportunities of clean growth for the whole country. The Committee will also oversee the UK's preparations to host the crucial UN climate change summit, COP26, in November 2020.

■ Energy: Meters

Catherine West:

[\[174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment her Department has made of the effect on people on low incomes of increasing the minimum top up amount on a prepayment meter; and whether she has had discussions with (a) British Gas and (b) other energy providers on such a change.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

British Gas are introducing a minimum top up of £5 for most of their prepayment customers starting on 1 January. This is a commercial decision of British Gas. Although a £5 minimum top up is not uncommon practice amongst suppliers, there are many that offer a minimum top up of £1.

BEIS officials are liaising with Ofgem to confirm whether they were given prior notification of British Gas' decision, and also that British Gas has met its obligation to treat customers fairly and ensure that each customer was provided with information about the assistance and advice that is available to them.

Customers are protected through the price caps on standard variable and prepayment meter tariffs. A key challenge now is for suppliers to put the consumer first and improve their customer service.

■ Energy: Prices

Catherine West: [\[177\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether her Department plans to commission an independent review into the cost of energy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The government plans to publish an Energy White Paper in 2020, which will address the transformation of the energy system in line with our net zero commitment and will set out the importance of affordable energy in support of a high productivity economy.

■ Post Office: Fraud

Marion Fellows: [\[155\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the total legal costs were in the group litigation against the Post Office Ltd relating to accounting software Horizon; and what proportion of those legal costs will be paid from the public purse.

Marion Fellows: [\[156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the settlement reached in court on Post Office Ltd's Horizon accounting software will be paid by the Government.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government recognises the critical role that post offices play in communities and for small businesses across the UK. This is why the Government committed to safeguard the post office network and protect existing rural services. The overall number of post offices across the UK remains at its most stable in decades with over 11,600 branches thanks to significant Government investment of over £2 billion since 2010.

While the Post Office is publicly owned it operates as an independent, commercial business. As such, the legal defence of this litigation and the costs involved in doing so are being handled by Post Office Limited and the settlement is being funded by commercial revenue and not by taxpayers.

■ Social Rented Housing: Energy

Dr Matthew Offord:

[94]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether her Department will match the £2,860 in funding per household in social housing to improve energy efficiency for people on low-incomes who own their own homes.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Improving home energy efficiency is the most sustainable way to tackle fuel poverty and an important step towards achieving Net Zero. The Energy Company Obligation scheme is currently set at £640 million per year and provides support to upgrade the homes of low income and vulnerable families.

In addition to this existing energy efficiency support, the Conservative Manifesto made new spending commitments for social housing and for Home Upgrade Grants. Further details on these policies will be announced in due course.

■ Unpaid Work

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[322]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if she will make it her Department's policy to ban the use of unpaid work trials at the outset of employment in UK businesses.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Unpaid work trials that are excessive and not part of a genuine recruitment process are prohibited by National Minimum Wage legislation. It is simply wrong to exploit workers by setting up excessive unpaid trials. The law is clear that if someone is "working" for minimum wage purposes, they must be paid at least the National Minimum or National Living Wage.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all employers pay their workers correctly. HMRC consider all worker complaints and will take enforcement action in any cases of abuse.

BEIS published guidance in December 2018 clarifying that unpaid work trials are not permissible if they are excessive or not part of a genuine recruitment process. They can, however, play an important role in helping people into work opportunities, if used correctly.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Early Years Ministerial Group On Family Support

Tim Loughton:

[26]

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to publish the report of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Early Years formerly chaired by the Rt hon Member for South Northamptonshire.

Oliver Dowden:

The previous Leader of the House, Andrea Leadsom, [laid out the recommendations](#) of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Early Years on 16 July 2019. This Government is fully committed to supporting working families, and their children. Relevant Secretaries of State will take into account the work of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Early Years as the government moves forward with this agenda.

■ Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[261\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to repeal the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011; what assessment he has made of the effect of repealing that Act on the Royal Prerogative power of the Monarch to dissolve the UK Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Chloe Smith:

As set out in the Queen's Speech, the Government will repeal the Fixed Term Parliaments Act. Prior to the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, an election was called through the use of the Royal Prerogative powers of the Monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister.

■ Office for Veterans' Affairs**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[49\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps the Office for Veterans Affairs has taken to provide lifelong support to military personnel.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[50\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what budget has been allocated to the Office for Veterans Affairs since its inception.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government recognises the lifelong duty which the nation owes to those who serve in the Armed Forces. The Government created the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) to ensure veterans are represented right at the heart of Government for the first time.

The OVA will be responsible for coordinating the Government's services and support for veterans. It will lead the delivery of the Strategy for our Veterans, to realise the Government's ambition of making the UK the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world by 2028.

The OVA will shortly set out the first action plan containing targets for the OVA to deliver initiatives for veterans and the commitments by Departments to make improvements in the support they offer.

With regard to the OVA's budget, I refer the Rt. Hon. member to the answer I gave him on 22 October 2019, to question [1606](#).

■ **Proof of Identity: Polling Stations**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[89\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a requirement for voter identification at polling stations.

Chloe Smith:

The Government will bring forward legislation requiring electors to show an approved form of photographic ID before casting their vote in a polling station in a UK parliamentary election in Great Britain and local election in England. Any voter who does not have an approved form of ID will be able to apply, free of charge, for a local electoral identity document.

These measures are part of a wider initiative to improve trust in the integrity of the electoral process, maintain public confidence and support equality and inclusivity in our electoral system.

DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces Covenant**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[51\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which component of the Armed Forces Covenant he plans to place under statutory law.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government, local authorities, the wider public sector, charities, commercial organisations and civil society all have a role in supporting the Armed Forces community. While this includes support to veterans in the areas of employment, healthcare, housing, education, and financial advice, it is also about recognising how Government can make a positive difference for those in the front line of our nation's Defence. Whilst the Ministry of Defence gave statutory foundation to the Armed Forces Covenant in the 2011 Armed Forces Act, with a requirement on the Defence Secretary to report annually to Parliament, this Government has recognized more must be done to ensure the Armed Forces community suffer no disadvantage. We have therefore committed to the creation of a legal duty to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant and are further enshrining it in law to support this.

■ **HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark**

Luke Pollard:

[\[230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he plans to vary the published out of service dates for (a) HMS Albion and (b) HMS Bulwark.

James Heappey:

There are currently no plans to vary the published out of service dates for HMS Albion and Bulwark. They remain 2033 and 2034 respectively.

HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth**Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[205\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when his Department plans to announce the location for a new dry dock facility capable of housing HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth.

James Heappey:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer he was given by my predecessor (Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP) on 5 November 2019 to Question 8278.

Attachments:

1. HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Queen Elizabeth [Hansard Extract 5 November 2019 UIN 82778.docx]

Shipbuilding**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[48\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any UK shipyard has the capability to build a Cantabria-class Combat Support Ship.

James Heappey:

The UK has capable shipyards that are able to build and maintain large complex warships and other classes of military and commercial vessels. The recent completion of the cutting-edge Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers are a clear example in this regard.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**5G: Suffolk****James Cartlidge:**[\[341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans she has for the roll-out of 5G in rural areas in Suffolk.

Matt Warman:

The Government remains committed to becoming a world leader in 5G and providing a 5G signal to a majority of the population by 2027.

Towards this aim, the Government has taken steps to ensure that we build the right conditions for commercial investment in 5G. As a part of this, we have invested in a nationally coordinated 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme which continues to build the business case for 5G in Britain.

Two of the Phase 1 programmes funded through this scheme, 5GRIT and 5G RuralFirst, are specifically focussed on building a market for 5G use cases in rural areas. We are also providing funding for up to 10 rural-based 5G research and development projects over the next two years through the Rural Connected Communities initiative. We expect these projects to do important work in building the business case for 5G investment in rural areas, such as those within South Suffolk.

It is important to note that the vast majority of commercial rollout of 5G services will be delivered by industry, according to their own timeframes. All four Mobile Network Operators have already begun launching their 5G offerings and coverage is expected to be available in 50 major towns and cities by summer 2020.

In the interim, Government is working closely with the Mobile Network Operators on the Shared Rural Network proposal to provide high quality 4G coverage to 95 percent of the UK. This proposal will help tackle both partial not spots - area where this is currently only coverage from at least one, but not all operators - and total not spots - areas with no coverage from any operator, ensuring good 4G signal wherever people live, work and travel.

It is expected that harder to reach locations, such as rural areas within Suffolk, will see the greatest benefit from this proposal.

■ Broadband

Seema Malhotra:

[305]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent estimate she has made of the number of households affected by broadband not-spots in each local authority area.

Matt Warman:

Almost every premise in the UK is able to get broadband through a fixed, wireless or satellite connection. However, a small minority of premises are unable to get a decent service, providing 10 Mbps download speeds and 1 Mbps upload speeds. In their latest Connected Nations report, Ofcom estimated that these premises numbered only around 155,000 and was likely to reduce further by March 2020, when the Government's Broadband Universal Obligation (USO) will come into force. The USO gives households without a decent service a legal right to request one up to a Reasonable Cost Threshold of £3,400 per premise.

Alongside the USO, investment by Government and the commercial sector has ensured that superfast broadband, providing download speeds of at least 24 Mbps, is now available to 96% of UK premises, and that access to full fibre broadband has increased by 1.5 million premises over the past year and is now available to 10% of the UK. The Government is ambitious to go further and, as part of this, has committed £5 billion to subsidise the deployment of full fibre and gigabit broadband in less commercially viable areas.

Further information on broadband availability in each local authority area can be found on the Connected Nations section of Ofcom's website.

■ Community Development: Grants

David Morris:

[\[300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ensure that community groups in receipt of large grants from administrative charities are required to comply with the political independence provisions in the Charities Act 2011.

Helen Whately:

Grant-making charities must ensure that charitable funds are used to further their charitable purposes. The Charity Commission for England and Wales publishes guidance ("Campaigning and political activity guidance for charities (CC9)") on the extent to which charities can legitimately engage in non-party political activity as part of furthering their charitable purposes.

Any concerns that charitable funds are being used inappropriately, for example for party-political activities or purposes, should be raised with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, which can investigate and if appropriate take action. There are currently no plans to bring forward legislative proposals on this subject.

■ Loneliness: Hounslow

Seema Malhotra:

[\[303\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what funding her Department has made available to help tackle loneliness in Hounslow.

Helen Whately:

Government's strategy on tackling loneliness in England includes a range of new policies that are benefiting people across England, including in Hounslow. This includes improving and expanding social prescribing and running a new communications campaign on social connection.

Government established the £11.5m Building Connections Fund in 2018. This funds 126 projects across England that bring people and communities together. 15 grants, totalling £1.25m, have been made to projects in London. This includes a £93,000 grant to the Afghanistan & Central Asian Association for a project based in Hounslow offering activities such as tea sessions, one to one mentoring and social events.

In October 2019 the Minister for Civil Society announced £2m of new grant funding for frontline organisations tackling loneliness. Details of this funding, including the application process, will be announced in due course.

■ Lotteries: Sales

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[30\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to raise the maximum amount that can be raised each year by an individual charity lottery from £10 million; and if she will make a statement.

Robert Halfon:[\[76\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government has taken to implement the society lotteries annual sales increased limit, announced in July 2019.

Robert Halfon:[\[77\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will increase the annual sales limit on society lotteries to £50 million by the end of the first quarter of 2020.

Helen Whately:

New limits to the per draw sales, annual sales and maximum prize for society lotteries were announced on 16 July 2019. Affirmative secondary legislation is required to change the limits, and the Gambling Commission is also required to consult on changes to its Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP).

I hope to lay the draft Order in Parliament in January 2020, and the changes to come into force during 2020. The Order will include transitional arrangements for the first year, to enable operators to take advantage of the new limits as soon as possible.

The Gambling Commission has already launched its consultation in anticipation of the legislation, and this will help ensure the new limits can come into force as swiftly as possible. Their consultation also covers measures to improve transparency of society lotteries and will run until 12 March 2020.

I shall not be making any further statement at this time.

■ Video Games: Children

Grahame Morris:[\[75\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps she is taking to ensure that pop-up adverts in mobile gaming apps for children are age appropriate.

Nigel Adams:

Advertising in the UK is regulated by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the industry's independent regulator, which for online advertising enforces the Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing (CAP Code) through a system of self-regulation. The CAP Code incorporates all relevant legislation, and sets standards for accuracy and honesty to which advertisers must adhere, including specific conditions on advertising to children, causing offence and social responsibility.

The ASA has issued guidance to advertisers (<https://www.asa.org.uk/resource/children-age-restricted-ads-online.html>) on using data and targeting tools to minimise children's exposure to age restricted or age inappropriate advertising online, including in mobile gaming apps, in order to ensure compliance with the CAP Code.

Last year the government also announced its intention to review how online advertising is regulated in the UK, looking at how well the current regime is equipped to tackle the challenges posed by developments in the market.

EDUCATION

■ Adult Education: Hounslow

Seema Malhotra:

[\[304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what funding his Department has made available to support English language classes for adults in Hounslow.

Michelle Donelan:

The department funds education and training, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for adults aged 19 and over, through the adult education budget (AEB). With effect from 1 August 2019, approximately half the AEB has been devolved to 6 mayoral combined authorities and delegated to the Mayor of London acting through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are now responsible for funding adult education provision, including ESOL, for learners who are resident in their areas.

As the London Borough of Hounslow is within the area of the GLA, they are now responsible for commissioning and funding ESOL provision for adults who are resident in their areas, rather than the department.

■ Apprentices: Females

Tim Loughton:

[\[22\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many women over the age of 60 have taken up apprenticeships in the last five years.

Michelle Donelan:

The number of women aged 60 and over that have started an apprenticeship from the 2014/15 academic year onwards is shown in the table below:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Female, 60+ apprenticeship starts	1,690	1,780	1,900	980	980

Notes:

- 1) Volumes are rounded to the nearest ten.
- 2) The data source is the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).
- 3) Age is calculated based upon age at start of the apprenticeship programme.

- 4) Numbers are counted for the full, final academic years from August to July.
- 5) Apprenticeship starts include all funded and unfunded learners reported on the ILR.

■ Arts: Secondary Education

Angela Rayner: [\[128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his plans are to introduce an arts premium for secondary schools.

Nick Gibb:

Arts education is an important part of a broad and balanced curriculum and should not be the preserve of the elite but the entitlement of every child. Between 2016-20 the Department is providing almost £500 million of funding for a range of creative and performance arts education programmes including Music Education Hubs, the Music and Dance Scheme, the Dance and Drama Awards, and a set of diverse cultural education programmes.

The Department believes that the arts help young people to learn creative skills and widen their horizons, so we will also offer an 'Arts Premium' to secondary schools to fund enriching activities for all pupils. The Department will share further details on the Premium in due course.

■ Children: Day Care

Angela Rayner: [\[126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the eligibility criteria will be for (a) 15 and (b) 30 hours of free childcare for children aged two to four in each year from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

Nick Gibb:

The Department wants parents to have access to a range of affordable childcare, giving them increased flexibility in their working hours and helping children thrive in the crucial early years. We are spending around £3.5 billion on early education childcare entitlements in 2019-20 and my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer recently announced increases in hourly rates for our early education entitlements for 2020-21. In total, this Government is planning to spend more than £3.6 billion to support these entitlements in 2020-21.

The current eligibility criteria for (a) 15 and (b) 30 hours of free childcare for children aged two to four is the following:

Since September 2010, all three and four-year olds living in England have been entitled to 570 hours a year of funded early education over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year (which equates to 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year). This is referred to as the universal funded early education entitlement.

From September 2013, the entitlement to 15 hours of funded early education per week for 38 weeks of the year was extended to some two-year olds. Information

regarding eligibility for free early education and childcare can be found at the following links: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/> and <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>.

In September 2019 the Department extended the eligibility criteria for the free early education entitlement for the most disadvantaged two-year olds. Two-year old children in low income families are now able to take up a free place when their parent(s) have one of the following types of immigration status:

- Zambrano carer (derivative right to reside in the UK under European law as the primary carer of a British child or dependent adult)
- Leave to remain with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) granted on family or private life (Article 8) grounds
- 'Appeal rights exhausted' (ARE) asylum seeker receiving asylum support from the Home Office under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Parents who are Zambrano carers or who have leave to remain with NRPF, must also be able to demonstrate that they have a low income

The Government has no current plans to change the eligibility criteria of these entitlements.

■ **Foster Care: Self-employed**

Martyn Day: [167]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason foster carers are classed as self-employed rather than employed.

Martyn Day: [168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will reclassify the employment status of foster carers to limb (b) workers.

Martyn Day: [333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to introduce workers' rights and protections for foster carers who are classed as self-employed.

Michelle Donelan:

In England, the purpose of foster care is to provide children with the chance of a family life when they cannot be cared for by their birth parents.

Foster care is a devolved matter and the agreement that foster carers in England have with fostering service providers, including local authorities, sets out how they carry out their role. This is, however, not a contract of employment or a contract to perform work, which would be a necessary requirement for someone to be classed as either an employee or a worker.

The Children's Act 1989 (Vol. 4: Fostering Services) and subsequent statutory guidance sets out strong safeguards to protect foster parents from unfair treatment,

including the requirement for fostering services to have a complaints procedure, whistle blowing policy, and for foster parents to have the right to review by the Independent Review Mechanism. Fostering Better Outcomes (2018) sets out the government's ambitions and commitments to improve the wider support available for foster parents in England. There are no plans to reclassify the employment status of foster carers to limb (b) workers.

■ Higher Education: Freedom of Expression

Dr Matthew Offord:

[87]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he will take to promote (a) diversity of thought and (b) freedom of expression on university campuses.

Chris Skidmore:

This government will ensure that our universities are places where free speech can thrive, and will strengthen academic freedoms.

The freedom to express views openly, challenge ideas and engage in robust debate is crucial to the student experience and to democracy. Individuals should never be in a position where they can be stopped from, or are made to feel inhibited in, expressing an opinion perfectly lawfully. Similarly, universities should be places where students are exposed to a range of views, including those which may be controversial, and are encouraged to debate and challenge them.

Free speech is protected in universities by law and is embedded in the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework. Under the Education (No 2) Act 1986, universities have a specific duty to take reasonably practicable steps to secure freedom of speech within the law for staff, students and visiting speakers. The government worked with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, who published new guidance in February 2019 on freedom of speech in higher education to support higher education providers and students' unions in delivering their duties.

The government will be looking closely at how well higher education providers are meeting these obligations and will consider whether further action is needed, working with a range of partners.

■ Pupil Premium

Angela Rayner:

[134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his policy to increase the per pupil funding of the deprivation element of the Pupil Premium in each year from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

Nick Gibb:

The Department plans to confirm the funding rates for the pupil premium in the financial year 2020-21 shortly.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Angela Rayner:

[125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average level of per pupil funding in schools (a) was in 2009-10 and (b) will be in 2022-23, in 2019-20 prices.

Nick Gibb:

The latest figures from the Institute for Fiscal Studies show that average real terms (2019-20 prices) per pupil funding for 5-16 year olds has risen overall from £4,599 (primary) and £5,991 (secondary) per pupil in 2009-10, to £5,016 (primary) and £6,220 (secondary) in 2019-20. The figures were published here:

<https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R162-Data-tables.xlsx>.

In August 2019, the Government announced the biggest funding boost for schools in a decade, which will give every school more money for every child. This includes an additional £2.6 billion for 2020-21, £4.8 billion for 2021-22, and £7.1 billion for 2022-23, in comparison to 2019-20. On top of this, the Department will provide £1.5 billion each year to fund additional pensions costs for teachers.

■ Schools: Domestic Visits

David Morris:

[116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to stop political visits to schools during general elections.

Gavin Williamson:

Following the announcement of the recent election, updated guidance was issued and circulated to schools on their responsibilities during the pre-election period here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-election-guidance-for-schools-and-multi-academy-trusts/pre-election-guidance-for-schools-and-multi-academy-trusts>.

Any school visits conducted by parliamentary candidates are arranged through their constituency offices rather than via the Department for Education. Decisions on the use of schools or other educational/public sector property must be taken by those legally responsible for the premises concerned – for example, for schools, the Governors or the Local Education Authority or Trust Board.

Although the ultimate decision is for those legally responsible for the premises to take, they are expected to treat the candidates of all parties in an even-handed way, and ensure that there should be no disruption to services.

I look forward to visiting a school in my hon. Friend, the member for Morecambe and Lunesdale's constituency, should a suitable opportunity arise.

■ Social Services: County Durham

Grahame Morris:

[72]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of the Children's Society in its report entitled Children and young people's services: Funding

and spending 2010-11 to 2017-18, that funding per child and young person has fallen by 32 per cent, if he will provide additional funding for local children's services in County Durham.

Michelle Donelan:

For 2020-21, the government has focused on providing early certainty and stability through a fast-tracked Spending Round, ahead of a full spending review next year.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that for 2020-21 local authorities will have access to £1 billion additional funding for social care, including children's social care. This is in addition to the continuation of the existing £410 million adult and children's social care grant. The settlement is the largest increase in core spending power since 2015 and is an estimated increase of 4.4% in real terms.

We are also investing £84 million in targeted, evidence-based interventions to improve the support provided to vulnerable children and their families.

Beyond 2020-21, longer term funding decisions will be taken at the spending review. The government will continue work to make the funding formula fairer and increase the amount of business rates growth which local authorities retain, aiming to implement major reforms in 2021-22.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Suffolk**

James Cartlidge:

[\[342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to improve SEND provision in Suffolk; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

Our ambition is for every local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver a high-quality service for every child or young person with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission conduct inspections of SEND services in local areas. Their inspection of Suffolk published in 2017 and subsequent revisit published in 2019 found strengths and improvements over time, but there remained a number of areas of significant weakness where sufficient progress had not been made.

Where we have concerns with performance, as there are with Suffolk, the Department for Education works with partners, including NHS England, to support and challenge local areas to improve. This includes regular advice and monitoring from the Department for Education and NHS England advisers as well as access to funded training opportunities and resources. Whilst there is more to be done, we welcome the progress being made and will continue to monitor the position closely.

In addition, in 2020-21, Suffolk will be receiving £74.9 million for its high needs budget, an increase of 17% per head of population aged 2-18 years old.

■ Teachers: Pay

Angela Rayner:

[129]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of increasing the teacher starting salary to £30,000.

Nick Gibb:

The Government's proposal for an increase in teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 by 2022-23, along with increases elsewhere on the rest of the pay framework, will be affordable for schools within the additional funding announced at the Spending Round. This will see an additional £2.6 billion in core schools funding next year, with increases of £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively.

Pay reform is subject to the School Teacher Review Body process and recommendations, but our assessment of affordability will be part of the evidence we provide as part of that process.

■ Teachers: Rother Valley

Alexander Stafford:

[363]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) primary and (b) secondary teachers there are in Rother Valley.

Nick Gibb:

As at November 2018 (the latest year for which information is available), there were 378 full time equivalent (FTE) primary school teachers, and 510 FTE teachers in secondary schools in Rother Valley.

The information requested can be derived from school level data on teachers numbers published as part of School Workforce in England, 2018. This is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2018>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agricultural Products: UK Trade with EU

Deidre Brock:

[141]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 19 December 2017 to Question 118358 on Agricultural Products: UK Trade With EU, what progress her Department has made on developing the UK's system for the management of agri-food imports and exports with EU countries.

George Eustice:

The UK Government is committed to ensuring UK businesses can continue to trade with our EU partners as easily as possible after Brexit, while continuing to protect the UK's high level of biosecurity.

Defra has built and tested a new import notification system and is in the final testing phase of a new online system for processing Export Health Certificates. Both of these could be used after the implementation period, if required, to ensure trade continues.

Deidre Brock: [142]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 13 December 2017 to Question 118331, what progress has been made on getting the best possible deal that allows the UK to continue to have tariff-free and frictionless access for goods and services into the European market.

George Eustice:

The principles underpinning any future trade deal with the EU were set out in the Political Declaration which accompanied the Withdrawal Agreement. We would expect formal discussions on the Political Declaration to commence after we leave the EU at the end of this month.

■ Air Pollution

Dr Matthew Offord: [90]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will bring forward legislative proposals on clean air.

Rebecca Pow:

The upcoming Environment Bill will contain provisions to tackle poor air quality, which is the greatest environmental risk to health.

The Air Quality chapter in the Environment Bill will ensure that local authorities have a clear framework for tackling air pollution, and simple to use powers to address air quality in their areas. It will also provide Government with new powers to enforce environmental standards for vehicles, and will commit to setting an ambitious, long-term air quality target.

The Environment Bill fell at the dissolution of the last Parliament, but the Conservative Party manifesto committed to reintroducing the Bill and we are expecting to see its reintroduction to Parliament shortly. Exact timings of the Bill's introduction will be confirmed soon.

■ Animals: Exports

Deidre Brock: [144]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 4 October 2019 to Question 290388, what replies have been received from those third countries on UK plans for the continued use of existing Export Health Certificates once the UK leaves the EU.

George Eustice:

Since the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) wrote to third countries on 21 December 2018, we have continued to work with third countries to ensure that the UK's Export Health Certificates (EHCs) remain when the UK leaves the EU.

93 countries have responded and no notifications have been received from third countries stating the UK's EHCs will be not be accepted.

■ **Business: Recycling**

Jim Shannon:

[297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether she is taking steps with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy to offer incentives to businesses to encourage greater uptake of workplace recycling.

Rebecca Pow:

In 2019, the Government consulted on measures to require businesses, public bodies and other organisations to segregate recyclable waste streams including plastic, metal, paper, glass and food waste so that these could be collected and recycled. The Government also consulted on measures to reduce the costs of putting in place recycling collections especially for smaller firms. The response to this consultation was published in July 2019 and showed strong support for businesses to recycle. The forthcoming Environment Bill is expected to introduce duties for businesses to separate waste to be recycled in England. The Government will work with businesses to implement these changes and to increase recycling including investigating measures to reduce costs.

In addition, the Government has launched a £1 million fund to promote recycling of non-household municipal waste (or business waste) in England. This fund will provide capital infrastructure to support collection and recycling of non-household municipal waste (or business waste) in England. The aim is to encourage organisations that collect or facilitate collection of this waste to provide new or improved recycling services. There is an additional aim of providing new infrastructure and better access to services targeting / benefitting small to medium enterprises. The grant scheme is managed by the Waste and Resources Action Programme. The scheme has now closed and applications for funding are being considered.

■ **Farms: Fly-tipping**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[63]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to help farmers tackle fly-tipping.

Rebecca Pow:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only.

Fly-tipping is unacceptable whether it occurs on public or private land. It blights local communities and the environment and is an issue the Government is committed to tackling, which is why we made tackling fly-tipping one of our manifesto commitments.

Defra chairs the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG), which is a group of organisations, including rural and urban landowning groups, working with a common aim to help prevent and tackle fly-tipping.

The NFTPG is working with major landowners in England, such as the National Farmers Union and Country Land and Business Association, to increase the reporting of fly-tipping on private land. We are doing so through developing a mobile smartphone and tablet app to collect data to better understand the extent of fly-tipping nationally, along with the type and geographical pattern of incidents. This will aid the investigation of incidents and help target enforcement.

The NFTPG has published a Fly-tipping Partnership Framework, outlining best practice for the prevention, reporting, investigation and clearance of fly-tipping. The NFTPG has also published a series of fly-tipping prevention guides for householders, businesses and landowners to help stop fly-tipping on their land.

We are also fulfilling a commitment in the Resources and Waste Strategy to develop a 'Fly-Tipping Toolkit' that will include guidance on local partnership working between landowners, including farmers, the police, local authorities and the Environment Agency, as well as guidance on presenting robust cases to the courts to ensure tougher penalties for fly-tipping.

■ Fisheries: Navy

Deidre Brock:

[145]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 2 October 2019 to Question 290370 on Fisheries: Navy, how many additional frontline warranted officers have been recruited, (b) by how much has aerial surveillance been increased, (c) how many extra sea patrol vessels are now available and (d) what the baseline figure was in each case.

George Eustice:

In England, the Marine Management Organisation has increased the number of frontline warranted officers by 50% (35 people) for 2019/2020. A framework is in place to increase aerial surveillance by a maximum of two surveillance aircrafts as risk and intelligence demands. Two additional commercial vessels have been chartered to enable an increase in routine sea-based inspections to supplement provision from the Royal Navy Fisheries Protection Squadron. A framework of agreements has been put in place with other Government departments and relevant agencies which enables provision for up to 22 further vessels to be activated, should the operational situation demand it.

As fisheries management is a devolved matter, it is for the devolved administrations to decide on appropriate levels of fisheries control and enforcement provision in their waters. However, we continue to work closely with the devolved administrations to ensure a coordinated approach to fisheries control and enforcement across UK waters.

■ Fishing Catches

Luke Pollard:

[\[237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans she has to introduce (a) catch recording and (b) reporting requirements on charter angling boats.

George Eustice:

In the 2018 white paper “Sustainable fisheries for future generations” the Government committed to explore how we can further integrate recreational angling within the new fisheries framework, recognising the societal benefits of this activity and impacts on some stocks. This work is being progressed and includes engagement with the recreational angling sector.

Luke Pollard:

[\[238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much her Department has spent on the implementation of the new catch recording app for fishing vessels under 10 metres in length; and how future revisions and updates to that app will be funded.

George Eustice:

As the Catch Recording App is downloaded to a mobile device, implementation costs are considered to be negligible. The development and build costs associated with the app as of 31 October were £1.8 million. The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) can be accessed to fund projects to support the ‘regulator’ and the ‘regulated’ to improve compliance with the Common Fisheries Policy Control Regulations. The app is substantively (90%, £1.6 million) funded by the EMFF, matched with Government funds (10%, £0.2 million). Any future revisions or updates to the app will also be funded from EMFF up to 31 December 2020, when this funding scheme ends.

■ Hunting

Catherine West:

[\[176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to amend the Hunting Act 2004 with regard to fox hunting.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government will not amend the Hunting Act 2004.

■ Incinerators: Licensing

Stephen Doughty:

[\[308\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many licences for (a) domestic (b) commercial and (c) industrial waste incineration were (i) granted and (ii) refused in each of the last five years; and for what reasons those licences were refused.

Rebecca Pow:

This is a devolved matter and the information provided therefore relates to England only. Regulation of incinerators in England is split between the Environment Agency (EA) and local authorities. The EA regulates incinerators with a capacity of greater than 3 tonnes per hour for non-hazardous waste and 10 tonnes per day for hazardous waste. Incinerators below this size are regulated by local authorities.

Since the start of 2015 the EA has granted 27 permits for new incinerators which may take in waste arising from domestic, commercial and industrial sources and which can be classed under the following waste types for each year:

	PRINCIPLE WASTE		NUMBER OF PERMITS ISSUED		
	TYPE				
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Mixed municipal waste	2	2	2	1	2
Waste wood	2	2	5	2	-
Refuse-derived fuel	1	1	-	2	1
Solid recovered fuel	1	-	-	-	-
Non-recyclable waste plastics	-	-	-	-	1

The EA also refused one permit in 2016 for a mixed municipal waste incinerator because the operator had failed to demonstrate that the height of its chimney was satisfactory.

While the EA has only refused one incinerator permit application in the last five years, other potentially unsuitable plants have been prevented during that time due to challenges from the EA, either as part of discussions before a formal application was made, or during the assessment process leading to the operator withdrawing their application. However, the EA does not keep records of such events.

■ **Potatoes: Exports****Deidre Brock:**[\[143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans her Department has to support seed potato exporters in the event that the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

George Eustice:

Both the UK and the EU have committed in the Political Declaration to reaching an agreement on our future relationship by the end of 2020. Defra will continue to work closely with seed potato businesses as the Withdrawal Agreement is signed and discussions on the future relationship start.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**■ Cameroon: Peace Negotiations****Mark Pritchard:**[\[68\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Cameroonian counterpart on a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict in Cameroon.

Andrew Stephenson:

The British Government remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon. We continue to maintain a spotlight on the crisis and raise our concerns at the highest levels, including with the Government of Cameroon, at the United Nations (UN) and with international partners. At a UN security Council briefing session on 6 December, the UK welcomed the National Dialogue that took place in Cameroon from 30 September – 4 October. The latter was called by the government and is an initial step to bring parties together. During a visit to Cameroon in September the FCO's Permanent Under-Secretary urged the government to ensure the National Dialogue was comprehensive and inclusive. It is imperative that the Government of Cameroon now engages in inclusive discussions about the root causes of the crisis and follows up on all the recommendations made at the National Dialogue. Supporting security, stability and good governance in Africa is a foreign policy priority and we urge all sides to engage in efforts to bring peace to the North-West and South-West regions. The UK has shared experiences with the Government of Cameroon on conflict resolution and remains ready to support.

■ China: Uighurs**Mr Steve Baker:**[\[108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation affecting Uighur Muslims in China; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We have particularly serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps", systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam, and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities. Reports indicating that forced labour is being used and children are being

forcibly separated from their parents add to the growing body of evidence about the disturbing situation that Uyghurs and other minorities are facing in Xinjiang.

Afzal Khan: [225]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) governance and (b) humanitarian situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang province, China.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We have serious concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Xinjiang, where there are credible reports of Uyghurs and other minorities being detained.” British diplomats in China visit Xinjiang regularly, most recently in November, in order to see the situation at first-hand. Their observations have supported much of the recent open source reporting, including reports of widespread surveillance measures, restrictions targeted at specific ethnic groups, and restrictions on the ability to freely practice religion.

Afzal Khan: [226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his UN counterparts on improving humanitarian access in Xinjiang province, China.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We regularly discuss concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang with likeminded partners at the UN. We have issued or joined a number of statements of concern in recent months: on 29 October at UN Third Committee, the UK read out a joint statement signed by 22 others drawing attention to the human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang and called on China to uphold its obligations to respect human rights; on 24 September, during the UN General Assembly Lord (Tariq) Ahmad called on China to allow UN observers immediate and unfettered access to the region; on 17 September, at the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UK again called for UN experts to be granted unfettered access to Xinjiang and raised our concerns on arbitrary detention.

■ Cyprus: Politics and Government

Dr Matthew Offord: [86]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will take steps to support a solution to the division on the island of Cyprus.

Christopher Pincher:

The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to reunite Cyprus, based on the internationally accepted model of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality for all. I visited Cyprus on 4 October to encourage progress towards an enduring solution. We will continue this regular dialogue. We call on all parties to engage constructively in talks about a settlement and demonstrate they are committed to making progress.

The United Kingdom believes a reunited Cyprus would unlock significant economic benefits through increased opportunities for trade, investment and tourism, and open up the possibility of new energy and economic partnerships in the region. This will benefit everyone on the island of Cyprus. A settlement would bolster the island's security and help to advance regional stability.

■ **Daphne Caruana Galizia**

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[\[42\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department has taken to support the investigation into the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia on 16 October 2017.

Christopher Pincher:

The United Kingdom has made very clear its condemnation of the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia and that all those responsible must be held to account. We remain closely engaged with the Maltese authorities and our international partners concerning this murder.

■ **Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Email**

Jeremy Hunt:

[\[66\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many of his Department's (a) employees and (b) contractors use non-secure email servers whilst on overseas missions.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

It is our policy not to comment publicly on the security measures that protect our people, properties and information.

■ **Hong Kong: Demonstrations**

Catherine West:

[\[175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his (a) Hong Kong and (b) Chinese counterparts on the scale of protests in Hong Kong since the local elections in that territory.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The Foreign Secretary summoned the Chinese Ambassador on 19 November and set out his concerns about the situation in Hong Kong. The Foreign Secretary has previously set out concerns directly to both the Hong Kong Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, and to the Chinese Foreign Minister, State Councillor Wang Yi. Since the District Council elections, officials have remained in regular contact with the Hong Kong SAR government and the authorities in Beijing. They have stressed the urgent need for political dialogue and underlined that the peaceful conduct of the elections demonstrates political engagement is the way to resolve the current impasse. The leadership in China and Hong Kong is in no doubt about the strength of UK concern,

and our commitment to seeing the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Joint Declaration upheld.

■ **Hong Kong: Human Rights**

Anneliese Dodds:

[223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government has sought EU approval for sanctions against people who have been involved in breaches of human rights in Hong Kong.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

There are currently no EU sanctions in place against individuals in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong our focus is on supporting a peaceful resolution through meaningful dialogue that addresses the concerns of the Hong Kong people. As the former Foreign Secretary announced on 25 June, no further export licences will be granted to Hong Kong for crowd control equipment for police unless we are satisfied that our concerns about human rights and fundamental freedoms have been addressed thoroughly.

■ **India: Human Rights**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for protestors' human rights of the recent response by police and security services to protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in India.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions are following reports on the continued protests in India and the Indian Government response. We are following the situation and raise issues with Indian officials where appropriate.

Mr Steve Baker:

[282]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect on the human rights of Muslims in India of that Government's recent decision to pass the Citizenship Amendment Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British Government and the British High Commission in New Delhi are following the human rights situation across India and raise issues with Indian officials where appropriate.

■ India: Politics and Government

Afzal Khan:

[227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Indian counterpart on the Citizenship Amendment Act in India and its effect on minority communities.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British Government and the British High Commission in New Delhi are following the human rights situation across India and raise issues with Indian officials where appropriate.

■ Iran: Scientists

Caroline Lucas:

[277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to his Iranian counterpart on the cases of Iranian conservation scientists (a) Niloufar Bayani, (b) Taher Ghadirian, (c) Houman Jokar, (d) Amirhossein Khaleghi Hamidi and (e) Sepideh Kashani; and if he will (i) request the immediate release of the scientists, and (ii) make a statement on the use of torture to extract forced confessions.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We are aware of reports of the sentencing of the Iranian conservation scientists Niloufar Bayani, Taher Ghadirian, Houman Jokar, Amirhossein Khaleghi Hamidi and Sepideh Kashani. The Foreign Secretary has not made representations to his counterpart specifically on these cases because they do not involve British nationals. The UK regularly raises human rights with the Iranian authorities at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues. Any report of the use of torture to extract forced confessions is extremely concerning. The UK consistently and unreservedly condemns torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and it is a priority for us to challenge it wherever and whenever it occurs.

■ Kashmir: Politics and Government

Mr Steve Baker:

[107]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) humanitarian and (b) political situation in Indian-administered Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We are following the situation in Kashmir closely. Events in Kashmir can have regional and international implications and we urge calm and caution from all. We encourage the Government of India to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the people of India-administered Kashmir are being met. It is important that individual rights are fully respected and that there is constructive dialogue with affected communities. We have raised our concerns, including on the continued use of

detentions and restrictions on communications, with the Government of India, most recently during Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon's meeting with Indian MEA Minister Muraleedharan on 19 December.

■ **Kashmir: Telecommunications**

Afzal Khan: [228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 4 November 2019 to Question 7221, what steps the Government is taking in respect of the reported continued use of detentions and restrictions on communications in India-administered Kashmir.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We remain concerned about the continued use of detentions and restrictions on communications. We are in regular contact with the Government of India and raise our concerns with them, most recently during Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon's meeting with Indian MEA Minister Muraleedharan on 19 December.

■ **Morad Tahbaz**

Caroline Lucas: [278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Iranian Government on the case of Morad Tahbaz, of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation and British-Iranian citizen; what steps he is taking to secure his release; and what support his Department are providing to him.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The British Government remains extremely concerned about the welfare of British-Iranian dual nationals detained in Iran, including Morad Tahbaz. Iran does not recognise dual nationality and therefore does not permit consular access to British-Iranian detainees. We are committed to ensuring that we do everything we can to secure Mr Tahbaz's release, including continuing to press the Iranian authorities for exceptional consular access. The Prime Minister raised his concerns about dual national detentions with President Rouhani on 24 September, and the Foreign Secretary did so with Foreign Minister Zarif on 13 November. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon hosted an event at the UN General Assembly on 25 September to call out the failings of the Iranian judiciary. I raised the issue of dual national detentions with my Iranian counterparts in Tehran in June.

■ **Persecution of Christians across the Globe Independent Review**

Mr Steve Baker: [284]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what his timescale is for implementing the recommendations of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review for the Foreign Secretary of FCO Support for Persecuted Christians; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British government is committed to implementing the recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's Review. The recommendations have been divided into short, medium and longer term priorities and we have already implemented a good number of them. This includes recently appointing a Director General level champion for Freedom of Religion or Belief and marking Red Wednesday in support of persecuted Christians and members of other minority groups. Some of the recommendations will take longer to implement and many will require an ongoing effort to embed into the working practice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Departments.

■ Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief**Mr Steve Baker:**[\[285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will (a) reappoint and (b) adequately resource the Prime Minister's Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

Rehman Chishti MP has been reappointed as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. Funding has been agreed for the office which should adequately cover travel and administrative costs.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Autism and Learning Disability****Barbara Keeley:**[\[276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the background briefing notes on the Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019, what steps the Government plans to take to deliver the commitment to improve how autistic people and people with learning disabilities are treated in law.

Caroline Dinenage:

Improving the care and treatment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities is a priority for this Government.

The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 made a number of recommendations to improve the treatment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities under the Act.

During 2019, we also received two petitions to change how the Act applied to autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

We will be responding to the Review's recommendations and to proposals to change the scope of the Act in a white paper early in 2020. We will then consult publicly on our proposals and bring forward a new Mental Health Bill to amend the Act.

■ Brain: Injuries

Seema Malhotra:

[301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) funding and (b) guidance his Department has provided for neuro-cognitive rehabilitation services in the NHS.

Caroline Dineneage:

Neuro-cognitive rehabilitation is offered in a number of settings. NHS England commissions specialised in-patient rehabilitation for those patients with the most complex needs. However, the vast majority of rehabilitation care is locally commissioned by clinical commissioning groups who are best placed to meet the needs of their local population.

The Service Specification for 'Specialist Rehabilitation for Patients with Highly Complex Needs' sets out the categories of patient need and the levels of service in addition to describing the pathways into and out of the specialised service. The specification can be found at the following link:

www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/d02-rehab-pat-high-needs-0414.pdf

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides the guidance on several neurological conditions and, where appropriate, suitable rehabilitation guidance is provided. NICE also provides Quality Standards on 'Head injury' and 'Rehabilitation after critical illness in adults' which provide further guidance on neuro-rehabilitation. These can be found at the following links:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs74/resources/head-injury-pdf-2098848108229

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs158/resources/rehabilitation-after-critical-illness-in-adults-pdf-75545546693317

■ Drugs: Misuse

Alison Thewliss:

[150]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of drugs policy in reducing the rate of infection from blood borne viruses.

Jo Churchill:

There is good evidence that a combined approach of harm reduction programmes such as needle and syringe programmes (NSP), opioid substitution treatment and abstinence-based treatment is the most effective way to tackle public health harms, including the spread of blood borne viruses (BBVs). Vaccination, testing and treatment of infection are also effective in the control of BBVs.

Public Health England monitors drug treatment data and anonymous testing of blood samples from people using drug treatment services or NSP. The data show that these interventions have been effective in reducing BBVs in people who inject drugs

(PWID). For example, the proportion of PWID who have ever been infected with hepatitis B in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has declined over the past 10 years, falling from 18% in 2008 to 9% in 2018. In addition, HIV infection is uncommon among PWID in the United Kingdom, and HIV prevalence in this risk group is low compared to many other European countries. Overall, there were 95 new HIV diagnoses in the UK during 2018 which were likely to have been acquired through injecting drug use, down from 170 in 2008.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of patients treated by hospital A&E departments as a result of vaping fluids laced with either cannabis or Spice in the last 12 months; and what the estimated cost to the public purse was of that treatment.

Jo Churchill:

We do not collect data at the level of detail needed to identify patients treated by hospital accident and emergency departments, as a result of vaping liquids laced with either cannabis or spice.

■ Health Services: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski:

[58]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on patient safety of the delays to the Future Fit process instigated by Telford Council.

Edward Argar:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care referred the Future Fit scheme to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) for their expert advice on this matter. The IRP provided a full assessment of the Future Fit scheme, which took into account concerns about patient safety, and recommended that the new model of hospital care be implemented without delay.

On 2 October 2019, in line with the IRP's recommendations, the Secretary of State decided that the emergency care centre should be located at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital whilst enabling as much clinically appropriate care as possible at the Princess Royal Hospital. He asked NHS England and NHS Improvement to work with the clinical commissioning groups and Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust to develop the accident and emergency local model.

■ HIV Infection: Urban Areas

Stephen Doughty:

[306]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to the Fast Track Cities Initiative for HIV/AIDS.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) is supporting cities in England that are working towards or have joined the HIV Fast Track Cities (FTCs) network and the International Association of providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC). Further information on the FTC programme is available at the following link:

<http://www.fast-trackcities.org/cities>

This support has included providing specialist public health advice to identify needs across the range of care. For example, improving access to HIV testing, tackling stigma and providing bespoke data analysis to better understand the local need.

PHE also works collaboratively with the initiative to provide methodologies and data to IAPAC, sharing learning and expertise with other FTCs and helping secure funding for work regionally.

■ NHS: Pensions

Mr Stephen Morgan: [206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of pension legislation on trends in the level of staffing in the NHS.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of pension legislation on the allocation of work to NHS staff.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [209]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of pension legislation on the ability of NHS staff to clear waiting lists.

Edward Argar:

The Department recognises that the annual allowance may contribute to decisions from National Health Service consultants to retire early or limit their NHS commitments. We are also listening carefully to concerns raised by senior doctors and NHS employers about the tapered annual allowance.

The Department has consulted on introducing flexibility within the NHS Pension Scheme from 2019/20 to allow clinicians affected by annual allowance tax charges to reduce their pension accrual in deciles in order to manage any potential annual allowance tax charges.

In September 2019 guidance was issued by NHS Employers informing employers of the short-term approaches that they could take to mitigate the effect of pension tax on their workforce this tax year. The NHS has also implemented an immediate measure to preserve clinical capacity amid the increased pressure on services during the winter period. This will compensate NHS clinicians for the effect on their pensions of annual allowance charges incurred in 2019-20.

■ NHS: Standards

Jeremy Hunt:

[R] [\[64\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the individual targets for (a) cancer treatment, (b) A&E waiting times, (c) eliminating infection, (d) elective waiting times and (e) any other NHS treatment targets.

Edward Argar:

There are acute operational waiting time standards relating to cancer treatment, accident and emergency (A&E) and elective care which the National Health Service reports against on a monthly basis. These are outlined in the following table:

CANCER	TARGET
Two week wait from urgent general practitioner (GP) referral to see a specialist where cancer is suspected	93%
31 day wait from diagnosis to first definitive treatment	96%
62 day wait from urgent GP referral to first definitive treatment	85%
Two week wait from referral to see a specialist for investigation of breast symptoms, even if cancer is not initially suspected	93%
62 day wait from a national screening service to a first treatment for cancer	90%
31 day wait from a decision to treat to a subsequent treatment for cancer (radiotherapy)	94%
31 day wait from a decision to treat to a subsequent treatment for cancer (surgery)	94%
31 day wait from a decision to treat to a subsequent treatment for cancer (anti-cancer drug regimen).	98%
A&E	Target
Patients admitted, transferred or discharged within 4 hours of arrival in A&E.	95%
Elective care (referral-to-treatment)	Target
Patients with incomplete pathways waiting 18	92%

CANCER

TARGET

weeks or less to start consultant-led treatment.

In addition to the acute operational standards mentioned, there are also mental health waiting times targets which are published on either a monthly or a quarterly basis:

MEASURE

TARGET

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)	75% of people referred to IAPT services should start treatment within 6 weeks of referral and 95% should start treatment within 18 weeks of referral
Eating disorder services for children and young people	By 2020/21, 95% of children with an eating disorder will receive treatment within one week for urgent cases and within four weeks for routine cases
Early intervention in psychosis	By 2020/21, at least 60% of people experiencing a first episode of psychosis commence a National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)-recommended package of care within two weeks of referral

The United Kingdom's five-year national action plan for antimicrobial resistance includes a strengthened focus on infection prevention and control and sets an ambition to halve levels of healthcare associated Gram-negative blood stream infections by 2023-2024. The draft NHS Standard Contract for 2020/21 includes a proposal for annual targets for trust and clinical commissioning group-level reductions in *E. coli*, Methicillin-Sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella* and *Pseudomonas* bloodstream infections. The draft contract is out for consultation until 31 January 2020.

The NHS Standard Contract will continue to include targets for both methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and *Clostridium difficile* (CDI). The zero-tolerance approach for MRSA bacteraemia will continue, and all acute providers submit monthly data on all positive MRSA bacteraemia specimens. CDI thresholds are published annually by NHS England and NHS Improvement and all acute providers must report positive CDI specimens.

National targets for vaccine preventable disease/immunisation are 95% national coverage for key vaccines, and 50% coverage for the childhood flu vaccine. The UK has also committed to meeting the World Health Organization elimination targets for hepatitis C, hepatitis B and Tuberculosis (TB) ahead of 2030, and is committed to

eradicating HIV transmission in England by 2030 (Public Health England's infectious disease strategy).

■ **Nurses: Recruitment**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Conservative Party manifesto 2019 and the background briefing to the Queen's Speech, how many of the 50,000 more nurses will be (a) mental health nurses, (b) learning disability nurses and (c) nurses from other disciplines.

Edward Argar:

The announcement made on the 18 December 2019 is to increase the nursing workforce by 50,000 by 2025 in total across all nursing disciplines which includes mental health and learning disability nursing.

■ **Perinatal Mortality: Registration**

Tim Loughton:

[\[23\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on the review of the registration of pre-24 week stillbirths as legislated in the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc) Act 2019; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Work on the Pregnancy Loss Review is ongoing and we expect to publish a report in 2020.

■ **Primary Health Care: Recruitment**

Barbara Keeley:

[\[275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Queen's Speech 2019 background briefing notes, what proportion of the 6,000 new staff in primary care settings will be providing mental health support.

Jo Churchill:

Many primary care professionals provide some form of mental health support for their patients. However, it is not possible to estimate what proportion of new staff being recruited to work in primary care settings will be providing such support, as this is dependent on patient demand, local decision making and ensuring patients and clinicians have a navigable system.

The Government is committed to growing the primary care workforce by 6,000 more doctors in general practice and 6,000 other professionals, such as physiotherapists and pharmacists. This is on top of the additional 20,000 primary care professionals NHS England is already providing funding towards recruiting.

■ Psychiatric Hospitals

Barbara Keeley:

[274]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to announcement of reform of the Mental Health Act 1983, what plans the Government has to reduce the number inpatient mental health beds in dormitory-style wards; and if he will make it his policy to end the use of dormitory style wards in all mental health units.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 recommended that all existing dormitory accommodation should be updated to allow patients the privacy of their own room. The NHS Long Term Plan also recognised that capital investment is needed to upgrade the physical environment for inpatient psychiatric care but that this would be subject to the next capital review.

We will publish a white paper in early 2020 that will set out the Government's response to the Review's recommendations and we will bring forward a Mental Health Bill to amend the Act when parliamentary time allows.

In addition, the NHS Long Term Plan will deliver improvements to crisis and community mental health services as an alternative to inpatient care through increased investment of at least a further £2.3 billion a year by 2023/24.

■ Radiotherapy

Tim Farron:

[70]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will place in the Library a list of each location, including postcode, at which radiotherapy commissioned via the NHS in England is delivered by the (i) NHS and (ii) private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The information is not held centrally in the format requested.

■ Screening: Children

Tim Loughton:

[25]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of children receive their two to two-and-a-half year check from health visitors as part of the Health Child Programme; and what steps he is taking to extend the coverage of that programme.

Jo Churchill:

The Healthy Child Programme is a universal offer for all children in England. The latest data, for the financial year 2018/19, shows that 77.6% (521,528) of children aged two to two-and-a-half years received their Universal Health Visitor Review. These data are available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/child-and-maternal-health-statistics#health-visitor-service-delivery-metrics>

Local authorities commission and monitor the provision of the Healthy Child Programme based on local population needs.

Public Health England is undertaking a systematic review and refresh of the Healthy Child Programme in England. The refresh will ensure that the future approach is both universal in reach and personalised in response to those families needing extra support. It is proposed that the programme will extend coverage from the pre-conception period until age 24 years.

The five mandated Universal Health Visitor Reviews (antenatal, new birth visit, six to eight week review, one-year review and two to two-and-a half year review) will remain a core element of the Healthy Child Programme.

■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust: Finance

Daniel Kawczynski:

[60]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the budget for Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust has been in (a) 2005, (b) 2010, (c) 2015 and (d) 2018.

Edward Argar:

National Health Service providers (NHS trusts and foundation trusts) fund their spending via income mostly received from NHS commissioners in return for the provision of healthcare services to their local population, and therefore do not have an annual budget.

In the years requested the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust has reported the following income for its services:

- 2004-05: Data is not held by the Department;
- 2009-10: Data is not held by the Department;
- 2014-15: £316.8 million; and
- 2017-18: £358.0 million.

■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust: Managers

Daniel Kawczynski:

[61]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many chief executives have (a) resigned, (b) retired early and (c) been sacked from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust since 2000.

Edward Argar:

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust has existed since 2003. In that time, one Chief Executive has resigned, one has retired and three have left to take up new positions with other organisations.

Daniel Kawczynski:

[62]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for the appointment of the new chief executive of Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust.

Edward Argar:

The new Chief Executive has been appointed and will take up her post in February 2020.

■ **Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust: Nurses**

Daniel Kawczynski:

[59]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new nurses will be employed at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust in (a) 2020, (b) 2021 and (c) 2022.

Edward Argar:

Healthcare providers are responsible for ensuring that they have the right level of staffing to provide high quality care. Health Education England (HEE) will work through its Local Education and Training Boards and others to ensure that there are sufficient nurses and other staff being trained to meet the needs of patients. The interim NHS People Plan, published on 3 June 2019, puts the workforce at the heart of the National Health Service and will ensure we have the staff needed to deliver high quality care. HEE will work with NHS England and NHS Improvement to understand the longer-term workforce implications of the NHS Long Term Plan. This will inform the final NHS People Plan, to be published in early 2020.

■ **Social Services: Fees and Charges**

Barbara Keeley:

[273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure that no one will have to sell their home to pay for social care.

Caroline Dinéage:

We are determined to find a long-term solution to the challenges in social care to ensure every person is treated with dignity and offered the security they deserve. We will seek to build cross-party consensus and will outline next steps shortly.

■ **Social Services: Waiting Lists**

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in waiting times for social care on the wellbeing of people requiring that care.

Caroline Dinéage:

Information on waiting times for social care provision is not centrally held.

■ Supported Housing: Safety

Catherine West:

[\[178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) unexpected deaths and (b) serious injuries there have been in supported living in each year since 2010.

Caroline Dinenage:

Information on unexpected deaths and serious injuries in supported living is not held centrally.

HOME OFFICE

■ Antisocial Behaviour: Feltham and Heston

Seema Malhotra:

[\[302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce anti-social behaviour in Feltham and Heston constituency.

Victoria Atkins:

We recognise the impact that anti-social behaviour can have on victims, which is why we reformed the powers available to tackle it through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Act provides police and local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour.

Strengthening police numbers is a priority for the Government. Our commitment to recruit 20,000 additional police officers over the next three years will assist Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to deploy resources to tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour and crime as they see fit. South Yorkshire Police have a year 1 recruitment target of 151

The powers are deliberately local in nature, and it is for local agencies to determine whether their use is appropriate in the circumstances. We keep anti-social behaviour policy under review through the Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Board which brings together key partners.

■ British Nationality: Children

Alison Thewliss:

[\[149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will refund child citizenship fees in light of the decision of the High Court that they are unlawful.

Kevin Foster:

The judgment was handed down on 19 December, and we are carefully considering its implications, and next steps.

■ Drugs: Misuse

Alison Thewliss: [147]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she next plans to attend a drugs task force meeting in Glasgow.

Kit Malthouse:

The Minister for Crime, Policing and the Fire Services recently announced that he was convening a UK drugs summit to be held in Glasgow.

Due to the General Election this was delayed our officials are now working on holding the summit in the first quarter of this year.

Alison Thewliss: [148]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to make provision for a supervised drug consumption facility in Glasgow.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to change the law on drug consumption rooms. Nevertheless, the UK Government continues to support a range of evidence-based approaches to reduce the health-related harms of drug misuse.

The UK Government will continue to work together with the Scottish Government to tackle the problem of drug misuse and drug-related harm, notwithstanding that funding decisions with regards to treatment and rehabilitation are entirely the decision of the Scottish Government.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Floods

Mr Stephen Morgan: [212]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of recent trends in funding from the public purse of the Fire Brigade on their ability to deal adequately with incidents of flooding.

Kit Malthouse:

Fire and Rescue Authorities already have the necessary funding to respond to incidents, including flooding. This has been demonstrated through the fantastic response of Fire and Rescue Services to a range of incidents in 2019 including the Wainfleet and Yorkshire floods and the Toddbrook Reservoir incident.

Overall Fire and Rescue Authorities will receive around £2.3 billion in 2019/20.

Single purpose Fire and Rescue Authorities will see an increase in core spending power of 2.3% in cash terms in 2019/20, and an overall increase of 0.3% from 2015/16 to 2019/20.

Additionally, the Home Office also provides funding for High-Volume Pumps and training for their use as part of the New Dimensions Grant to Fire and Rescue Authorities. Including other National Resilience capabilities this totals approximately £18m.

The Home Office also provides a further £9m funding to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, the Lead Authority for National Resilience, in support of the maintenance and assurance of National Resilience Capabilities, including High Volume Pumps.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of introducing a statutory duty for firefighters in England to respond to flooding on the ability of the fire service to tackle flooding.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effect of introducing a statutory duty for firefighters in England to respond to flooding on the ability of the fire service to tackle the issue of flooding.

Kit Malthouse:

A statutory duty for firefighters to respond to flooding is unlikely to make a significant difference to the Fire and Rescue Services which already provide effective response to flooding incidents. This has been demonstrated through the fantastic response of Fire and Rescue Services to a range of incidents in 2019 including the Wainfleet and Yorkshire floods and the Toddbrook Reservoir incident.

Fire and Rescue Authorities already have the power to respond to all kinds of emergencies for which they do not have a specific statutory duty, including flooding, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Furthermore, the Government provides the Fire and Rescue Service with additional resource to tackle flooding via the provision of High-Volume Pumps and Water Rescue Assets.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Hampshire

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of recent trends in funding from the public purse for Hampshire fire service on the number of fire fatalities in that county.

Kit Malthouse:

In 2019/20, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority will receive £65.2 million in core spending power. This is an increase of 2.4% compared with 2018/19. In addition, at March 2018, the authority held £30.3 million in reserves, equivalent to 47% of their core spending power, which is above the average for single purpose fire and rescue authorities.

There were seven fire-related fatalities recorded in Hampshire in the year ending June 2018. Fire-related fatalities fluctuate year to year due to the relatively small numbers involved and, over the last decade, fire-related fatalities in Hampshire have ranged between 2 and 12 a year.

■ Fire Stations: Closures

Mr Stephen Morgan: [210]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of recent trends in fire station closures on the ability of the fire service to safeguard the public.

Kit Malthouse:

In December the new Fire Inspectorate, HMICFRS, completed the first inspection of all fire and rescue services for over a decade. This included assessing how effective each service is at responding to fires and other emergencies.

Operational decisions including the number and locations of fire stations are for each fire and rescue authority to make as part of the integrated risk management planning process.

■ Police: Finance

Alex Norris: [189]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to make an announcement on the Police Provisional Grant Settlement for 2020-21; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office will announce the police funding settlement early this year.

■ Police: Recruitment

James Cartlidge: [338]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has for police officer recruitment in Suffolk; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government has committed to increasing the number of police officers by 20,000 over the next three years. Up to 6,000 additional officers will be recruited in the first wave and will be shared among the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales. Suffolk has a recruitment target for the first year of 54.

Targets for all forces were announced on 9 October 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-announces-first-wave-of-20000-police-officer-uplift>

■ Taxis: Hate Crime

Mr Stephen Morgan: [198]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to allow taxi drivers to audio record their journeys for the purposes of accurately recording incidents of hate crime and racism.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Justice on bringing forward legislative proposals to tackle (a) hate crime and (b) racism against taxi drivers.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to improve the ability of taxi drivers to record incidents of (a) hate crime and (b) racism against them.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many recorded incidents of (a) violence and (b) hate crime were recorded against taxi drivers in (a) 2010 and (b) 2018.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to reduce hate crime against taxi drivers.

Victoria Atkins:

UK legislation does not prohibit the installation and use of systems capable of recording visual and audio data in taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs). It is for individual taxi and PHV licensing authorities to consider whether such systems should be prohibited, permitted or mandated in their fleet.

The Government has asked the Law Commission to undertake a full review of the coverage and approach of current hate crime legislation. That review is in progress. The Law Commission will publish a Consultation Paper in early 2020, and we expect their Final Report in early 2021.

The Government is clear that all forms of hate crime are unacceptable, and we have robust legislation to tackle these crimes. The Government's Hate Crime Action Plan includes a commitment by the Department for Transport to ensure that taxi and private hire vehicle drivers identify and report hate crime in the night-time economy and includes relevant advice in the Department's best practice guidance on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle licensing.

The Home Office does not hold information on the occupation of victims of violence or hate crime.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION■ **Big Ben****Patrick Grady:**[\[154\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission has received a request from the Government to arrange for Big Ben to chime to mark the UK's departure from the EU.

Sir Paul Beresford:

The House of Commons Commission has not received a request from the Government to arrange for Big Ben to chime to mark the UK's departure from the EU.

The Commission is aware of EDM No. 2, tabled by the right hon. Member for Rayleigh and Wickford, which calls on Mr Speaker and the House Authorities to make arrangements for Big Ben to chime at 11.00 pm on 31 January 2020.

The Commission is further aware that an amendment in the names of Mark Francois and other signatories has been tabled to the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill that moves the following clause;

Exit day chimes of Big Ben

(1) The United Kingdom leaves the European Union, in accordance with Article 50 (2) of the Treaty on European Union, at 11.00pm Greenwich Mean Time on Friday 31 January 2020.

(2) The Speaker of the House of Commons and the Corporate Officer of the House of Commons, together with any other relevant parliamentary authorities, must make arrangements for the occasion in subsection (1) to be marked by the sounding of the hourly chimes including eleven strikes of the principal bell (Big Ben) of the Great Clock in the Elizabeth Tower of the Houses of Parliament at 11.00pm Greenwich Mean Time on Friday 31 January 2020.

In May 2018, the Commission agreed that, during the Elizabeth Tower refurbishment project, Big Ben should sound only for Remembrance Sunday, Armistice Day and over the New Year.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT■ **Buildings: Insulation****Mr Steve Reed:**[\[119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the fires at Samuel Garside House in Barking Riverside, Beechmere retirement complex in Crewe and Sherbrooke Way in Worcester Park, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of banning the use of timber cladding in residential buildings.

Esther McVey:

On 29 November 2018, the Government introduced a ban of combustible materials in the external wall of buildings including blocks of flats, student accommodation and care homes with a storey more than 18 metres in height. The ban requires that all materials which become part of an external wall or specified attachment achieve European Class A2-s1, d0 or Class A1, other than those covered by exemptions. There are currently no timber cladding panels able to achieve this performance.

As stated in the explanatory memorandum the Department intends to review the ban annually through monitoring arrangements and advice from bodies such as Building Regulations Advisory Committee for England. The Department is currently in the process of reviewing the scope of the ban and will report in due course.

Hilary Benn:[\[269\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to provide assistance to leaseholders unable to sell their properties as a result of uncertainty over the content of the cladding on the buildings within which those properties are situated.

Esther McVey:

Lenders are lending on flats in high rise buildings, but obtaining the necessary paperwork to support a decision can take time. Valuers can now refer to the form produced by the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (RICS) to manage valuations and lending on high rise residential buildings.

■ Help to Buy Scheme**Mr Clive Betts:**[\[264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what checks his Department carries out on homes purchased under the Help to Buy scheme to ensure that they comply with (a) building regulations and (b) other legal requirements.

Mr Clive Betts:[\[265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take as a result of the investigation into Persimmon homes which found thousands of homes did not comply with building regulations on fire safety.

Mr Clive Betts:[\[266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the investigation into Persimmon new build properties, many of which were bought under the Help to Buy scheme, what plans he has to ensure that properties sold by other developers under that scheme conform to (a) building regulations and (b) other requirements.

Esther McVey:

[Holding answer 7 January 2020]: House builders are responsible for ensuring they build high quality homes which are fit for purpose. Persimmon's independent review

has identified serious failings and they will want to take immediate action to address the concerns raised.

Improving the quality and safety of buildings is a priority for this government and we are determined to ensure that everyone is, and feels, safe in their homes. Through the Building Safety and Fire Safety Bills we will bring about fundamental change, reforming both the regulatory frameworks and industry culture to ensure construction products are safe and residents have a stronger voice in a more accountable system.

We will also create a New Homes Ombudsman to ensure homebuyers have a means of redress.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Mr Steve Reed: [118]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications from privately owned housing blocks have been made to his Department's fund to pay for the removal of aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding on private housing blocks.

Esther McVey:

Information on applications to the private sector remediation fund can be found in the Building Safety Programme monthly data release. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-monthly-data-release-november-2019>

Mr Steve Reed: [120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department holds figures on the number of blocks over 18m in height in England and Wales that have the same form of cladding as was on the Cube student halls building in Bolton.

Esther McVey:

The Department has commenced a data collection exercise which will enable us to build a picture of external wall systems in use on high rise residential buildings. The exercise will collect data on residential buildings 18 metres and over covering private and social buildings, student accommodation and hotels in England. We will publish appropriate summary information from the data collection in our monthly Building Safety Programme data release in due course.

Hilary Benn: [268]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to give financial support to owners of housing blocks clad in HPL to enable the removal of that cladding.

Esther McVey:

Government intervention does not remove responsibility for overall building safety from the building owner. We have issued advice (updated in December 2018) to building owners on non-Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) external wall systems

and managing the safety of buildings of all heights. Building owners should consider all routes to meet costs, for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work. Government intervention to provide funding for the removal and replacement of unsafe ACM cladding is based on the unparalleled fire risk ACM poses.

■ High Rise Flats: Safety

Mr Steve Reed:

[117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many emails were received by the email address set up to allow tower block residents to report safety fears following the Grenfell Tower fire in each month from its creation to the end of November 2019.

Esther McVey:

Following the Grenfell fire the Housing Checks mailbox was established to allow local authorities (LAs) and housing associations (HAs) to report their stock of buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Cladding. The inbox was advertised on Gov.uk. We are aware that other organisations and bodies have sent mail to this inbox on housing safety issues. As of November 2019, there were in excess of 9000 emails in the Housing Checks mailbox dating back from June 2017.

We do not record the number of emails received each month from residents to the Housing Checks inbox. Residents with concerns should contact the department through the online portal: <https://forms.communities.gov.uk>.

■ Housing: Standards

Stephen Doughty:

[307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many complaints have been received by his Department on (a) building defects and (b) fire safety issues relating to developments built by Redrow Homes in each of the last five years.

Esther McVey:

The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government does not routinely maintain data on individual complaints it receives on specific developers.

Complainants are directed to developers, the relevant complaints processes for new homes and local authorities. The Department does not deal with individual complaints but responds to correspondence advising how complaints can be resolved through existing processes. However we know that the current complaints and redress system does not provide sufficient protection for consumers and this is why we have committed to legislate to set up a New Homes Ombudsman.

The Department is committed to ensuring all buildings are built and maintained to a good standard. That is why we have announced in the Queen's Speech that we will bring forward legislation on building safety in this parliament.

■ Housing: Students

Mr Steve Reed:

[121]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will undertake an assessment of fire safety in blocks of student accommodation owned by private providers.

Esther McVey:

The Government's comprehensive programme to oversee Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding remediation included student accommodation. We have pushed building owners hard to remediate unsafe buildings. We have worked closely with local authorities and Fire and Rescue Services to ensure that interim safety measures are in place in all buildings until the cladding is replaced.

The Government has made clear that building safety is the responsibility of the building owner. We have issued advice (updated in December 2018) to building owners on non-ACM external wall systems and managing the safety of buildings of all heights. The Secretary of State for Education also wrote to all university vice chancellors on 18 November 2019, asking that they – and their commercial partners – review fire safety across all university buildings used by students, including student accommodation, to ensure compliance with building regulations.

■ Mobile Homes

Sir Christopher Chope:

[259]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to prevent park homes from being advertised as bungalows in promotional marketing; and if he will make it his policy to raise awareness of the legal difference between a home which is a real estate in land and chattel or personal property.

Esther McVey:

The Government is committed to improving the park homes sector and ensuring that residents are better protected.

Consumer Rights legislation is already in place to protect consumers from unfair or misleading trading practices and ban misleading omissions and aggressive sales tactics.

We have published a factsheet (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/buying-a-park-home>) for anyone intending to buy a park home. There is also valuable information for those buying a home in the Government's How to Buy a Home Guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-buy-a-home>). In addition, free independent advice has been made available through the Leasehold Advisory Service.

We have set up a working group to examine how messages about residents' rights and responsibilities can be improved and better disseminated. The working group will publish its recommendations in due course.

■ Religious Hatred: Islam

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to establish a working definition of Islamophobia; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

The Government agrees that there needs to be a formal definition of Islamophobia to give the issue a stronger focus. We have committed to appointing independent advisers to provide expert advice on a definition. The first of these advisers, Imam Qari Asim MBE, was appointed in July 2019. We are taking steps to appoint individuals with the right combination of skills and experience to drive the work. We endeavour to move at pace on these appointments; good progress is balanced by the necessity for careful consideration of due process.

■ Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to enable tenants of Housing Associations in England to have a Right to Buy; and if he will make a statement.

Esther McVey:

The Voluntary Right to Buy for housing association tenants is currently being piloted in the Midlands, which is giving thousands of tenants in the East and West Midlands the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of home ownership. The demand for the pilot was high. Over 9,000 households registered for the ballot in August 2018, with 6,000 tenants being given the opportunity to apply to their housing association. The pilot will be fully evaluated after its completion.

As set out in the 2019 manifesto, we will be evaluating new pilot areas. We will announce more details on this in due course.

■ Vandalism: Prosecutions

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[81\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the powers available to local authorities to prosecute people responsible for fly-posting.

Luke Hall:

My Department has not undertaken any recent formal assessment of local planning authorities' powers to deal with fly-posting. However, local authorities already have extensive powers under the advertisement control regime in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and through community protection notices in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to tackle fly-posting. This includes the power to prosecute those responsible if they fail to comply with any enforcement action.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**■ Middle East and North Africa: Locusts****John Spellar:**[\[262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support his Department is providing to countries in the Middle East and North Africa to (a) counter plagues of locusts and to (b) support populations affected by them.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

DFID provides approximately £17 million per annum in core funding to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), a strategic objective of which is to “increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises” such as locusts. In 2018, UK core funding to the FAO supported the Desert Locust Information System, which provides an early warning information system for countries including in the Middle East and North Africa.

DFID also funds a range of programmes that work to improve the monitoring of and response to pests more generally. These include the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International (CABI) Plantwise and Action on Invasives programmes, the development and testing of biopesticides by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, and new work under development with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to strengthen pest and disease surveillance, forecasting and the coordination and capacity of plant health organisations.

■ Overseas Aid**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what estimate he has made of the proportion of the aid budget spent on (a) protecting endangered species, (b) projects in Commonwealth countries and (c) promoting international trade in the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will make it his Department's policy to increase the proportion of spending in these areas.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

DFID has committed over £600 million funding between 2011 – 2021 to conserve nature and wildlife. Nature-based solutions that protect the environment and biodiversity will be a priority for the UK's increased investment in International Climate Finance of at least £11.6 billion between 2021/22 and 2025/26, announced by the Prime Minister at the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019. DFID's focus is on protecting biodiversity and ecosystems as a whole and we do not disaggregate our spend by species.

Commonwealth developing countries are major recipients of UK ODA. In 2017, they received around £3.57 billion (equating to around 25% of overall UK ODA), of which £1.96 billion was UK bilateral ODA and £1.61 billion was imputed UK share of multilateral ODA.

In 2017, the UK spent around £1.5 billion on Aid for Trade, as determined by OECD figures.

Decisions on the levels of future UK ODA will be determined in the context of the next Spending Review.

JUSTICE

■ Criminal Cases Review Commission

Damian Collins:

[281]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will publish the results of any review that has been carried out by the Criminal Cases Review Commission, or other public authority within his responsibility, of criminal cases in which Mr John McCafferty was involved in providing forensic evidence for the prosecution.

Wendy Morton:

Section 23 of the Criminal Appeals Act 1995 prevents the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) from disclosing any information obtained by the Commission in the exercise of any of their functions (specified exceptions do apply).

In line with legislation, following a Case Review the CCRC will provide all applicants with a Statement of Reasons, as to why the case was referred or not referred to the Court of Appeal.

The Ministry of Justice is not aware of any other reviews undertaken by other public authorities that concerned Mr McCafferty. Mr McCafferty previously worked for the Forensic Science Service (FSS). The FSS was a government owned company, sponsored by the Home Office, which was dissolved in 2012.

■ Criminal Proceedings: Interpreters

Dr Matthew Offord:

[92]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether translators in criminal trials are remunerated in cases where the foreign-speaking defendant does not turn up for their trial.

Chris Philp:

If an interpreter has attended a booking, but is no longer required to deliver service, at a minimum they will be paid a cancellation fee. Depending on the circumstances the interpreter may also receive a payment for the time spent waiting to provide a service at the venue.

■ Duty Solicitors: West Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[40]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure sufficient numbers of criminal duty solicitors are available in the West Midlands.

Wendy Morton:

The Government is clear that there are sufficient solicitors to undertake criminal legal aid-funded cases and will make sure this continues to be the case in the West Midlands. The Government commenced a review of all criminal legal aid fee schemes in December 2018, including the criminal duty solicitor fee scheme.

In June 2019 the Government took the decision to accelerate certain key areas of the Criminal Legal Aid Review that were highlighted to be of immediate concern to defence practitioners

In addition to monitoring duty solicitor coverage on an ongoing basis where issues are identified, the Government continues to take action to ensure there is ongoing availability of criminal legal advice for the public.

■ Miscarriages of Justice: Compensation**Sir Christopher Chope:**[\[32\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on what date the Miscarriage of Justice Service received the application from Mr David Bryant of Christchurch for compensation; what the timeframe is for a decision to be made on that application; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The Miscarriage of Justice Application Service ('MOJAS') received Mr Bryant's application on 8 March 2018.

Each application is necessarily fact specific and enquiries need to be undertaken so that the Secretary of State has all the required information before making a decision. This involves, amongst other matters, contacting external agencies (such as the Crown Court, Court of Appeal or Crown Prosecution Service) to confirm the facts for each application and obtain documentation such as judgments and court files.

Over the past weeks, MOJAS have been carefully reviewing all the requisite material in Mr Bryant's case in line with the requirements of section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. We remain hopeful of reaching a decision within the next three months.

■ Prisoners: Literacy**Sir Greg Knight:**[\[35\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent estimate he has made of the proportion of the prison population who are illiterate; and what steps he is taking to tackle illiteracy in the prison population.

Lucy Frazer:

The Department for Education publishes data on English & maths screenings undertaken when someone is received into prison. English screening data provides information on the proportion of prisoners who have very low levels of literacy. The most recent data available, for 2017/2018, can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-education-and-training>

For English, approximately 34% of prisoners were below the level expected of an 11-year-old. These prisoners would be regarded as having a high priority level of need.

We have recently overhauled the prison education system, giving Governors control over the education budget for their prison, and have implemented two new prison education frameworks: the Prison Education Framework (PEF) and the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). Governors have the freedom to commission bespoke English education for prisoners with low levels of literacy through the PEF, aimed at addressing their high priority needs. The impact would be improvement in, for example, prisoners' reading and writing.

■ Television: Licensing

Sir Christopher Chope:

[33]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for television licence fee evasion were made by magistrates' courts in (a) Dorset and (b) England in the last 12 months for which information is available; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Philp

The Ministry of Justice has published information on prosecutions and court outcomes by police force area, which can be found in the Court Outcome by Police Force Area data tool available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/804509/court-outcomes-by-PFA-2018.xlsx

In the data tool:

Use the 'Court type' filter and select '02: Magistrates court'.

Use the 'Offence' filter to select '191A Television licence evasion'.

Under the 'Row Labels' filter deselect 'Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales' to include on the results for England. The number of prosecutions in a) each police force area, and b) the combined total across all areas, will then be visible by year.

Following the introduction of Single Justice Procedure (SJP) offences in the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, adults tried for summary non-imprisonable offences at the magistrates' court can be dealt with remotely (the defendant does not need to physically attend court). Caution should be taken when interpreting trends by Police force area as particular courts may be allocated all the SJP offences for the entire region.

NORTHERN IRELAND■ **Agriculture: Northern Ireland**

Jim Shannon: [298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and (b) the Northern Ireland Administration on the provision of financial support to Northern Ireland's farming communities after the UK leaves the EU.

Julian Smith:

My immediate priority is to restore devolved Government in Northern Ireland. Agriculture policy is a devolved matter and once the UK has left the EU, the Northern Ireland Executive will make its own decisions on how to allocate or direct subsidy support within Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER■ **Climate Change**

Anneliese Dodds: [224]

To ask the Prime Minister, when the first meeting of the cross-Cabinet Committee on climate change will take place.

Boris Johnson:

I want us to become the cleanest, greenest society on earth, and inspire countries around the world to follow our lead, and to continue building on the excellent progress this government has made in tackling climate change and improving our environment. The Committee will bring together ministers responsible for domestic and international climate change policy, provide a forum to hold departments to account for their actions to combat climate change and oversee the UK's preparations to host the UN's major climate summit COP26, in November 2020. As has been the practice under successive Governments, information relating to the proceedings of Cabinet Committees is not disclosed.

■ **SPAC Nation**

Mr Steve Reed: [314]

To ask the Prime Minister, what the purpose was of the visit by SPAC Nation to Downing Street on 9 May 2018.

Mr Steve Reed: [315]

To ask the Prime Minister, which ministers attended the meeting with SPAC Nation at Downing Street on 9 May 2018.

Boris Johnson:

Details of ministerial meetings are published and available on the gov.uk website; **no such Ministerial meeting took place.**

SCOTLAND**■ Food Banks: Scotland**

David Linden: [\[181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he plans to visit a food bank in December 2019.

Mr Alister Jack:

I did not visit a food bank in my capacity as Secretary of State for Scotland in December 2019.

David Linden: [\[182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, whether he plans to visit a food bank in January 2020.

Mr Alister Jack:

I currently have no plans to visit a food bank in my capacity as Secretary of State for Scotland in January 2020.

TRANSPORT**■ A27: West Sussex**

Tim Loughton: [\[20\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he next plans to report on proposals for upgrading the A27 between Worthing and Shoreham.

George Freeman:

The second Road Investment Strategy will confirm the Government's plans for the Strategic Road Network. We expect this to be published before the start of the second Road Period on 1 April 2020.

■ A34: Oxfordshire

Layla Moran: [\[221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timescale is for the delivery of the Lodge Hill diamond interchange on the A34 following recent delays by Highways England.

George Freeman:

The A34 Lodge Hill junction upgrade is being progressed and developed by Oxfordshire County Council as the scheme promotor. I understand Highways England are working closely with the County to help develop the design and modelling for the upgrade. I believe the County are currently aiming to begin construction of the scheme in early 2021, subject to approval from Highways England, with completion in early 2022.

■ Animal Welfare: Buckinghamshire

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[17]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which (a) badger, (b) fox and (c) rabbit holes have been netted in each of the last two months in Buckinghamshire; what steps were taken to prevent the animals living in those holes from being trapped underground; how the activity was supervised by the environmental authorities; and whether the necessary (i) planning and (ii) environmental permissions had been obtained in advance.

Paul Maynard:

Badger setts/holes have been closed by HS2 contractors at three separate locations in the last two months in Buckinghamshire. Badger setts are closed under an HS2 Organisational Licence agreed with Natural England and all works are supervised by suitably experienced ecologists. In accordance with the licence, holes are fitted with one-way gates (allowing animals to get out of the holes but not to return) and are then monitored for a minimum of 21 days to ensure there are no animals using them before they are either blocked or dug out. Mesh would then usually be installed over the ground to prevent animals re-entering or digging new holes. No evidence of fox or rabbit activity has been noted during the mitigation work in the last two months in Buckinghamshire.

■ Bus Services: Fares

Andy McDonald:

[123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect on the number of bus journeys made in the year to March 2019 of the increase in bus fares during that period.

George Freeman:

There are a variety of reasons for the fall in bus patronage. This includes congestion, affecting bus service reliability and punctuality, which industry leaders have remarked upon publicly last week as one of the key issues impacting on bus patronage. That is why the Department's 'A Better Deal for Bus Users' published recently stated that all new road investments receiving central UK government funding will be required to either support bus priority measures to improve bus journey times and reliability or explain why doing so would not be necessary or appropriate in that instance. All future funding bids will need to explicitly address this issue.

In addition, the Bus Services Act 2017 provides the tools local authorities in England need such as Enhanced Partnerships and Franchising to improve local bus services. From 2020, a number of measures such as Bus Open Data powers, and the commitments in the Better Deal for Bus Users, will help increase passenger numbers and help passengers secure best value tickets.

■ Great Western Railway Line: Electrification

Luke Pollard:

[234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to electrify all or part of the Great Western mainline between Penzance, Plymouth and Paddington in the next Network Rail control period.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There are no immediate plans to electrify all or part of the Great Western mainline between Penzance, Plymouth and Paddington in the next Network Rail control period. However, Network Rail is currently preparing a Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS), which is due to report in 2020. This will indicate where routes might be electrified or where hydrogen or battery trains could be deployed. The TDNS will therefore inform future decisions about electrification.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[16]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the locations are of areas of vegetation cleared by (a) HS2 Ltd and (b) their contractors in each of the last four months; and whether the necessary (i) permissions and (ii) environmental clearances had been obtained in advance.

Paul Maynard:

In respect of part (a), no clearance work has been undertaken directly by HS2 Ltd. In respect of part (b), vegetation clearance has been undertaken by HS2 contractors in various locations up and down the Phase One route, avoiding ancient woodland until the Independent Government review has concluded

In respect of (i) and (ii), for all clearance works undertaken, the relevant environmental permissions and consents have been obtained including, for example, protected species licences from Natural England in relation to mitigation works for bats, great crested newts and badgers.

Whilst environmental consents and permissions have been obtained in relation to clearance works, there has recently been an instance where HS2 Ltd's contractors mistakenly undertook work on land owned by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) for which land access permission had not been obtained in advance. HS2 Ltd has apologised for this and is in direct contact with BBOWT as the matter is fully investigated by HS2 Ltd and its contractors to prevent reoccurrence. HS2 Ltd are putting in place additional assurance measures to prevent a repeat of this incident.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Buckinghamshire

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[15]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether High Speed 2 requires any additional piling in the Great Missenden area of Phase One.

Paul Maynard:

HS2 Ltd's plans are being finalised. Detailed construction arrangements will be notified in due course through its contractors' management plans and engagement with the local communities.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Chesham and Amersham**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[14\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many community engagement meetings have been cancelled by (a) HS2 Ltd, (b) their agents and (c) their contractors in the last six months in Chesham and Amersham constituency; and what the reasons were for the cancellation of those meetings.

Paul Maynard:

HS2 Ltd and its contractors postponed one meeting between the months of July to December 2019 within the Chesham and Amersham constituency. This was a stakeholder meeting on 17 December 2019 to discuss the redesign of Link Road works in Great Missenden and was postponed as a result of local feedback from a number of attendees who commented that they would rather meet with HS2 individually; HS2 Ltd are in the process of arranging these.

During the same period HS2 Ltd and its contractors held over 20 community engagements within the Chesham and Amersham constituency including local drop-in sessions, individual meetings with local organisations and three information events to inform local communities about the Chalfont St Peter ventilation shaft, Wendover Dean and Small Dean viaducts, and the widening of Link Road.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Conservation**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[18\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many potential breaches of (a) wildlife and (b) environmental protection legislation have been reported against (i) HS2 Ltd and (ii) their contractors in each of the last five years; and what steps have been taken in response to those reports.

Paul Maynard:

There have been no prosecutions for breaches in wildlife or environmental protection legislation in relation to HS2 Ltd or its contractors in the last 5 years.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Noise**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish all data the Department holds on expected noise levels from HS2; and what comparative assessment he has made of those expected noise levels and the World Health Organisation environmental noise guidelines.

Paul Maynard:

An assessment of the predicted noise from HS2 trains and associated data was published as part of the HS2 Phase One Environmental Statement (as amended) (found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-one-environmental-statement-documents>) and the HS2 Phase 2a Environmental Statement (found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-2a-environmental-statement>). For Phase 2b, the Working Draft Environmental Statement (found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-phase-2b-working-draft-environmental-statement>) did not include a full assessment but one will be provided in the formal Phase 2b Environmental Statement. HS2 Ltd's approach to assessing and controlling noise is compliant with WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines.

■ **M20****Damian Green:****[19]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to instruct Highways England to remove the barrier on the M20 between Junctions 8 and 9; and if he will make a statement.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Highways England are responsible for operational decisions regarding the strategic road network including the M20 in Kent.

Following the Government's decision to stand down contingency planning for leaving the EU without a deal, Highways England and the Kent Resilience Forum will be considering the most suitable time to remove the barrier, taking into account the disruption this will cause, the impact closures will have on other planned works, as well as the ability to respond to any unplanned disruption at the ports, including severe weather.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Lighting****Sir Greg Knight:****[36]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to ensure that replacement LED bulbs and modules fitted retrospectively to vehicle head, side and tail lights for use on the public highway remain within the lumen limits set out in the relevant UNECE Regulations; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

The Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations require vehicles first used on or after 1st April 1986 to be fitted only with lamps and light sources that have been approved to established standards, which govern luminous flux, colour and dimensions. The regulations also require vehicle owners to replace light sources with like-for-like approved replacements and ensure that the lamps fitted to their vehicles do not cause undue dazzle or discomfort to other road users.

The Automotive Market Surveillance Unit (MSU), based in the Driver and Vehicles Standards Agency, is responsible for ensuring that vehicle products comply with legal

standards and are sold for correct usage. If the MSU discovers evidence of non-compliance in a sector of the market, investigators will take action. This includes warning and potentially prosecuting any company involved in illegal activity.

■ Railway Signals

Helen Hayes: [171]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the (a) resilience of Network Rail's signalling infrastructure and (b) the potential for failure of that infrastructure to affect passengers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of Network Rail's latest settlement (Control Period 6) Government has committed to continue record levels of investment in rail infrastructure, providing around £48bn of funding across the five-year period spanning from 2019 to 2024. This funding settlement is focussed on maintaining and improving rail infrastructure assets including signals, and includes major programmes of signalling upgrades which will increase resilience. This will help support a more reliable railway for passengers by reducing the instances of failures which affect passengers. This includes Network Rail's recognition within the CP6 delivery plan that digital signalling renewals are a priority. Network Rail have published their Long-Term Deployment Plan for digital signalling as part of the Digital Railway transformation

■ Railways: Infrastructure

Helen Hayes: [172]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to ensure that rail infrastructure is (a) secure and (b) fit for purpose.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The management of the UK's mainline rail infrastructure is undertaken by Network Rail. To enable Network Rail to carry out its work effectively, Government has committed to continue record levels of investment in rail infrastructure, providing around £48bn of funding across the five-year period spanning from 2019 to 2024. This funding settlement is focussed on maintaining and improving rail infrastructure assets to help support a more reliable railway for passengers.

With regards to security, the Government regulates the rail industry in Great Britain, including both domestic and international operators and works closely with the police and security partners. Policing of the railway is undertaken by the British Transport Police, the specialist dedicated police force for the railway in Great Britain.

■ Roads: Construction

Layla Moran: [216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of his Department's planned review of the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.

Layla Moran: [\[217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeline is for his Department's planned review of the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.

Layla Moran: [\[218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to consult the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the housing targets for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc in light of his Department's recent decision to review the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project.

George Freeman:

We will provide an update on whether the project should continue in due course.

Layla Moran: [\[219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect his Department's planned review of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway will have on the delivery of the Lodge Hill diamond interchange upgrade to the A34.

George Freeman:

The Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project has no effect on Oxford County Council's delivery of the Lodge Hill diamond interchange upgrade.

Layla Moran: [\[220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what effect his Department's proposed review of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway will have on the (a) timescale and (b) viability of the consultation process for the project planned by Highways England.

George Freeman:

We will provide an update on whether the project should continue in due course.

Greg Smith: [\[245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will bring forward a priority review of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.

George Freeman:

We will provide an update on whether the project should continue in due course.

■ Roads: Safety

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[93\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Roads Policing Review will be published.

George Freeman:

In the Road Safety Statement 2019 we announced that the Department would lead a review of roads policing and wider traffic law enforcement. As part of this review we will be commissioning an inspection of roads policing and publishing a Call for Evidence to run alongside that inspection.

Following consideration of the Call for Evidence, planned to launch early next year, we would expect to publish any findings and recommendations as quickly as possible and expect that to be in 2021.

■ **South Western Railway**

Munira Wilson: [352]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with South Western Railway; and how many of those discussions were with reference to the current industrial action.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Under the Franchise Agreement the Department holds meetings with South Western Railway every 4 weeks. These meetings cover several areas of the franchise including performance, safety, finances and current issues.

■ **South Western Railway: Strikes**

Munira Wilson: [350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether South Western Railway has made an application in the last 12 months for reimbursement for revenues lost as a result of official industrial action.

Munira Wilson: [351]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department has taken to resolve the 27-day strike between South Western Railways and the RMT.

Munira Wilson: [353]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what provisions are in place to compensate passengers who have been affected by a reduced number of train services as a result of industrial action on South Western Railway.

Munira Wilson: [354]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether South Western Railway has received compensation in the last 12 months for reimbursement for revenues lost as a result of industrial action.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department believes the industrial dispute to be counterproductive for all parties concerned and is well aware that this action by the RMT is disproportionate and deliberately designed to hit passengers at one of the busiest times of the year for the railway. We have been monitoring the dispute and the negotiations between SWR and the RMT closely.

South Western Railway has made an application to the Department with regards to industrial action. This matter is subject to commercial confidentiality.

Passengers are entitled to compensation under the Delay Repay scheme for delays of 15 minutes or more against the published timetable on SWR. The Department are

considering all options available to ensure passengers are compensated for this disruption.

TREASURY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Henry Smith: [\[900051\]](#)

Whether he has plans to undertake a review of HMRC's IR35 Tax Regulations.

Greg Smith: [\[900052\]](#)

What the timeframe is for the review of HMRC's IR35 Tax Regulations.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has announced today further details about the review of the off-payroll working rules reform. As set out at Budget 2018, the reform is due to be extended to all sectors from April 2020. The review will address any remaining concerns from businesses and individuals about how the upcoming reform will be implemented, and will focus on steps the Government can take to ensure smooth and successful implementation. The self-employed are not in scope of the rules; and the review will consider whether any additional support for businesses is needed to ensure that the self-employed are not affected.

Mike Amesbury: [\[900058\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that HMRC has adequate (a) powers and (b) resources to investigate tax avoidance enablers.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has taken significant action, including introducing 100 new measures tackling tax avoidance, evasion and other forms of non-compliance since 2010. This has secured and protected £200bn that would have otherwise gone unpaid, helping to bring the UK's tax gap to a near record low of 5.6%.

■ Broadband: Rural Areas

Mark Menzies: [\[900054\]](#)

What fiscal steps he is taking to improve broadband connections in rural communities.

Robert Courts: [\[900057\]](#)

What fiscal steps he is taking to improve broadband connections in rural communities.

Rishi Sunak:

We want to deliver gigabit-capable broadband across the country as soon as possible.

We have already committed over £1 billion to support the rollout of next-generation digital infrastructure, and, at Conference, the Chancellor announced an ambition to invest £5bn to support gigabit broadband rollout in the hardest to reach areas.

We will set out further details of our approach in our National Infrastructure Strategy later this year.

■ Disguised Remuneration Loan Charge Review

Mr Steve Baker: [105]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish Sir Amyas Morse's review of the Loan Charge on 8 January 2020; and if he will make an oral statement on that day.

Mr Steve Baker: [106]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to delay the Loan Charge payment deadline of 31 January 2020 until after he has made an assessment of Sir Amyas Morse's review of the Loan Charge; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government published Sir Amyas Morse's independent review of the Loan Charge on 20 December, alongside the Government's response to his recommendations. The Government welcomes Sir Amyas' recognition that disguised remuneration schemes are a form of tax avoidance and that action was needed to tackle their use. However, the Government recognises concerns raised by the Review about the design of the Loan Charge and the impact on those liable to pay it and is therefore accepting all but one of the Review's recommendations. The Government will ensure taxpayers have sufficient time to consider the impact of these changes on their tax position and individuals can now defer submitting their tax return and paying their Loan Charge liability until 30 September 2020, without incurring any penalties or interest.

Harriett Baldwin: [289]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish Sir Amyas Morse's review of the Loan Charge.

Neil Coyle: [321]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to publish the independent review of the Disguised Remuneration Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Government published Sir Amyas Morse's independent review of the Loan Charge on 20 December, alongside the Government's response to his recommendations. Further detail can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disguised-remuneration-independent-loan-charge-review/guidance>

■ Dividend Tax Credit

Anneliese Dodds: [222]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many tax credit overpayments were made in each of the last 12 months; and what the average repayment was.

Rishi Sunak:

Overpayments are a feature of the annualized tax credits system. Figures for the value of overpayments relating to 2019-20 tax credits awards will not be known until all awards have been finalised in January 2021.

The most recent estimate of overpayments relates to the 2017-18 award year and can be found in the following publication.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-and-working-tax-credits-statistics-finalised-annual-awards-supplement-on-payments-2017-to-2018>

In this year, 1.45 million tax credits awards had an overpayment at the point of finalisation. The total value of overpayments was £1.55 billion.

Estimates of the average value of repayments in each of the last 12 months are not readily available. Tax credits repayments are repaid through a number of routes, including through the Universal Credit (UC) system. Information on the monthly value of all these repayments could only be collected at disproportionate cost.

For the year 2017/18, HMRC received repayments of £1.29bn. These repayments were made on overpayments from all previous award years. On top of this, £188m of tax credits overpayments transferred to DWP as customers migrated to UC.

■ Motorhomes: Excise Duties

Sir Christopher Chope:

[258]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to classify motorhomes as commercial vehicles for taxation purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government reformed Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) to encourage the uptake of vehicles with lower CO₂ emissions to help us meet our legally binding climate change targets. It is right that under the reformed system motorhomes with high CO₂ emissions pay greater first year VED than those with lower emissions.

I met representatives of the industry to discuss the matter and I understand their concerns. As with all taxes, the Government keeps the VED treatment of motorhomes under review.

■ Public Sector: Redundancy Pay

Sir Christopher Chope:

[34]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the £95,000 cap on public sector exit payments is planned to come into force; what the timeframe is for the publication of the Government response to the consultation on the draft regulations that closed on 3 July 2019; and if he will make a statement.

Rishi Sunak:

The government is currently considering responses to the consultation and will publish its response in due course. Once the government response has been published, regulations are required to be laid before Parliament for approval through the affirmative procedure to bring the cap into force.

■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs**Paul Howell:****[R] [900040]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to increase the level of per pupil funding.

Rishi Sunak:

At last year's Spending Round, the Chancellor announced a £7.1 billion increase in schools funding by 2022-23 compared to this year.

This will level up funding across the country and ensure at least £5,000 a year for every secondary school pupil next year, and £4,000 a year for every primary school pupil by 2021-22.

■ Revenue and Customs: Cumbernauld**Stuart C McDonald:****[900053]**

What discussions he has had with (a) HMRC and (b) the Secretary of State for Scotland on proposals to close HMRC's Cumbernauld office.

John Glen:

HMRC announced its Locations Programme in 2015, which included the establishment of the Glasgow Regional Centre and closure of the Cumbernauld office. Ministers are kept up to date on HMRC's progress in delivering the Locations Programme.

The former Secretary of State for Scotland (Rt Hon David Mundell MP) met with HMRC representatives to discuss the closure of the Cumbernauld office and the relocation of staff to the Glasgow Regional Centre.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Child Tax Credit and Universal Credit****Alison Thewliss:****[151]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the two child limit for (a) child tax credits and (b) universal credit on low income families.

Will Quince:

DWP and HMRC produce a joint report with statistics related to the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children, the latest of which was published in July 2019 and can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-tax-credit-and-universal-credit-claimants-statistics-related-to-the-policy-to-provide-support-for-a-maximum-of-2-children-april-2019>

Providing support for a maximum of two children, or qualifying young persons in Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit, ensures fairness between claimants and those taxpayers who support themselves solely through work.

We recognise that some claimants are not able to make the same choices about the number of children in their family, which is why exceptions have been put in place to protect certain groups. On migration to Universal Credit, families' existing entitlement will be protected.

■ Disability

Dr Matthew Offord:

[95]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will introduce a national strategy on tackling barriers faced by disabled people.

Justin Tomlinson:

I can confirm that the Government will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People in 2020. Our strategy will be ambitious, supporting disabled people in all aspects and phases of their lives and focusing on removing barriers and creating opportunity.

■ Employment: Poverty

Neil Gray:

[318]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to tackle in-work poverty.

Will Quince:

Delivering a sustainable, long-term solution to all forms of poverty is a priority for this Government. There is clear evidence that full-time work substantially reduces the risk of in-work poverty; for example, there is only a 7% chance of a child being in poverty if both parents

work full-time compared with 66% for two-parent families with only part-time work.

The number of people in employment is at a near-record high of 3.8 million. Around three-quarters of the growth in employment has been in full-time work, substantially reducing the risk of poverty.

Universal Credit promotes full-time work through smooth incentives to increase hours, a general expectation that lone parents and partners should work (unless caring for young children or a disabled person); and generous childcare subsidies. We will therefore continue with our reforms to the welfare system so that it works with the tax system and the labour market to support employment and higher pay.

■ Food Banks: Glasgow

David Linden: [\[183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people who have been signposted to a food bank by staff at Shettleston Jobcentre in the last 12 months.

Will Quince:

Under long-standing national guidance issued to all Jobcentres, staff can signpost benefit claimants to a local food bank provided all sources of formal support have been considered. Although staff are not required to keep records of the number of signposting slips issued, they may set up a process for recording the issue of signposting slips for authentication purposes only, if the local food banks asks them to do so. Staff can make local arrangements to reflect any specific restrictions set by their food bank around the use of their services; however, any decision to award a food parcel is a matter for the food bank alone.

The staff in Shettleston Jobcentre continue to work closely with local food bank managers to ensure vulnerable people get the support they need.

■ Older Workers and Social Security Benefits: Females

Tim Loughton: [\[24\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women between 60 and 66 years old are in (a) full-time employment, (b) part-time employment, (c) receipt of in-work benefits and (d) receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance.

Mims Davies:

For parts a) and b) the latest information is contained in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Women in employment

	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
60-66	505,000	675,000

Source: Labour Force Survey, Jul-Sep 2019

For part c), table 2 shows the number of women aged 60-65 and over 65 who are claiming Universal Credit and are in employment (figures for the specific age group 60-66 are not available within Stat-Xplore).

Table 2: Women claiming Universal Credit and in employment, October 2019

	IN EMPLOYMENT
60-65	16,676
Over 65	57

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore

For part d), table 3 shows the number of women aged 60-65 who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (figures for the specific age group 60-66 are not available within Stat-Xplore).

Table 3: Women claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, May 2019

60-65

10,703

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore

■ Pension Credit

Neil Gray:

[316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the take-up of pension credit.

Guy Opperman:

The Department for Work and Pensions publishes an annual report detailing latest available statistics regarding the estimated take-up of Pension Credit and other income-related benefits.

The latest version can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-2016-to-2017>

The next report containing 2017/18 data is currently due to be published around January – February 2020.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Parkinson's Disease

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[38]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to reduce the waiting time for people with Parkinson's disease to receive personal independence payments.

Justin Tomlinson:

There are no specific claim processes designed for individual health conditions such as Parkinson's Disease. This is because PIP claims are assessed on the basis of individual functional need rather than health condition. We actively manage and review our PIP claim processes to ensure claims are assessed and paid as quickly and accurately as possible. Normal rules new claims are currently being dealt with in an average of 14 weeks from registration to initial decision. There is also a fast-track process for any claimants with a terminal illness.

■ Poverty: Children

Grahame Morris: [73]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking with the Secretary of State for Education to (a) identify and (b) tackle the causes of child poverty in Easington constituency.

Grahame Morris: [74]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will set a target date for eradicating child poverty in Easington constituency.

Will Quince:

This Government is committed to delivering a sustainable, long-term solution to poverty in all its forms. Tackling child poverty requires an approach that goes beyond targets - which focus on income alone- to one that addresses the root causes of poverty and disadvantage and improves long-term outcomes for families and children.

Through Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families, published in 2017, we set out detailed evidence on the root causes of poverty and disadvantage and their impact on the outcomes of children in families where none of the parents is working. We also set out nine indicators to track progress in the areas that matter, including two statutory measures of parental worklessness and educational attainment – the two areas that we know can make the biggest difference to children’s outcomes.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621364/improving-lives-helping-workless-families-web-version.pdf.

■ State Retirement Pensions

Peter Aldous: [109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of increasing by 25 pence the state pension for people over the age of 80.

Guy Opperman:

The Age Addition is paid to people who reached State Pension age prior to 6th April 2016 when they claim their State Pension and attain 80 years of age. It is not payable to those people who reached State Pension age on or after 6th April 2016.

In March 2019, the most recent date for which data are available, there were approximately 3.3m people in receipt of the payment, at a weekly cost of approximately £820,000.

Source: DWP Administrative data, March 2019

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility (Kelly Tolhurst):

[[HCWS20](#)]

I am writing to inform the House that the Government is pleased to accept all of the Low Pay Commission's recommendations for the new National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates, which will come into force in April 2020.

The Low Pay Commission is an internationally renowned independent and expert body which conducts extensive analysis and stakeholder research to make its recommendations.

The Low Pay Commission has recommended that:

- The National Living Wage (for workers aged 25 and over) should increase from £8.21 to £8.72;
- The rate for 21 to 24-year-olds should increase from £7.70 to £8.20;
- The rate for 18 to 20-year-olds should increase from £6.15 to £6.45;
- The rate for 16 to 17-year-olds should increase from £4.35 to £4.55; and
- The apprentice rate (for apprentices aged under 19 or in the first year of their apprenticeship) should increase from £3.90 to £4.15.
- The Low Pay Commission has also recommended that the accommodation offset increases from the current rate of £7.55 to £8.20 from 1 April 2020.

We welcome the Low Pay Commission's recommendation of an increase to the National Living Wage rate such that it meets the Government's objective of reaching 60% of median earnings by 2020.

The new National Living Wage rate of £8.72 will be the highest ever UK minimum wage and benefit over two million workers. From April 2020, a full-time worker on the National Living Wage will see their earnings increase by nearly £4,000 over the course of the year, compared to when the National Living Wage was introduced. This increase in the National Living Wage is the first step in meeting our commitment to raise the NLW to two-thirds of median earnings, provided economic conditions allow, within the next five years.

The Low Pay Commission's recommendations for increasing the National Minimum Wage youth rates, by between 4.6% and 6.5%, are well ahead of forecast inflation.

These increases are due to come into effect from 1 April 2020, subject to parliamentary approval. The Government intends to lay implementing regulations before Parliament in due course.

A copy of the response will be available from the BEIS website at www.beis.gov.uk

■ E3C Report

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom): **[\[HCWS19\]](#)**

On Friday 9th August 2019, over 1 million customers were affected by a major power disruption that occurred across England and Wales and some parts of Scotland. The power outage was due to the loss of a mix of generation including a gas fired power station and an offshore wind farm.

Though the power disruption itself was relatively short lived – all customers were restored within 45 minutes - the knock-on impacts to other services were significant. This is especially true for rail services which experienced major delays that extended into Sunday 11th August. The wider disruptions were caused by automatic safety systems under the control of individual service providers, which reacted to frequency and voltage fluctuations, or problems with their back-up power supplies.

Given the severity of the incident, I commissioned the Energy Emergency Executive Committee (E3C) to conduct a review to identify lessons learnt and put in place a robust action plan to improve the reliability and integrity of our power network. The Committee's final report was published on Friday 3rd January. This follows the publication of their interim report on 4th October. The final report sets out 10 clear actions and these will be implemented in full, to help prevent and manage future power disruption events.

Alongside the E3C report, Ofgem also published the conclusions of its own investigations into the incident. This set out a series of cross-industry actions for maintaining the resilience of the electricity system, as well as announcing voluntary payments totalling £10.5 million for companies involved in the power outages.

GB Power Disruption: E3C Lessons Learnt and Actions

Following a lightning strike on an overhead transmission line, there was a near simultaneous generation loss at two transmission-connection generators; and a significant number of smaller embedded generators connected to the distribution network.

The two transmission-connected generators experienced technical issues near-simultaneously. Both generators have acknowledged the role they played in the incident and since implemented technical fixes to ensure that their systems can withstand similar incidents in the future. The E3C will share the lessons identified with generators across the UK.

The loss of smaller embedded generation on the day was greater than expected. The E3C report sets out a series of actions to assess the need for improvements to the governance, monitoring and enforcement processes for large and smaller generators.

On the 9th August, the cumulative loss of generation exceeded the amount of back-up generation on hold. This triggered the first stage a demand disconnection protection system, which is the last line of defence when the system is out of balance. This resulted in over 1 million customers being disconnected from the network.

Given the events on the 9th August, the E3C report recommends a review of how much back-up generation the Electricity System Operator should be required to hold. As this is funded through consumer bills, the review will include a cost benefit analysis of increasing the amount of reserves.

Although the demand disconnection protection system worked broadly as intended, the review identified some discrepancies in its operation; therefore, the report recommends further analysis of the schemes performance in order to develop options for short- and long-term improvements. This includes considering whether Distribution Network Operators should afford particular types of customers any form of protection, especially during the early stages of an incident.

In addition to the direct impacts of customers being disconnected from the electricity network, wider disruptions on the day were caused by the automatic safety systems owned and operated by individual service providers reacting unexpectedly to the frequency and voltage fluctuations on the electricity network; or problems with their own back-up power supplies.

The E3C will consider what more can be done to support essential services owners and operators with advice and guidance to put in place more robust business continuity plans.

Effective communication is a vital part of any emergency response. Unfortunately, industry communications on the day fell below the standard expected, with infrequent and disjointed updates to the general public.

The E3C will develop and roll out new communications processes to ensure the general public receives regular updates during any future disruptions. There will also be a review of operational protocols to make sure they are fit for purpose.

Where appropriate, the E3C and Ofgem reports contain jointly agreed actions and recommendations. The E3C will take the actions set out both reports to drive forward changes across the sector. The Committee will provide quarterly updates to my Department and Ofgem.

The UK leads the world by working to eradicate its contribution to climate change by 2050, the actions I have outlined here today will form part of a wider package of work already underway across government and industry to ensure the UK's energy system remains resilient as we transition to clean and affordable energy.