



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 January 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:43 P.M., 08 January 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

**CONTENTS**

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
DEFENCE	3	■ Families: Disadvantaged	12
■ Devonport Dockyard	3	<b>SCOTLAND</b>	<b>12</b>
EDUCATION	3	■ Children: Poverty	12
■ Apprentices: Taxation	3	■ Devolution: Scotland	12
■ Children: Day Care	3	■ Fisheries: Scotland	13
■ Children: Food Poverty	4	■ United Kingdom	13
■ Further Education: Finance	4	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>13</b>
■ National Skills Fund	4	■ Great Western Rail Franchise	13
■ Pupils: Food Poverty	5	■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Buckinghamshire	13
■ Social Services: Reviews	5	■ South Western Railway: Strikes	14
■ Teachers: Bureaucracy	6	■ West Midlands Rail Franchise	14
■ Teachers: Rother Valley	7	<b>TREASURY</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS</b>	<b>8</b>	■ Employment: Taxation	15
■ Flood Control: Dawlish	8	<b>WALES</b>	<b>15</b>
■ Flood Control: Finance	8	■ Economic Situation: Wales	15
■ Tree Planting	9	■ Ports: Wales	16
<b>HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>WORK AND PENSIONS</b>	<b>16</b>
■ Cardiovascular System: Health Services	9	■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations	16
■ Health Professions: Rother Valley	9	■ Work Capability Assessment	16
■ Health Professions: Suffolk	11		

<b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND</b>	
<b>CABINET OFFICE</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>18</b>
■ Cabinet Office Update	17	■ Departmental update	18

**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

### DEFENCE

#### ■ Devonport Dockyard

**Luke Pollard:**

[231]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to announce the full funding for the construction of submarine refit facilities for the Astute-class submarines in Devonport.

**James Heapey:**

Plans to update the Astute Class refit facilities at Devonport are in the early stages. The funding approach has not yet been defined, but it is not Ministry of Defence policy to announce the full funding of its projects for reasons of protecting commercial interests.

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Apprentices: Taxation

**Angela Rayner:**

[127]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the effectiveness of the Apprenticeship Levy.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We are committed to improving the working of the apprenticeship levy, including delivering greater transparency on how the levy is being spent.

We have already increased the amount of funding that levy-paying employers can transfer to other businesses, from 10% to 25%, in response to feedback from employers. We are pleased to see that levy-payers with uncommitted funds are increasingly using transfers to support apprenticeship starts in smaller employers.

We continue to work closely with employers and business groups to help them take advantage of the levy and consider improvements to the system to meet long-term skills needs.

#### ■ Children: Day Care

**Tim Loughton:**

[27]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many families with a household income of (a) £50,000 to £70,000, (b) £70,001 to £90,000, (c) £90,001 to £110,000, (d) £110,001 to £130,000, (e) £130,001 to £150,000 claim childcare benefits.

**Nick Gibb:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

**■ Children: Food Poverty****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:**[\[52\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he will publish a response to the Children's Future Food Inquiry.

**Michelle Donelan:**

Every child should be able to access healthy nutritious food at home and in school. This is an essential part of building a country which works for everyone, and in which every child and young person can reach their potential.

We are supporting around 1.3 million of the most disadvantaged children through free school meals, saving families around £400 a year. We invested £9 million in a holiday activities and food programme in summer 2019 and will invest £9 million again in summer 2020. In addition, we are also investing in a programme to kick start sustainable breakfast clubs in schools.

We are continuing to reflect on the Children's Future Food Inquiry report along with the recommendations. We will set out our response shortly.

**■ Further Education: Finance****Angela Rayner:**[\[131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the base rate of funding for 16 to 18 year old students will be from 2019-20 to 2023-24.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The government has announced an increase to 16-19 funding of £400 million for 2020-21. This is the biggest injection of new money into 16-19 education in a single year since 2010, with funding increasing faster for 16-19 than in 5-16 schooling. This will ensure that we are building the skills that our country needs to thrive in the future. The base rate of funding for 16 and 17 year olds in full-time education for the academic year 2019/20 is £4,000. This will increase by 4.7% in the academic year 2020/21 to £4,188. The base rate for subsequent years will be dependent on the outcomes of the next Spending Review.

**■ National Skills Fund****Angela Rayner:**[\[135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to create a new national skills fund.

**Michelle Donelan:**

We will invest an additional £3 billion over the course of this Parliament to support the creation of a National Skills Fund. The fund will build on existing reforms, including ongoing work to develop a National Retraining Scheme, an end-to-end service designed to help workers prepare for the changing labour market.

## ■ Pupils: Food Poverty

**Angela Rayner:**

[132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of child hunger in schools.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The information requested is not held centrally.

The government supports the provision of nutritious food in schools. This ensures pupils are well nourished, develop healthy eating habits and can concentrate and learn. Under the benefits-based criteria, around 1.3 million of the most disadvantaged children are eligible for and are claiming free school meals. This saves each family around £400 per year. Benefits-based free meals were extended to disadvantaged further education students in September 2014. This benefitted 82,117 students in the 2017 to 2018 academic year. A further 1.4 million infants receive a free nutritious meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meals scheme, introduced in September 2014.

We are investing up to £26 million to the National Schools Breakfast Programme. This money will kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in over 1,700 schools and target the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including Opportunity Areas. This has been extended by a further year until March 2021 with up to an additional £11.8 million of funding, this investment will help schools kick-start up to a further 650 breakfast clubs.

In 2019 we invested £9 million to set up local Holiday Activity and Food coordinators in 11 local authority areas. Before Christmas we launched a grant fund for another £9 million for 2020. With this money we will be able to support even more disadvantaged children, building on the learning from 2019 to ensure that the programme supports the development of high-quality provision for children and provides more support for parents and families.

## ■ Social Services: Reviews

**Angela Rayner:**

[130]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his policy to undertake a review of the care system.

**Michelle Donelan:**

As set out in the manifesto, we are committed to undertaking a review of the care system. Alongside this we are providing councils with an additional £1 billion for adults and children's social care in every year of this Parliament. This is on top of spending £84 million over five years to keep more children at home safely.

We have also invested to deliver high quality children's social care. The number of children's services rated outstanding is up and the number rated inadequate down by a third since 2017. This review will allow us to go even further and to ensure that all

care placements and settings provide children and young adults with the support they need.

## ■ Teachers: Bureaucracy

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[179]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings and recommendations of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) report entitled *About time: life as a middle leader*, published in November 2019; and what discussions he has had with representatives of the NAHT on that report.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department has put in place a range of measures to support middle leaders, and which address the findings raised in the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) report. Ministers and officials regularly engage with NAHT on issues relating to school leadership.

Improvements to National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), including for middle leaders, have been well received by the profession. NPQ scholarships and our High-Potential Middle Leaders Programme target funding towards the professional development of primary and secondary middle leaders in the country's most challenging schools. The Department is currently developing new specialist NPQs to support and promote career pathways beyond traditional leadership routes that can enable teachers and leaders to progress and excel in specialist areas. The Department is working closely with the sector on the design of these new qualifications and will release further details in due course.

The Teacher Workload Survey 2019 indicated there has been a reduction in the reported working hours for teachers and middle and senior leaders of five hours per week over the past three years, largely in the areas targeted through our recently updated workload-reduction toolkit. The Teacher Workload Survey 2019 is available at

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/842053/teacher\\_workload\\_survey\\_2019\\_report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/842053/teacher_workload_survey_2019_report.pdf).

We are committed, as set out in a joint letter with the sector published in November 2018, to support school leaders to identify and reduce unnecessary workload in their schools, and to undertake further work ourselves to reduce the pressures on schools and so enable teachers and leaders at all levels to improve their work-life balance and focus on their development. The Department published the 2019 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy last year, which was developed with teachers, education unions and leading professional bodies, to focus reform and investment on helping school leaders establish more supportive school cultures and on promoting flexible working.

## ■ Teachers: Rother Valley

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase the numbers of teachers in Rother Valley.

**Nick Gibb:**

In January 2019 the Department launched the Government's first ever integrated strategy to recruit and retain more teachers in schools – developed alongside and welcomed by teachers, education unions and leading professional bodies.

The Department recognises that some schools and local areas have greater issues with recruitment and retention than others. The Department is making every effort to refocus national teacher recruitment and retention programmes to ensure they address local variations in teacher supply, so that more schools can benefit from tried and tested programmes.

In January 2019 the Department also announced that we will introduce the Early Career Framework early in three local authority areas, including Doncaster, in September 2020. The Early Career Framework is a two-year package of development and support that will transform support for early career teachers, rolling out nationally from September 2021. From September 2020, early career teachers and their mentors in early roll-out areas will be eligible to start benefitting early from improved support to their early career teachers, including high-quality training and support.

There are a number of financial incentives to join and remain in the profession that teachers in Rother Valley may be eligible for. Mathematics and Physics teachers in the Rotherham and Doncaster local authority areas of Rother Valley who are in the first five years of their career may be eligible for a £2,000 retention payment after tax. In addition to this, teachers who completed their initial teacher training from 2013 onwards may be eligible for Teacher Student Loan reimbursement, and Mathematics teachers who started their initial teacher training from 2018 onwards may be eligible early career payments up to £7,500. Both of these schemes are available to teachers in the Doncaster local authority area.

In addition to this, the Department is currently delivering a £30 million investment in tailored support for struggling schools designed to help schools improve existing plans, join national programmes, build local partnerships or fund new initiatives. One school in Rother Valley is receiving this support.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****■ Flood Control: Dawlish**

**Luke Pollard:** [\[232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment she has made of the level of recent damage to the Dawlish coastal defences; and what funding she has made available to strengthen those coastal defences as a result of such damage.

**Rebecca Pow:**

In the recent storms, part of the defence, known as a 'geotube' (a sand-filled sleeve of geotextile fabric) became exposed in front of the golf course. Minor works to reduce the risk of scour have now been completed. The work was funded from the Dawlish Warren Beach Management Scheme budget.

There is currently no requirement for major works. However, further works to adapt the site to become more sustainable to future storms will be needed in the future. The Environment Agency will continue to monitor the site closely and liaise with local stakeholders to respond and adapt to changes where possible.

Earlier this year the Government made £80 million available to Network Rail for enhancing the Dawlish coastal defences. These works will deliver a new sea wall which will offer greater flood protection for the community of Dawlish and the railway which serves the town.

**■ Flood Control: Finance**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much and what proportion of the flood defence spending allocated following Storm Eva has been spent (a) nationally and (b) in York.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Storm Eva took place on 24 December 2015. Following this between April 2015 and March 2021 the Government is investing £2.7 billion to better protect the country from flooding and coastal erosion. As of March 2019, £1.67 billion of this Government funding has already been invested in flood and coastal erosion risk management (Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management grant-in-aid) nationally.

In the City of York a total of £25.8 million was spent as of March 2019. This includes investment in the Foss Barrier, a strategic floodgate designed to protect properties upstream in the Foss River catchment. Future funding allocated in York from April 2019 onwards is £74.4 million.

## ■ Tree Planting

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[83]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will set out the steps necessary to plant 30 million trees a year.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government set out its ambition to increase tree planting to 75,000 acres each year across the UK by the end of this Parliament. To support this, we announced a Nature for Climate Fund, part of which will kick-start a step-change in tree planting in England. Forestry is a devolved matter and we will work with the devolved administrations to increase planting across the UK.

We will expand on woodland creation initiatives like the Northern Forest and Northumberland Forest, and plant more trees in urban areas. We will support afforestation on private land, continuing our woodland creation grants, which offer a viable, long-term source of income for landowners who deliver environmental benefits by planting and maintaining trees.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Cardiovascular System: Health Services

**Emma Hardy:**

[192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the forthcoming NHS People Plan will include a fully costed plan to address the needs of NHS staff providing vascular services in (a) England and (b) Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

The NHS People Plan will set the national strategic direction for how the National Health Service workforce will be staffed to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan commitments in the short and longer term.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Regional teams and alongside the 'Getting It Right First Time' programmes to jointly improve vascular services, including the workforce challenges.

Local NHS organisations, such as Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, will be expected to continue to plan and cost their own workforce based on local population needs.

It is expected that the full NHS People Plan will be published in early 2020.

### ■ Health Professions: Rother Valley

**Alexander Stafford:**

[366]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) nurses, (b) GPs, (c) midwives and (d) mental health specialists are working in Rother Valley.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in primary care or in general practitioners (GPs) surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows National Health Service HCHS staff in specified staff groups and organisations at 30 September 2019, the latest available data, full-time equivalent (FTE). The mental health workforce includes staff who either have a specialist professional qualification in an area relating to mental health or staff who work in an area relating to mental health.

ORGANISATION NAME	ALL HCHS STAFF	NURSES AND HEALTH VISITORS	MIDWIVES	HCHS STAFF - MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE (INCLUDING NURSES AND MIDWIVES)
NHS Rotherham CCG	98	20	-	-
Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust	2,811	980	-	1,379
Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust	3,790	1,028	92	10

The following table shows the number of full-time equivalent GPs working in NHS Rotherham CCG and the closest healthcare geography to the named constituency. Figures shown do not include GPs working in prisons, army bases, educational establishments, specialist care centres including drug rehabilitation centres, walk-in centres and other alternative settings.

ORGANISATION NAME	ALL GPs	FULLY QUALIFIED GPs EXCLUDING REGISTRARS	ALL REGULAR GPs (EXCLUDES LOCUMS)	ALL QUALIFIED PERMANENT GPs (EXCLUDES REGISTRARS & LOCUMS)
NHS Rotherham CCG	152	125	146	119
NHS England	3,201	2,715	3,112	2,627

ORGANISATION NAME	ALL GPs	FULLY QUALIFIED GPs EXCLUDING REGISTRARS	ALL REGULAR GPs (EXCLUDES LOCUMS)	ALL QUALIFIED PERMANENT GPs (EXCLUDES REGISTRARS & LOCUMS)
North East and Yorkshire				
South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw sustainability and transformation partnership	901	749	880	728

As at September 2019 there are 102 FTE nurses in Rotherham CCG.

#### ■ Health Professions: Suffolk

##### James Cartlidge:

[\[340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to recruit more (a) nurses, (b) doctors and (c) clinicians in Suffolk.

##### Edward Argar:

NHS England and NHS Improvement have confirmed that the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System is currently developing a workforce strategy that will identify the staffing levels required to deliver its patient care objectives for the next five to 10 years.

At national level, 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. The final NHS People Plan will be published in early 2020.

The Government recently pledged to increase nurse numbers by 50,000 in England over the next five years. As part of this commitment, eligible pre-registration nursing students enrolled on courses at English universities from September 2020 will receive a payment of at least £5,000 per academic year which they will not need to pay back.

In addition, in 2016 the Government committed to an extra 1,500 undergraduate medical school places - a 25% increase taking the total number of medical school training places in England to 7,500 by 2020/21. Five new medical schools will open in England to help deliver the expansion.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Families: Disadvantaged****Angela Rayner:**[\[133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to improve the Troubled Families programme.

**Luke Hall:**

The national evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme has shown that the programme has helped reform public services and improved outcomes for families. This Government has announced funding of up to £165 million to extend the programme for an extra year. This will mean more people in need get access to the programme's early, practical and coordinated support to transform their lives for the better. This Government wants to build on the success of the programme in the coming year, delivering on our manifesto commitment to ensure we reach all those who could benefit from the programme – from the early years and throughout their lives – and we will set out the steps we plan to take in due course.

**SCOTLAND****■ Children: Poverty****Ruth Jones:**[\[900096\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the level of child poverty in Scotland.

**Douglas Ross:**

This Office has regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on a range of issues.

The Hon. Lady will know, the Scottish Government also controls a number of powers to tackle poverty, and I believe that it is important that Scotland's two Governments work together to address the critical issue of child poverty.

**■ Devolution: Scotland****Gerald Jones:**[\[900098\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of intergovernmental relations between the Government and Scottish Government.

**Douglas Ross:**

The UK Government is committed to having a constructive relationship with the Scottish Government. We continue to develop proposals for a package of reforms as part of the review on intergovernmental relations.

## ■ Fisheries: Scotland

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[900093\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with representatives of the fishing sector in Scotland on the (a) employment of foreign crews and (b) Tier 2 status.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

I am in regular contact with representatives from the fisheries sector in Scotland on a range of issues, including the challenges they face with recruitment.

The Hon. Member will be aware that the Government is currently designing a new immigration system, and it's important that the new system takes account of the needs of all regions and sectors of the economy, including those of our fishing industry and coastal communities.

## ■ United Kingdom

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[900097\]](#)

What steps he is taking to help strengthen the Union.

**Mr Alister Jack:**

Strengthening and Sustaining the Union is a key priority for the UK Government.

We want 2020 to be a year of growth and opportunity for Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom, not one of further division and uncertainty.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Great Western Rail Franchise

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[229\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects to sign the extension for the Direct Award Great Western rail franchise.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Discussions are continuing with First Group regarding the proposed Direct Award. An announcement will be made in due course.

### ■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Buckinghamshire

**Greg Smith:**

[\[246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether HS2 Ltd were authorised to begin enabling works at the Calvert Jubilee nature reserve; and whether all works have been halted at that site.

**Paul Maynard:**

There has been a recent incident in Calvert Jubilee nature reserve where some (non-ancient woodland) vegetation was inadvertently cleared without the landowner's consent. In this case HS2 Ltd believed they understood who owned the land and had

obtained their consent in advance of these works taking place. However, after further investigation it has become clear that their ownership information was incorrect, and that the land in question was in fact owned by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust.

HS2 Ltd have written directly to the Trust to unreservedly apologise for this error and to discuss the matter further with them.

No further works will take place at this site until a full investigation has been carried out by HS2 Ltd. HS2 Ltd are putting in place additional assurance measures to prevent a repeat of this incident.

### ■ South Western Railway: Strikes

**Royston Smith:** [\[157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to mitigate the effect on commuters of the strike on Southwestern Railway.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department has been in regular contact with SWR since the Industrial Action was announced by RMT, to ensure that SWR was taking all possible steps to mitigate the impact of the RMT's disproportionate action on passengers and provide as many services and as much capacity as possible during the strikes.

### ■ West Midlands Rail Franchise

**Harriett Baldwin:** [\[110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the performance of West Midlands Railway since that company was awarded its franchise.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department oversees the delivery of the West Midlands Franchise in conjunction with the West Midlands Railway Executive (WMRE), a consortium of 14 local authorities. The Department and WMRE monitor the performance of West Midlands Trains (WMT) performance against its obligations on a four weekly basis and meets with WMT regularly (both formally and informally) to discuss these matters. Operational performance since WMT implemented its new timetable in May 2018 has been particularly disappointing and the Department and WMRE are closely monitoring the steps WMT are taking to address the performance problems and, if appropriate, will be using the full range of remedies available under the Franchise Agreement.

**Harriett Baldwin:** [\[111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the performance of West Midlands Railway against their contractual commitments.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Franchise Agreement with West Midlands Trains (WMT) contains a large number of contractual commitments, ranging from targets for train service performance,

customer satisfaction, and service quality, to over 90 committed obligations designed to transform the quality of services operated by the Franchisee.

The Franchise Agreement is available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-midlands-2017-rail-franchise-agreement>

The Department oversees the delivery of the West Midlands Franchise in conjunction with the West Midlands Railway Executive (WMRE), a consortium of 14 local authorities. The Department and WMRE monitor the performance of West Midlands Trains (WMT) against its obligations on a four weekly basis and meets with WMT regularly (both formally and informally) to discuss these matters. Operational performance since WMT implemented its new timetable in May 2018 has been particularly disappointing and the Department and WMRE are closely monitoring the steps WMT are taking to address the performance problems and, if appropriate, will be using the full range of remedies available under the Franchise Agreement.

## TREASURY

### ■ Employment: Taxation

**Jessica Morden:**

[367]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what his policy is on the future of IR35.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government announced yesterday 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 forthcoming reform will be implemented, and will focus on steps the Government can take to ensure smooth and successful implementation.

## WALES

### ■ Economic Situation: Wales

**Ruth Jones:**

[348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposed Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration on the economy of Wales.

**Simon Hart:**

The Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration allows us to get Brexit done and leave the European Union in a smooth and orderly manner on 31 January. The Government will maximise the opportunities of Brexit for Wales and the whole of the UK, taking back control of our money, our laws, our trade and our borders.

**■ Ports: Wales****Ruth Jones:** [\[349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration on the viability and future of Welsh ports.

**Simon Hart:**

The Government is clear that we are leaving the EU on the terms of the new Withdrawal Agreement on 31 January. Welsh ports will benefit from the deal as it ensures that we take back control of our laws, trade, borders and money without disruption, and provides the basis of a new relationship with the EU based on free trade and friendly cooperation.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations****Luke Pollard:** [\[235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what disability training medical professionals undertaking personal independence payment assessments are required to have in respect to autism.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

All health professionals carrying out assessments are clinically qualified and registered practitioners in their own field.

DWP requires health professionals to have a broad training in disability analysis as well as awareness training in specific conditions which include autistic spectrum disorder.

While preparing to undertake an assessment, health professionals have access to a range of resources as well as experienced clinicians to support them in assessing claimants with conditions that they may not be familiar with.

Additionally, assessment providers engage with medical experts, charities and relevant stakeholders to strengthen their training programmes.

**■ Work Capability Assessment****Louise Haigh:** [\[491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will issue guidance to ensure that claimants of benefits are aware that they have the right to record work capability assessments.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The letter that is sent to claimants advising when they need to attend a face-to-face assessment (known as an AL1C) makes it clear that claimants can request audio recording.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ Cabinet Office Update

##### **Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Oliver Dowden):**

**[[HCWS21](#)]**

On Friday 27 December 2019 at 22:30, the Cabinet Office published the New Year Honours List 2020 on GOV.UK. As part of this publication a version of the honours list was published online which contained address details of the 1,097 recipients. This was done in error. The document was accessible for approximately 40 minutes, and was available to those who had already accessed the information for a further 150 minutes via the original web link.

This incident was a result of human error. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat is responsible for managing and publishing the Honours lists. The New Year 2020 honours round was the first to use a new IT system from which a report was downloaded to create a file for publication.

The sensitivities around address data had been identified as a risk and previous versions of the file prepared for publication had not included address data. As part of the final checking process, further amendments were made to the file and a version of the file, including address data, was mistakenly sent for publication.

The team was made aware of the error at 23:00 on 27th December and the link was removed from the Cabinet Office web page within 10 minutes. It took a further 150 minutes to close the link to the document and remove the page altogether. In this intervening period those who opened the link or had the web page address could still open the document.

The immediate concern following the publication of this information was to ensure that there was no increased risk to any individuals and that their security was being appropriately managed. The Cabinet Office worked with the police and relevant authorities to identify any potentially high risk cases and put in place any necessary actions. Over 48 hours, the Department made contact with all affected individuals to inform them of what had taken place, provide contact details and to apologise for this incident. Chief Constables were briefed through the National Police Chiefs' Council, and local forces made assessments for all recipients.

The Department has worked with the relevant organisations to ascertain the extent of the access to the data. We have no evidence that data has been exploited by a third party, or shared more widely though we continue to be vigilant.

The Government has been informed by the police and other agencies that there is no information to suggest an increased risk in relation to any persons as a result of this data breach. This is not to underestimate the concern this incident may have caused for

individuals. On behalf of the Cabinet Office I apologise unreservedly for any distress or inconvenience caused.

Appropriate management action will be taken in response to this incident. Changes have already been made to ensure the relevant IT system generates reports containing only data that is suitable for publication, removing the scope for further human error. I have also instructed the Government Digital Service to improve their processes to ensure all access to data can be removed much more rapidly when required.

The Department reported the matter to the Information Commissioner on Saturday 28 December 2019 and will cooperate fully with its on-going inquiries. In addition, I am announcing today an independent review of data handling practices within the Cabinet Office. This review will focus on process, culture, policy and practice within the Department. It will establish whether appropriate controls are in place around the storage, sharing and deletion of personal data, including learning lessons from this case. More information on this review will be published shortly.

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Departmental update

**Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):**

[\[HCWS22\]](#)

#### **Troubled Families allocations**

On 5 January I announced up to £165 million of new funding for the Troubled Families Programme for 2020-21. This funding will provide intensive support for some of the most vulnerable families and place the programme on a stable footing for the future. It will help more families to get early, practical and coordinated support to transform their lives for the better, with key workers working with the whole family to address their needs holistically rather than responding to each problem, or single family member separately.

This funding will also help local authorities and their partners to work together to reduce demand and dependency on costly, reactive key public services. The latest evaluation results show that as a result of the Troubled Families programme, two years after joining there were a third fewer children going into care, a quarter fewer adults going to prison, 15 per cent fewer juvenile convictions and 11 per cent fewer claiming Job Seekers Allowance.

#### **Pets in privately rented accommodation**

As part of the steps the government is taking to secure a better deal for renters, I have called on landlords to make it easier for responsible tenants to have well behaved pets in their homes while recognising landlords' rights to protect their properties from damage. Pets bring a huge amount of joy and comfort to people's lives, but some families can't experience this because they rent their homes privately. We will publish a revised model tenancy agreement shortly, which can be used as the basis of lease agreements, to remove restrictions on responsible tenants with well-behaved pets.

**Rogue landlord enforcement**

I have awarded more than 100 councils across England a share of over £4 million to crack down on criminal landlords and letting agents through the Private Rented Sector Innovation and Enforcement Grant Fund. This builds on £2.4 million awarded in January 2019 and will continue the government's ongoing work to make the private rented sector fairer and stamp out criminal practices for good. Most landlords provide decent homes for their tenants, but a small minority persist in breaking the law, making tenants' lives a misery by offering inadequate or unsafe housing. The grants support a range of projects to enable councils to make the best use of their enforcement powers and include trialling innovative ideas, sharing best practice and targeted enforcement where we know landlords shirk their responsibilities. The Government is committed to helping good landlords to thrive, and ensuring that hard-working tenants across the country get the homes they deserve - creating a housing market that works for everyone.

**High Streets package**

At the heart of this new government's mission is a commitment to supporting places and communities that have been overlooked and undervalued for far too long. We will make an immediate start on levelling up across the regions and I am reorganising my department to relentlessly focus on these places so that we can deliver real change for communities through our £3.6 billion Towns Fund, announced by the Prime Minister in July 2019. It will support an initial 100 town deals across England and which includes £1 billion for the Future High Street Fund.

The Future High Streets Fund aims to renew and reshape town centres in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability. Last week we released over £1 million of additional funding, on top of £13.5 million already invested in local authorities, to further support places developing detailed business cases of their original proposals.

In addition to this funding I also announced that the High Streets Task Force, established to provide hands-on support to local areas, will be piloting interventions, products and services in 20 places in early 2020 before rolling out expert, training and data offer across the country later in the year. The places benefitting from being part of this pilot will be a mixture of local authorities, Business Improvement Districts and community groups. The Task Force is also holding an open recruitment for a Board Chair to provide expert leadership to this programme.

My department has also launched a survey to consult on the proposed register of empty commercial properties, to improve transparency of ownership on the high street and make it easier for businesses or community groups to make use of vacant commercial properties and identify landlords. The consultation exercise will remain open until 9 February 2020, after which we will consider responses and decide how to proceed.

**Cold Weather Fund**

This Government is committed to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping within the term of this parliament. To this end, on 23 December I announced the allocation of £263

million in funding to local authorities designed to support the delivery of services to tackle homelessness. This is an increase in overall funding for local authority homelessness services of £23 million on the previous financial year.

My department is also funding many additional rough sleeping services across the country this winter through our £10 million Cold Weather Fund. In recognition of the level of interest in the fund we have announced a further £3 million available to all local authorities in England. This will enable us to build on the successes of the fund so far by increasing outreach work further and extending winter shelter provision to support rough sleepers off the streets this winter. These announcements underline our commitment to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping and will ensure local authorities are given the resource they need to make this a reality in local areas.

### **Housing First**

My department announced recently that 200 people have so far been housed through the Housing First pilot, underway since 2018 in Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Liverpool City Region and West Midlands Combined Authority areas. The Housing First approach offers permanent affordable housing to rough sleepers with multiple complex needs as well as wrap-around support to ensure that they are able to maintain their tenancies and provide the support that they need to recover from mental health issues, substance misuse and the physical effects of living on the streets.

### **Community pubs**

On the 22nd of December I announced a £1.15 million fund that will assist an estimated 100 communities to either own their local pub or benefit from new, pub-based community services and facilities. This funding will also create valuable new jobs and volunteering opportunities. Pubs run by the community and for the community help bring people closer together. Importantly, they are a space for older, vulnerable and more isolated residents to access important local services and feel part of their communities.

The £1.15 million fund will support pubs through two key programmes, £650,000 will be allocated to the second 'more than a pub' programme. More than a pub provides small grants and specialist advice for community groups at the start of their journey to community ownership. It also supports groups later in the process who require specialist professional advice with larger grants and loans to help with business planning, conveyancing, architectural help or financial advice.

£500,000 will be allocated to Pub is the Hub to enable a range of projects providing new, pub-based community services from post offices and shops to libraries and allotments. This will increase the services available in rural and remote communities and help sustain pubs as community assets and businesses.