



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 January 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:35 P.M., 09 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

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ Conditions of Employment

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans the Government has to negotiate alignment with the EU on employment rights after the UK leaves the EU.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Government is committed to protecting workers' rights and enhancing these where it is right for the UK. The Political Declaration sets out the UK's ambition on employment provisions in our future trade agreement with the EU. In order to prevent either Party gaining an unfair trade advantage, the UK will seek a reciprocal agreement to maintain social and employment standards at the current high levels. This will both help maintain fair and open competition in trade and protect workers' rights in the UK.

#### ■ Iron and Steel

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies on the steel industry of the views expressed by the chairman of Tata Sons in The Sunday Times on 5 January 2020; and if she will make a statement.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Government is committed to supporting a productive, vibrant and modern steel sector in the UK. As part of our support, the Government is taking wide-ranging action including compensation for energy costs, supporting innovation and clean steel production, and working with the industry to roll out steel procurement guidance.

We are monitoring the situation with Tata closely and remain in regular contact with the company, unions and other stakeholders.

We are committed to working constructively with members across the House of Commons on matters relating to the steel sector.

#### ■ Living Wage: Age

**Stephen Timms:**

[383]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when she plans to reduce the age of entitlement to the National Living Wage to 21; and if she will make a statement.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Government has announced that in April 2020 the National Living Wage (NLW) will increase by 6.2 per cent to £8.72 for those aged 25 and over. The Government has also announced inflation-beating increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) rates for younger workers and apprentices of between 4.6 per cent and 6.5 per cent.

My rt. hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has pledged that the National Living Wage will increase further, reaching two-thirds of median earnings by 2024, providing economic conditions allow. The Government also plans to expand the reach of the National Living Wage, bringing down the eligibility threshold first to age 23 in 2021 and then to 21 by 2024.

**■ Whirlpool Corporation: Washing Machines****Andy Slaughter:****[386]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when Whirlpool first notified the Office for Product Safety and Standards of (a) the safety fault with its machines and (b) its intention to recall over 500,000 affected appliances, announced on 17 December 2019; what targets the Office for Product Safety and Standards has set Whirlpool for carrying out the recall of its washing machines; what quality assurance the Office for Product Safety and Standards has carried out on the modification that Whirlpool is proposing to offer to consumers as part the recall; and how long the Office for Product Safety and Standards expects affected Whirlpool customers will have to wait to have their at-risk washing machines repaired or replaced following the recall.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Whirlpool informed the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) in October 2019 that it was investigating a potential issue with door locks on some models of washing machine. OPSS required the company to provide detailed data on this issue in order to have clarity on the nature and scale of the problem and to identify the appropriate response to protect public safety. Following assessment of the issue, it was agreed that a full recall should be instigated and the recall programme was announced on 17 December 2019.

OPSS is acting to ensure the company conducts an effective recall with a process that is as quick and easy for consumers as possible. OPSS is monitoring Whirlpool's actions closely and will hold the company to account. Data on the recall, including on the time taken for customers to receive a remedy will be published by OPSS.

In order to include a modification as part of an appropriate response, a manufacturer must provide scientific and technical evidence that the modification addresses the problem identified; that those undertaking the modification have received full training on applying the modification; and that there is a robust quality assurance process in place for each modification.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Constituencies**

**Catherine West:** [\[431\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on the recommendations of the 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

**Jonathan Edwards:** [\[975\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he has taken in response to the Boundary Commission for England's 2018 recommendations on parliamentary constituency boundaries.

**Chloe Smith:**

The final reports of the four Boundary Commissions in the 2018 Boundary Review were submitted to the Government and laid before Parliament in September 2018.

The Government will continue to monitor closely the current legal proceedings in relation to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's final report.

As we set out in our manifesto, the Government will ensure we have updated and equal parliamentary boundaries, making sure every vote counts the same.

**■ European Parliament: Scotland**

**Alyn Smith:** [\[244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when he will confirm the appointment of a new Member of the European Parliament for Scotland.

**Chloe Smith:**

The European Parliamentary Elections (EPE) Regulations 2004 set out the procedure to be followed when an MEP vacancy arises in the United Kingdom.

**■ Farmers: Debts**

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[91\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate his Department has made of the level of personal debt in the agricultural industry.

**Chloe Smith:**

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA Response [2020.01.07 - PQ 91 - UKSA Response.pdf]

## ■ Proxy Voting

**Dr Rupa Huq:** [\[173\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether he plans to review the criteria for transferring a proxy vote from one person to another in the case of an emergency.

**Chloe Smith:**

There is currently no provision to transfer proxy votes between people. Emergency proxy votes are granted in limited circumstances, to maintain the integrity of the electoral process. The Government has announced it will consider the process of emergency proxy applications and the circumstances in which they can be issued, when time allows.

## DEFENCE

### ■ Aircraft Carriers: Repairs and Maintenance

**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [\[468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the use of floating docks for the maintenance of Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

**James Heappey:**

The Royal Navy and Defence Equipment & Support are working together to develop a long-term dry docking plan for the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers. The use of floating dry docks was reviewed early in these deliberations; however, they were rejected on infrastructure, security and access grounds.

### ■ Strait of Hormuz: Unmanned Air Vehicles

**Anneliese Dodds:** [\[479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has had discussions with his Kuwaiti counterpart on the potential for deploying RAF Reaper drones for operations over the Strait of Hormuz.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:**

We are in regular communication with all our regional allies. However, I am withholding information on the location of Reaper aircraft as its release would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

### ■ Veterans

**Douglas Chapman:** [\[139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons veterans may be medically discharged from the armed forces before receiving a diagnosis for their condition.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Ordinarily, an individual would not be medically discharged from the Armed Forces prior to a diagnosis of their condition being made.

However, it is possible in a limited number of cases that an individual displays symptoms and reduced function that is incompatible with Service, where even specialist medical opinion has been unable to determine a diagnosis, and all appropriate investigation and management have failed to improve functional outcome to the level required. A medical discharge decision is based on functionality rather than the condition per se.

**Douglas Chapman:**[\[140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will commission an independent review and audit of the medical discharge process within the armed forces.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Armed Forces medical employment policy, which governs the process of medical discharge, is kept under continual review by our clinical experts, who take account of UK best practice in occupational medical policy, latest research and clinical information. This ensures that appropriate medical standards and medical boarding practice are maintained and are responsive to wider advances in medical practice and technology.

**■ Veterans: Compensation****Douglas Chapman:**[\[138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to reduce waiting times for veterans who are medically discharged from the armed forces to be informed of their compensation award.

**Johnny Mercer:**

Veterans UK is committed to an ongoing programme of digitisation and transformation which will reduce claims processing times and enhance the customer experience.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ Facebook: Harassment****Jim McMahon:**[\[436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with Facebook on moderating hate speech, harassment and bullying online.

**Jim McMahon:**

[437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with Twitter on moderating hate speech, harassment and bullying online.

**Matt Warman:**

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook on a range of issues, including moderating hate speech, harassment and bullying online. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## ■ Football: Clubs

**Jim McMahon:**

[435]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support is available to enable fans to have a greater say on the running of the football club they support.

**Nigel Adams:**

Football clubs and grounds are the heart of local communities, they have unique social value and many with a great history. It is vital they are protected and fans should have their voices heard.

The Fans Fund, funded by the Premier League and administered by the Football Supporters' Association (FSA), includes funds to assist Supporters' Trusts of clubs in the National League, English Football League and Premier League with the professional fees needed to build a credible bid when an ownership opportunity arises.

The FSA can provide support and advice to fans considering supporter ownership as part of their important work representing and connecting football fans across the country.

The Premier League and English Football League now also require clubs meet with supporters at least twice a year to discuss strategic issues, giving fans the opportunity to shape the direction of the club.

We have committed to a fan led review of football governance, which will include consideration of the Owners' and Directors' test.

## ■ S4C

**Mr David Jones:**

[480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she last met the Chair of the S4C Authority.

**Mr David Jones:**

[481]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when she plans to meet the acting Chair of the S4C Authority.



**Nigel Adams:**

Ministers regularly meet with a range of people on a range of issues.

Officials have engaged closely with S4C, including the acting Chair of the S4C Authority, on a range of relevant matters.

**EDUCATION**■ **Children: Poverty**

**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent trends in child poverty on the number of children in Portsmouth who do not own a book.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase book ownership amongst children in Portsmouth.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent trends in book ownership amongst pupils aged nine to 18 on (a) literacy rates and (b) pupil development in the UK.

**Nick Gibb:**

National Literacy Trust research published in November 2019 showed that the gap in book ownership between disadvantaged children and their peers has almost halved in the past six years (from 6.1% in 2013 to 3.3% in 2019).

The Department wants all children to be able to read well, with fluency and understanding. In 2018 we launched a £26.3 million English Hubs Programme. The English Hubs are focused on improving educational outcomes for the most disadvantaged pupils in Reception and Year 1. We have appointed 34 primary schools across England as English Hubs. The English Hubs Programme is supporting nearly 3000 schools across England to improve their teaching of reading through systematic synthetic phonics, early language development, and reading for pleasure. Springhill Primary School is an English Hub which aims to support 170 schools in its local area, which includes Portsmouth.

The Department recognises that disadvantaged pupils may face greater challenges to succeed at school. Since 2011 we have provided schools with more than £15 billion in extra funding through the pupil premium so that disadvantaged pupils can receive the support they need. School leaders are free to use the pupil premium as they choose; drawing on eight years of research the Education Endowment Foundation recommends focusing the grant on meeting basic needs, that can include providing books, as well as teaching quality and targeted academic programmes.

## ■ Pupils: Literacy

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[452]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the literacy rate is amongst people aged eight to 15 in (a) Portsmouth and (b) the UK.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department for Education assesses pupils in England via end of Key Stage 1 assessments when pupils are typically age 7, end of Key Stage 2 assessments when pupils are typically age 11, and end of Key Stage 4 (GCSE) exams when pupils are typically age 16.

The Department publishes attainment, in headline measures for state-funded schools, at the end of Key Stage 2 by local authority, region and all of England. An extract from the latest figures for 2018-19 are in the table below, relating to attainment in reading and writing. At Key Stage 2 English reading is assessed via tests and writing via teacher assessments.

**Table 1 - Key Stage 2 English results in 2019 for Portsmouth local authority and state funded schools in England**

	STUDENTS MEETING ENGLISH READING EXPECTED STANDARD	STUDENTS MEETING ENGLISH READING HIGHER STANDARD	STUDENTS MEETING ENGLISH WRITING EXPECTED STANDARD	STUDENTS MEETING ENGLISH WRITING GREATER DEPTH
Portsmouth	67%	22%	76%	11%
England (state- funded schools)	74%	27%	79%	20%

Key Stage 2 local authority data, including for previous years[1], is available at the following link[2]:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-key-stage-2>.

For students at the end of Key Stage 4, there is no assessment of literacy skills, nor reading and writing separately. As a proxy, Table 2 provides the percentage of students entering the English element of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), and the percentage attaining a standard pass (grade 9-4).

**Table 2 - EBacc English results in 2019 for Portsmouth local authority and state funded schools in England**

	% OF STUDENTS ENTERING EBACC ENGLISH[3]	% OF STUDENTS ACHIEVING A GRADE 4 OR ABOVE IN EBACC ENGLISH
Portsmouth	93.4%	67.5%
England (state-funded schools)	95.8%	75.6%

Local authority data, including for previous years, is available at the following link[4]:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-gcses-key-stage-4>.

[1] Due to change in methodology and headline measures at Key Stage 2, figures are only comparable between 2009-10 to 2014-15 and 2015-16 to 2016-17. Changes made within the 2017-18 writing teaching assistant frameworks mean that judgements in 2018 are not directly comparable to those made using the previous interim frameworks in 2016 and 2017.

[2] For each year, select the 'revised' publication and then open the 'Local authority and regional tables'. For 2015-16 to 2016-17 the headline measures are the percentage of students reaching the expected standard and can be found in tables L1, L2 and L3. For 2009-10 to 2014-15 the headline measures are the percentage achieving L4 or above and can be found in tables 12-16 (2013-14 to 2014-15); tables 12-15 (2012-13); tables 13-15 (2011-12); table 11 (2010-11); table 18 (2009-10 – in the 'national and local authority tables').

[3] Pupils must achieve at least a grade 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 4 or are required to resit in post-16 education. Therefore, entry and achievement at grade 4 in EBacc English has been used as a proxy for 'literacy' for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. For more information about EBacc, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>.

[4] For each year, select the 'revised' publication and then open the 'local authority tables'.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

**Catherine West:**

**[433]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment has been made of the economic value of continuing with the policy of culling badgers.

**George Eustice:**

Bovine TB is one of the greatest animal health threats to the UK and is a major source of distress for hard-working farmers and rural communities. The most recent badger control policy value for money analysis, carried out in 2019, estimates the Net Present Value of Badger Control over eleven years at £1.08 million per area.

Further information can be found on Gov.uk at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-badger-control-policy-value-for-money-analysis>

**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**■ **Australia: Fires****Catherine West:****[434]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether any support from the UK Government has been (a) offered to and (b) accepted by the Australian Government to assist during the recent bush-fires affecting that country.

**Mrs Heather Wheeler:**

The Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon have been in contact with their Australian counterparts to offer our condolences and stress our readiness to help in whatever way they need.

As set out by FCO Minister Heather Wheeler in her Oral Statement of 9 January, we have deployed a small team of UK experts to Australia.

The team includes a senior member of UK Fire and Rescue Service, a medical specialist in trauma and mental health, and a military liaison officer specialising in crisis response.

They will work with Australian counterparts to establish what further UK support will be of most use to Australian emergency responders, and ensure that such contributions are fully integrated with Australian efforts.

■ **Burma: Rohingya****Ms Lyn Brown:****[469]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will provide support to Gambia in the case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in respect of allegations of genocide and human rights abuses against the Rohingya people.

**Mrs Heather Wheeler:**

UK Ministers have repeatedly expressed their profound concern at the horrific events of August 2017 in Rakhine state. The perpetrators of these atrocities should be held to account. We are following proceedings in The Hague closely and welcome the International Court of Justice's consideration of whether genocide has occurred.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Mr Steve Baker:****[104]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to improve mental healthcare in Wycombe; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

In response to the NHS Long Term Plan, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System published a draft strategic delivery plan in September 2019 which outlines how each county will work with stakeholders to deliver the expectations of the Plan, including how to further improve local mental health services. This is available at the following link:

<https://bobstp.org.uk/media/1752/ics-ltp-1st-draft-submission-v10-2.pdf>

Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) reports that a number of developments, which have the potential to impact on mental health care in Wycombe, are being delivered or are planned for delivery over the next financial year. These include:

- improving mental health crisis services with an increase in the number of days that the 'safe haven' service will operate in 2020 with a new location opening in High Wycombe. Home treatment for acutely unwell mental health patients will also start to be offered;
- two mental health support teams becoming operational in 2019, working in 33 schools across Buckinghamshire to provide interventions to young people with low to moderate mental health needs. The CCG will bid for national funding to expand this offering in 2020;
- increasing access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The number of young people accessing these services has increased and waiting times for assessment have decreased. The CCG will continue to develop this further into 2020 using online technology to increase access;
- recruiting additional CAMHS psychologists as part of the four-week wait pilot scheme;
- the employment of additional trainees by Buckinghamshire's 'Healthy Minds' service; and
- continuing to improve the physical health of people that have a serious mental illness by ensuring they are able to access an annual physical health check.

## ■ Autism: Diagnosis

**Paul Bristow:**

[\[358\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the length of time it takes for children to be referred for an initial assessment for autism spectrum disorders.

**Caroline Dinenge:**

We are committed to ensuring children receive a timely diagnosis of autism in line with the clinical guideline set by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. This guideline recommends the length of time between referral and a first appointment to start an assessment should be no more than three months.

Under the NHS Long Term Plan, over the next three years, autism diagnosis will be included alongside work with children and young people's mental health services to test and implement the most effective ways to reduce waiting times for specialist services. This will be a step towards achieving timely diagnostic assessments in line with best practice guidelines.

## ■ Cardiovascular System: Health Services

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the forthcoming NHS People Plan will take account of the barriers and challenges faced by NHS staff in charge of providing vital vascular services; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

The final NHS People Plan will build on the ambitions in the interim NHS People Plan by setting out a workforce strategy for the National Health Service that will enable the service to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan across all clinical areas, including vascular, by addressing the challenges that staff currently face.

In developing the People Plan, the NHS has worked with a range of partner organisations to put people issues at the heart of service transformation and support creative new approaches to service and workforce design that will allow us to use our existing resources better and deliver better care for patients.

The NHS People Plan will help improve leadership culture with a focus on education and training, including introducing new routes into the NHS and improving workforce planning and supporting interventions that will release staff time for care. This will include, for example, encouraging advanced practice in radiology departments which play an important role in delivering high quality vascular services.

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

## ■ Care Homes: Learning Disability

**Catherine West:**

**[432]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) unexpected deaths and (b) serious injuries have occurred in residential care homes among people with learning difficulties in each year since 2010.

**Caroline Dinenege:**

The following table shows Unexpected Death and Serious Injury Notifications raised against 'Residential social care home' locations with a Service User Band of 'Learning disabilities or autistic spectrum disorder', from 1 April 2010, provided by the Care Quality Commission:

Raised Year	NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS	
	16-1 Unexpected Death	18-2a,b Serious Injury
2010	260	558
2011	1,201	2,656
2012	1,248	3,112
2013	936	3,077
2014	948	3,215
2015	1,067	3,866
2016	1,221	4,236
2017	1,081	4,573
2018	1,153	4,513
2019	959	4,812
2020	12	48
Grand Total	10,086	34,666

Notes:

1. The data does not indicate whether a notification relates directly to someone with a learning disability or autism, only that the location has the Service User Band of 'Learning disabilities or autistic spectrum disorder'. A location may have more than one Service User Band.
2. 'Residential social care home' locations are defined as locations with a Primary Inspection Category of 'Residential social care', or with an Organisation Type of 'Social Care Organisation' and any of the Service Types 'Care home services with nursing', 'Care home services without nursing' or 'Specialist college services'

3. This data is at location level only.
4. The data for 2010 reflects both an incomplete year of reporting, i.e. from 1 April, and from a starting point of data from the National Health Service alone before providers across the United Kingdom were included.
5. Data for 2020 is up to and including 7 January.

## ■ Doctors: Pensions

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

**[207]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of pension legislation on the personal finances of high-earning doctors, that work unpredictable overtime shifts.

**Edward Argar:**

It is difficult to predict the impact of the tapered annual allowance for individual high earning doctors. Tapering applies to individuals whose taxable income exceeds £110,000 and whose adjusted income exceeds £150,000. Adjusted income is taxable income plus the value of annual pension growth. The standard annual allowance is reduced by £1 for every £2 of adjusted income over £150,000, tapering down to a minimum allowance of £10,000.

The taper calculation takes into account all taxable income, including non-pensionable income such overtime sessions worked for the National Health Service, or private work. The Department cannot therefore make an assessment of the impact of the tapered annual allowance on the personal finances of high-earning doctors.

The Department recognises that the annual allowance may contribute to decisions from NHS 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, and the particular difficulties caused by the impact of non-pensionable income from providing additional much needed clinical sessions on the taper.

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.



## ■ General Practitioners: Oldham

**Jim McMahon:**

[\[439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many GPs per 1,000 population were available in Oldham in each year from 2010 to date.

**Jo Churchill:**

The number of full time equivalent doctors (FTE) in general practice (excluding locums) per 1,000 patients in Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) since 2015 has been provided in the table below. General practitioner (GP) locums are excluded as improvements have been made to GP locum recording methodology and figures are not comparable across the time series. Data is not included prior to 2015 as improvements were made to the methodology for recording all staff working in general practice in September 2015 and data prior to this is not comparable.

Number of doctors in general practice per 1,000 patients in NHS Oldham CCG

	FTE PER 1,000 PATIENTS (EXCLUDING LOCUMS)
2015	0.44
2016	0.46
2017	0.43
2018	0.53
2019	0.54

Source: NHS Digital

Notes

1. Data as at 30 September.
2. 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.
3. Each period, figures contain estimates, for practices that did not provide fully valid General Medical Practice GP records.
4. FTE refers to the proportion of full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. One would indicate they work a full set of hours (37.5), 0.5 that they worked half time. In Registrars' contracts one FTE = 40 hours. To ensure consistency, these FTEs have been converted to the standard wMDS measure of 1 FTE = 37.5 hours in the table.

## ■ Health Services: Homelessness

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[88]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he will take to ensure people with no fixed abode can access non-urgent medical care.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

NHS England has issued guidance making clear that lack of identification or proof of address is not grounds for refusing National Health Service primary care treatment, including general practitioner, dental and eye care services. In these circumstances, individuals can use the primary care services' address or an address of a hostel, where appropriate. Where this guidance is not being followed, cases should be brought to NHS England's attention, as the commissioner should be able to reinforce the guidance locally. Ultimately, the commissioner can issue a remedial notice and can terminate a contract or practice that still does not abide by its obligations.

To help improve the commissioning of dental services for vulnerable people, including homeless patients, NHS England is developing a Commissioning Standard, which will consider options, such as looking at commissioning 'time' rather than treatments (measured through 'units of dental activity') to help incentivise high street practices to treat patients expected to need a greater investment of time, including homeless people.

## ■ In Vitro Fertilisation

**Paul Bristow:**

[357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure access to IVF treatment in line with the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence Clinical Guideline 156 in (a) Peterborough and (b) across all clinical commissioning group areas.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

The level of provision of local health services available to patients, including fertility treatment, is, and has been since the 1990s, a matter for local healthcare commissioners, who must consider the needs and priorities of all their population. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory responsibility to commission healthcare services that meet the needs of their whole population, including fertility services.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's guidance for commissioners is a new tool to help them implement National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence Fertility Guidelines and use the benchmark price for treatments.

On 5 November 2019 I wrote to the Chief Executives of the five CCGs in England that do not currently offer routine access to fertility treatment, including Cambridge and Peterborough CCG, making clear that it is an unacceptable situation for no routine local fertility service to be offered. I also asked them for assurance on what action they are taking to address this issue, how they are utilising the new

commissioning guidance and National Health Service benchmark price to support fair and equal access to fertility services, and, how they are ensuring their Public Sector Equality Duty is being met.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Children and Young People

**Julian Sturdy:**

[\[288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) monitor and (b) reduce waiting times for CAMHS services.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have introduced two waiting time standards relating to mental health services for children and young people and the National Health Service is currently on track to meet both of these by April 2021.

The first is for 95% of children (up to 19 years old) with eating disorders to receive treatment within a week for urgent cases and four weeks for routine cases. The second aims for 50% of patients of all ages experiencing a first episode of psychosis to receive treatment within two weeks of referral.

Our Green Paper on transforming children and young people's mental health provision, jointly published with the Department for Education, sets out how we plan to go further. We are piloting a four-week waiting time in 12 areas to improve access to children and young people's specialist mental health services and are introducing new schools- and college-based mental health support teams.

## ■ Mental Health Services: Expenditure

**Rachael Maskell:**

[\[324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been spent on mental health services (a) in York and (b) nationally in each of the last 10 years.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The following table shows total spend on mental health services, including learning disabilities and dementia, in England and the Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group.

YEAR	ENGLAND (£ MILLION)	VALE OF YORK CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP (£ MILLION)
2015/16	10,978.9	46.7
2016/17	11,601.9	62.8
2017/18	11,976.0	67.4
2018/19	12,513.2	68.0

Source: NHS Mental Health Dashboard, NHS England

The Department and the National Health Service does not hold financial data at a sufficiently granular level to provide the information requested prior to 2015/16.

#### ■ **Motor Neurone Disease: Nurses**

**Anneliese Dodds:** [482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many motor neurone disease specialist nurses are working in the NHS.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department does not hold the information requested.

#### ■ **NHS: Finance**

**Rachael Maskell:** [323]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the basis for the NHS funding formula was last reviewed.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England is responsible for funding allocations to clinical commissioning groups. This process is independent of government and NHS England takes advice Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA). The underlying formula and data are kept under review and changes made in line with CCG allocations.

In 2019/20 these changes included the introduction of a new community services formula, that has the effect of better recognising needs in some rural, coastal and remote areas that on average tend to have much older populations, and higher needs for certain community services.

Further information on ACRA's priorities for methodological improvements in the next round of allocations was set out in the Chair of the committee's letter to the Chief Executive of NHS England. Further information can be found in NHS England's supporting 'Note on Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Allocations 2019/20-2023/24' at Annex A, at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/note-on-ccg-allocations-2019-20-2023-24.pdf>

#### ■ **NHS: Negligence**

**Jeremy Hunt:** [R] [65]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many law suits worth more than £1 million (a) his Department and (b) the NHS settled in relation to babies disabled for life by medical error in the last 12 months.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We are determined to reduce the number of cases where babies are harmed, often permanently, by medical error. Our National Maternity Safety Ambition, launched in

November 2015 and updated in November 2017, is to halve the rates of maternal and neonatal deaths, stillbirths, and brain injuries that occur during or soon after birth by 2025. Details can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safer-maternity-care-progress-and-next-steps>

NHS Resolution handles clinical negligence claims on behalf of National Health Service organisations and independent sector providers of NHS care in England. NHS Resolution is also responsible for handling the clinical liabilities of former NHS bodies, where the defendant is the Secretary of State.

In the financial year 2018/19 the number of legal cases settled worth more than £1 million in relation to babies disabled for life by medical error were:

- Department of Health and Social Care legacy schemes – five; and
- Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts covering the NHS - 105.

It should be noted that this covers the period for the financial year 2018/19, rather than for the last 12 months, as the numbers for cases since April 2019 have not yet been audited.

#### ■ **Parkinson's Disease: Drugs**

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:**

**[37]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure Parkinson's disease patients receive medication on time while in hospital.

**Caroline Dinenege:**

National Health Service providers have worked hard to implement National Institute for Health and Care Excellence CE Quality Standard (QS164), published in February 2018, which recognises the importance of patients getting Parkinson's disease medicines on time to prevent harmful effects on their health whether they are in a hospital or a care home.

Many hospitals have worked closely with Parkinson's UK as part of its 'Get it on time' campaign, which aims to ensure that clinical staff in both hospitals and care homes understand the importance of timely availability of these medicines.

NHS England and NHS Improvement published further guidance in August 2019, in partnership with charities such as Parkinson's UK, to help local NHS staff take practical steps to improve the care for patients with progressive neurological conditions. A copy of the guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/rightcare/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2019/08/progressive-neuro-toolkit.pdf>

We recognise that patients with Parkinson's disease and other neurological conditions are among the most vulnerable in our society, and all parts of the NHS strive to provide them with the best care possible.

## ■ Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much time is available to opponents of Future Fit in relation Shrewsbury and Telford Trust to take the process to judicial review as at 1 January 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

The Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) decision on the Future Fit scheme was taken on 29 January 2019. This decision was referred to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who sought advice from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel. The Secretary of State's decision was made on 2 October 2019 and was communicated to NHS England and NHS Improvement, CCGs and Telford and Wrekin Council.

Independent legal advice would need to be sought on the timings of bringing a challenge by way of judicial review.

## ■ Social Services

**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [\[215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the social care Green Paper.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

We are determined to find a long-term solution to the challenges in social care to ensure that 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.

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[80\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will urgently bring forward a White Paper on the future of provision and funding of social care integrated into the NHS in England.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

We are determined to find a long-term solution to the challenges in social care to ensure that 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.

Integration across health and social care enables improved co-operation and joint decision-making between health and social care partners in delivering shared outcomes. The Government is already taking steps to integrate health and social care funding through the Better Care Fund (BCF), the national policy driving forward the integration of health and social care in England.

In 2019, 93% of local areas agreed that joint working had improved as a result of the BCF. The budgets reflect that cooperation: local areas have voluntarily pooled around £2 billion above the minimum required into the BCF last year.

In the recent Spending Round, we confirmed that the BCF and the improved BCF will continue in 2020-21. We are currently reviewing how the BCF can best support the closer integration of health and care and will provide local areas with further details about the BCF beyond 2020 as part of an announcement on the review.

### ■ Social Services: Apprentices

**Jim McMahon:**

[438]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with the Education and Skills Funding Agency on increasing the level of apprenticeship levy for adult care workers from the current lowest band of £3,000.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

No such discussions have taken place.

Apprenticeships are an important entry route into the social care sector, offer an excellent opportunity for employers to upskill existing staff and train new staff as part of high-quality training programmes, and provide clear career progression routes through the sector.

Apprenticeship standards are allocated funding bands based on recommendations made to the Department for Education by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), which is an employer led Non-Departmental Body. The funding bands for Adult Care Worker and Lead Adult Care Worker apprenticeships were reviewed by IfATE in January 2019. Following discussions with the social care trailblazer group (a group of employers involved in developing apprenticeship standards for their industry) and looking at available evidence, both were retained at the same funding rate.

IfATE continue to keep the funding of all standards under review to ensure that funding bands remain appropriate.

### ■ Social Services: Waiting Lists

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[344]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of effect of recent trends in people dying per day while waiting for social care on the wellbeing of those requiring social care.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

No such assessment has been made.

### ■ Veterans

**Douglas Chapman:**

[137]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support veterans who are medically discharged from the armed forces.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

As part of the Government's continued commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, veterans are able to access National Health Service provided mainstream and bespoke veteran services.

In England, this includes the Veterans Trauma Network. Located in 10 major trauma centres across England, with links to five specialist NHS trusts, the network works closely with Defence Medical Services, national centres of clinical expertise, veteran specific mental health services, as well as military charities to provide a complete package of care and treatment to those with service-attributable physical health conditions.

For mental health issues there is the Transition, Intervention and Liaison mental health service, which supports serving personnel who need additional mental health support as they are leaving the armed forces and for veterans who have mental health issues.

**■ West Suffolk Hospital****James Cartlidge:**[\[339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for a complete rebuild of West Suffolk hospital; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

On 29 September 2019 the Government announced a new Health Infrastructure Plan, to ensure that our health infrastructure is fit-for-purpose for decades to come.

At the centre of this Plan is a new hospital building programme. To launch this programme, in September, the Government announced six new hospital schemes that are receiving funding to 'go ahead' now (aiming to deliver by 2025), and a further twenty-one schemes, across 34 hospitals, that have the green light to go to the next stage of developing their plans (aiming to deliver between 2025 and 2030).

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust's scheme at West Suffolk Hospital is part of the second phase and will receive a share of £100 million seed funding, as well as guidance and support from central government, to help progress its plans to the next stage.

Further detail on specific plans and funding will be made available in due course, as part of delivering the Government's wider commitment to build 40 new hospitals.

**HOME OFFICE****■ Police: Recruitment****Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of entry requirements for people wishing to become police officers on the ability of the police force to recruit new staff.



**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government is committed to delivering the people's priorities including the recruitment of an additional 20,000 police officers over the next three years. The national 'Be a Force for All' campaign was launched in September and has supported local recruitment across all forces in England and Wales.

Police officer entry requirements are set by the College of Policing. The Home Office is working with the National Police Chiefs Council, the College of Policing and forces to ensure there are no undue barriers for anyone who is qualified to do so from joining the police.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Buildings: Insulation****Paul Blomfield:**[\[400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effectiveness of extending the December 2019 deadline for applications to the private sector ACM cladding remediation fund; and if he will make a statement.

**Esther McVey:**

Our priority is to enable residents to be safe and feel safe in their homes. We upheld the 31 December application deadline for the private sector Aluminium Composite Material cladding remediation fund in order to maintain pressure on the pace of remediation. Unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify a delay in making an application, those responsible for buildings should expect further action to be taken – including naming and shaming and enforcement.

**■ Leasehold: Ground Rent****Barbara Keeley:**[\[398\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent steps he has taken to end the use of escalating ground rents on leasehold properties.

**Esther McVey:**

The Government has set out a package of measures to tackle unfair practices in the leasehold market, this includes a ban on the unjustified use of leasehold for new houses and restricting ground rents for both houses and flats to a peppercorn.

The Government is committed to providing support to existing leaseholders. We are putting pressure on developers who have sold leases with onerous ground rents, including those that double more frequently than every 20 years, to provide support for current leaseholders. Some developers have introduced schemes to assist individuals with onerous leases which is welcome, but these must go further and faster.

To facilitate this process, the Government announced a 'Public Pledge for Leaseholders' on 28 March 2019. This contains a commitment for freeholders to identify any existing leases within their portfolio which contain ground rents that double more frequently than every 20 years. They have also committed to contact the relevant leaseholders and offer to vary their leases. We are pleased that over 60 institutional freeholders and developers have signed the pledge, which also provides safeguards for future leaseholders.

### ■ Leasehold: Misrepresentation

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to tackle the mis-selling of leasehold properties.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[396\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to help ensure that people who have been mis-sold leasehold properties will be compensated.

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he is taking steps to enable people who have potentially been mis-sold leasehold properties to purchase the freehold of those properties; and if he will make a statement.

**Esther McVey:**

The Government is taking forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. This includes working with the Law Commission to make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and more cost effective to help both future and existing leaseholders. Their report on Valuation was published on 9 January, and we are considering the recommendations. We are moving forward with legislation to ban new leasehold houses and reduce ground rents on future leases to zero. We will publish a draft bill as soon as possible.

The Government recognises that there are those who feel strongly that they were mis-sold their properties. The Government welcomed the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) announcement on 11 June 2019 that it was launching an investigation in this area. The CMA is considering the extent of any mis-selling and onerous term in the leasehold sector, including whether they might constitute 'unfair terms'. The Government looks forward to hearing progress on the CMA's work.

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT****■ Department for International Development: Departmental Responsibilities**

**Patrick Grady:** [\[416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if he will publish a response to EDM 21 on Global Goals, Official Development Assistance, and the role of the Department for International Development.

**Dr Andrew Murrison:**

The Global Goals are at the centre of our work to improve lives around the world. The international community is making progress but there is much more to do if we want to achieve them by 2030.

We are proud of our 0.7 commitment in legislation – a commitment shared by all parties in their manifestos at the recent general election.

The UK is and will remain a global champion for humanitarian relief and international development. Our aid budget is a major part of the UK's contribution to deliver the international goals that shape global efforts to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Ceramics: Exports**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans the Government has to support ceramic producers to increase exports after the UK leaves the EU.

**Graham Stuart:**

The Department for International Trade (DIT) will support the ceramics sector as we develop the UK's future trade policy, helping companies to maximise opportunities within markets around the world.

Ceramic companies can utilise DIT products and services to grow their businesses further. Support ranges from DIT missions and webinars, personalised advice from a local International Trade Adviser, and an online tool to find optimum online marketplaces for showcasing products internationally. Companies can also apply for grants to visit overseas trade shows.

**■ Northern Ireland: USA**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans he has to use the historical connection between Northern Ireland and the US for (a) tourism and (b) trade benefits.

**Conor Burns:**

The USA is one of Northern Ireland's largest non-EU trading partners and tourism markets, and the UK Government works closely with Invest Northern Ireland to support exporters and to promote Northern Ireland as a great place to visit, invest and do business.

Trade is just one way in which we can strengthen that deep and historic relationship as the UK leaves the EU. HMG has committed to a substantial programme of engagement on the UK's future trade policy with the Northern Ireland Civil Service, to ensure that it reflects the needs and ambitions of the whole of the UK.

**■ Whisky: Northern Ireland****Jim Shannon:**[\[294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps his Department is taking to protect whiskey distillers in Northern Ireland from the imposition of tariffs after the UK leaves the EU.

**Conor Burns:**

The UK government recognises the vital role of the whiskey industry in Northern Ireland and are mindful of the potential impact of any current and future tariffs. In response to the current US tariffs on Irish Single Malt Whiskey, the UK government is working closely with the EU and US to support a negotiated settlement to the Airbus and Boeing disputes.

The UK government is committed to the long-term promotion of UK business interests on the international stage. We have had extensive engagement with the US administration on the issue of tariffs and continue to work closely with the EU, US and other WTO Members, to ensure our collective prosperity after the UK has left the EU.

**TRANSPORT****■ High Speed 2 Independent Review****Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons were members of the Oakervee Review Panel only allowed to read the final draft of the report in the office and not permitted to retain copies.

**Paul Maynard:**

This is not a matter for the Department for Transport as the Oakervee Review has been conducted independently.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the report by Lord Tony Berkeley on the review of High Speed 2.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Government commissioned Doug Oakervee to provide advice on how and whether to proceed with HS2 and his report will inform our decisions. We will of course give appropriate consideration to Lord Berkeley's personal views.

**High Speed Two****Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has (a) made and (b) commissioned on the accuracy of information provided to his Department by HS2 Ltd in each of the last 10 years.

**Paul Maynard:**

The Department for Transport continuously assesses and challenges the information provided to it by HS2 Ltd. Some of this information is factual and some takes the form of advice based on judgement. In assessing this information the Department seeks additional assurance from HS2 Ltd's internal assurance processes as well as external assurance provided by the National Audit Office, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and the HS2 Project Representative.

**Railways: Chesterfield****Dame Cheryl Gillan:**[\[380\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what changes will be made to rail services between Chesterfield and London if High Speed Two is completed.

**Paul Maynard:**

As currently planned, Chesterfield will receive HS2 services. Decisions on the national rail timetable are yet to be taken and it would be inappropriate to try to set a timetable for services on the existing railway this far ahead of their adoption.

Decisions will be taken in consultation with Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies.

**Roads: Construction****John Howell:**[\[483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeframe is for the review of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

**George Freeman:**

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

**Walkden Station: Access****Barbara Keeley:**[\[399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what criteria his Department used to decide not to award Walkden Station funding from the 2018 Access for All programme.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani:**

Stations were selected for this funding against a range of criteria including annual footfall, the incidence of disability in the area, and the availability of third party funding for the project. The Department also took into account local factors such as proximity to a hospital. Stations were also chosen to ensure a fair geographical spread of projects across the country.

The programme was heavily subscribed, meaning that many strong nominations were not successful, including Walkden.

**TREASURY**■ **Sleeping Rough****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[448\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the adequacy of funding allocated to tackling rough sleeping.

**Rishi Sunak:**

This Government is committed to ending rough sleeping by the end of the Parliament. That is why last year's Spending Round announced total resource funding of £422m to reduce rough sleeping and homelessness in 2020/21. This followed on from discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and represents a £54m increase in funding – a real terms increase of 13%.

**WALES**■ **Children: Poverty****Ruth Jones:**[\[347\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on levels of child poverty in Wales.

**Simon Hart:**

Child poverty is an important issue in Wales, and one which the UK Government remains determined to tackle. We are helping parents to move into and remain in work, offering the best opportunity for families to move out of poverty and improving children's long-term outcomes.

The Government's focus has been on radically reforming the welfare system to promote work as the most effective route out of poverty and towards financial independence.

Compared with 2010, there are 14,200 more people in employment in Wales, the number of people unemployed is at a record low of 55,000. The number of people in workless households has fallen by 90,000 since April-June 2010.

We recognise the importance of a collaborative approach in addressing complex issues such as this and I am keen to ensure that we work with the Welsh Government to tackle the causes and effects of child poverty in Wales.

## ■ Immigration: Wales

**Ruth Jones:**

[346]

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the policies set out in the immigration White Paper on Wales.

**Simon Hart:**

This Government is committed to developing a new system for immigration that is fit for purpose and based upon the skills of the individuals seeking to work in the UK, rather than the country that they are from.

On 6 September 2019, the Home Secretary commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to consider a new points-based immigration system for introduction from January 2021.

The Committee has also been commissioned to review the salary thresholds for the future immigration system and will continue with this work in addition to its work on the new points-based immigration system and report back to the Government by January 2020.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### ■ Gender Recognition Act 2004: Public Consultation

**Alberto Costa:**

[485]

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when the Government plans to publish its response to the Reform of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 consultation.

**Victoria Atkins:**

Reform of the Gender Recognition Act would have an impact across several different public services and it is imperative that any changes work effectively and have support. We have analysed the 100,000+ responses to the consultation and are working hard with colleagues across Whitehall and relevant agencies to consider the appropriate next steps. We will publish our response to the consultation once these have been agreed in due course.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

#### ■ Media Matters

##### **Minister of State for Sport, Media and the Creative Industries (Nigel Adams):** **[[HCWS27](#)]**

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has today written to Daily Mail and General Trust (DMGT) and JPI Media Publications Limited, the current and former owners of the i newspaper, to inform them that the Secretary of State for DCMS is 'minded to' issue an Intervention Notice. This relates to concerns the Secretary of State has that there may be public interest considerations - as set out in section 58 of Enterprise Act 2002 - that are relevant to the recent acquisition of the i newspaper by DMGT and that these concerns warrant further investigation.

A 'minded to' letter has therefore been issued to the parties on one public interest ground specified in section 58 of the Enterprise Act 2002:

- (2B) The need for, to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable, a sufficient plurality of views in newspapers in each market for newspapers in the United Kingdom or a part of the United Kingdom

It is important to note that the Secretary of State has not taken a final decision on intervention at this stage. In line with the statutory guidance on media mergers, the 'minded to' letter invites further representations in writing from the parties and gives them until 13 January to respond. The Secretary of State plans to make her final decision, which needs to be made on a quasi-judicial basis, on whether to issue an Intervention Notice no later than week commencing 20 January.

If the Secretary of State decides to issue an Intervention Notice, the next stage would be for Ofcom to assess and report to the Secretary of State on the public interest concerns and for the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to assess and report to her on whether a relevant merger situation has been created and any impact this may have on competition. Following these reports, the Secretary of State would need to decide whether to refer the matter for a more detailed investigation by the CMA under section 45 of the Enterprise Act 2002.

DCMS will keep Parliament updated on progress with this media merger case.



**HOME OFFICE****■ The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's report on Children Outside the UK**

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel):** [\[HCWS26\]](#)

Today the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has published its latest report, which can be found at [www.iicsa.org.uk](http://www.iicsa.org.uk).

This report relates to its investigation into Children Outside the UK. I pay tribute to the strength and courage of the victims and survivors who have shared their experiences to ensure the Inquiry can deliver its vital work.

Government will review this report and consider how to respond to its content in due course.

I would like to thank Professor Jay and her Panel for their continued work to uncover the truth, expose what went wrong in the past and to learn the lessons for the future.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Towns update**

**Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** [\[HCWS28\]](#)

Today I am announcing the opportunity for towns across England to compete in a new Town of the Year competition. The competition aims to celebrate towns' achievements in areas such as entrepreneurship, technology, community, enterprise, and integration. This will help deliver on the Prime Minister's bold agenda for the future, making this decade a time of renewal for towns and communities.

In the months ahead, I will complete a countrywide tour of all the 100 areas receiving funding under the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. This will ensure these places are receiving the practical support and investment they need on the ground so we can help local communities to deliver real change.

£16 million of funding has now been delivered to local authorities to help develop new innovative proposals in the 100 areas across England, as part of the Towns Fund. Each place will have the opportunity to bid for funding of up to £25 million.

To assist with this, I will establish a new 'Towns Hub' within my department, which will work to develop each town's investment proposals. The hubs, based across the country will have a named representative from the department, supporting local people on the development of their plan. They will also evaluate the emerging town investment plans, share best practice across towns and build on the Towns Fund investments for potential future support to towns from across government.

Finally, today I am also announcing a new expert-led advisory panel, which will be convened to advise on how we can revitalise our towns over the next year. The

specialists, including entrepreneurs and people who have delivered real change, will help shape this government's policy to support the growth agenda.

These announcements reaffirms out the Government's ambition to level up the country. It sets out how we will help restore the fabric of our towns and cities and give local people far more control in how they are invested in, and to hear directly from people in these communities on the specific support and investment they need.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Contingencies Fund Advance

**Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):** [\[HCWS23\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Transport's intention to seek an advance from the Contingencies Fund. The Department requires an advance to meet its cash requirements pending parliamentary approval of the Supplementary Estimate 2019-20.

The Department is operating within the budget agreed in the Main Estimate, however, we will be seeking an increase in our net cash requirement in the Supplementary Estimate. Accessing the contingency fund is to allow the department to move cash around the group to support existing expenditure consistent with existing Parliamentary Estimates and does not represent additional spending.

When the Main Estimate was submitted for approval, part of Network Rail's (NR) grant-in-aid was excluded. The grant funding for NR in Control Period 6 was agreed shortly before the Main Estimate was finalised and in the transition from loan funding to grant funding the full value of the required grant was not captured in the Department's Net Cash Requirement. It was the Department's intention that the final classification and cash requirement would be covered by the Supplementary Estimates process.

The advance will be repaid immediately following approval of the Supplementary Estimate. We have taken steps to review our processes and capture lessons learned, to prevent any similar issues from happening again.

Parliamentary approval for additional cash of £3.6 billion will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate for the Department for Transport. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at up to £3.6 billion will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

### ■ Rail Update

**Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):** [\[HCWS24\]](#)

Passengers in the north have had to put up with unacceptable services for too long. We understand how frustrating this has been for people and we are taking action to make sure that performance improves.

On 16 October 2019 I informed the House, through the Transport Committee, that I had issued a request for a proposal to the current Northern franchisee, Arriva Rail North (ARN) and to the Operator of Last Resort as the first phase of securing options for the

continuation of passenger services on the Northern franchise. This was triggered by concern over the financial position of ARN.

It has now been confirmed to me from the most recent available financial information that the franchise will only be able to continue for a number of months. The proposal I requested from ARN is being evaluated. Following completion of this process I will consider whether to award ARN a short-term management contract or whether to ask the Department for Transport's own Operator of Last Resort to step in and deliver passenger services. Longer-term decisions on the franchise will be made in the light of the recommendations of the Williams Rail Review.

My decision on which short-term option to choose will be made in accordance with the key principles set out in the statement on how I use my rail franchising powers. This includes:

- protecting the interests of passengers
- ensuring business and service continuity
- preserving the interests of taxpayers by ensuring value for money
- the continued quality of the franchise proposition;

In order to inform this decision, the Department will assess the extent to which each option performs against these principles. Our value for money assessment will be based on a number of criteria, including which option returns most money to the taxpayer, the risks attached to each, and the value of any improvements in passenger services. I intend to announce my decision before the end of January 2020.

To clarify, the current financial position of the Northern franchise will not impact on the railway's day-to-day operations. Services will continue to run and there will be no impact on staff.

## TREASURY

### ■ Direct Payments Funding

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Rishi Sunak):**

[\[HCWS25\]](#)

The Treasury has confirmed £2,852 million of funding across financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 to replace funding from the European Union and allow delivery of Direct Payments 2020 for farmers at the same level as the 2019 scheme.

The 2020 Direct Payment scheme across the EU is funded from the next Multiannual Financial Framework, which means that in the UK, the 2020 scheme will be funded domestically by the UK government. To provide certainty for farmers, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the devolved administrations, the Treasury has announced that the following funding will be allocated:

- £1,751 million in 2020/21 and £92 million in 2021/22 for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;

- £449 million in 2020/21 and £24 million in 2021/22 for the Scottish Government;
- £231 million in 2020/21 and £12 million in 2021/22 for the Welsh Government; and
- £279 million in 2020/21 and £15 million in 2021/22 for the Northern Ireland administration.

This funding will be ringfenced for Direct Payments and is based on an exchange rate of €1 = £0.89092, the same rate as used for Direct Payments 2019.