

Daily Report

Monday, 13 January 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 13 January 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:44 P.M., 13 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

■ Consumer Goods: Electrical Safety

Carolyn Harris:

[165]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of (a) a central recall database for electrical products and (b) a database of injuries caused by electrical products.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Consumers can find the latest information on product recalls through the Government's website including a list of recalls of household products since January 2018 - <https://productrecall.campaign.gov.uk/>. The site also provides information on how UK consumers can register their products with manufacturers in order to receive important safety messages. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is continuing to work on improvements to this site, in order to provide consumers with relevant information about product safety issues.

Access to information on products posing a safety risk is a key element of ensuring the safety of the public. OPSS is working with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) on a pilot programme to collect accident data relating to consumer products from hospital Accident and Emergency departments. OPSS will review the benefits of this pilot programme when it has concluded. This is one of a number of workstreams OPSS is leading to improve the information available to consumers on safety issues.

Carolyn Harris:

[166]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment she has made of the number of recalled second hand electrical goods being sold on online marketplaces.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is committed to protecting consumers from unsafe products. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) engages regularly with online platforms on a range of issues and its work programme includes a focus on regulating the online marketplace. The Chief Executive of OPSS wrote to online platforms when the recall of washing machines was announced by Whirlpool to ensure affected washing machines and other recalled items were not available on their platforms in order to protect public safety. OPSS is keeping the issue under close scrutiny.

■ Consumer Goods: Registration

Carolyn Harris: [\[163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps her Department is taking to increase the uptake of product registration of electrical products.

Carolyn Harris: [\[164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of mandatory registration of electrical products.

Kelly Tolhurst:

It is important that consumers can access safety information about the products in their homes so they can take appropriate action when necessary. The Government encourages consumers to register their domestic appliances and works with consumer organisations and business groups to promote this. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is conducting extensive research with 4,000 consumers to understand their attitudes to product registration and trial different approaches. Officials are developing proposals to increase registration, including mandatory registration for electrical products as part of this work.

■ Cosmetics

Ronnie Cowan: [\[1389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timeframe is for the UK cosmetics portal to go live.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The timeframe for whether the UK Cosmetics Portal needs to go live is dependent on the outcome of negotiations on the future economic relationship between the UK and the EU. The Government has made preparations so that the UK cosmetics portal can go live as soon as it is needed.

■ Cosmetics: Sales

Ronnie Cowan: [\[1388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the selling of cosmetics products in the UK will require a non-UK EU Responsible Person during the transition period of the UK leaving the EU.

Kelly Tolhurst:

It is the intention that those placing cosmetic products on the UK market during the transition period will require a responsible person based in the UK or EU.

■ Fireworks

Alison Thewliss:

[1357]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent progress her Department has made in its assessment of the use of fireworks in the UK.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is developing a fact-based evidence base on the key issues that have been raised around fireworks. This includes looking at data on noise and disturbance, anti-social behaviour, non-compliance, environmental impact, and the impact on humans and animals. This will build a fuller picture of the data around fireworks in order to identify whether further action is appropriate.

The work to develop a full evidence base is an ongoing exercise which is not time limited and we will report in due course.

■ Heating: Carbon Emissions

Grahame Morris:

[1350]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if she will make it her policy to introduce a support framework for low-carbon heating after March 2021.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

In the 2019 Spring Statement, the Government committed to support low carbon heating by accelerating the decarbonisation of our gas supplies. We will consult on how to deliver our commitment to increase the proportion of green gas in the gas grid in due course.

The budget for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) has been set out to the end of March 2021. Decisions on the future funding for the RHI and any other low-carbon heat support schemes will be a matter for future fiscal events.

Grahame Morris:

[1413]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if she will undertake a review the Standard Assessment Procedure to ensure that it includes the carbon savings that can be delivered by (a) heat pumps and (b) other electricity-based heating systems.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department is commencing work on the development of the next version of Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), SAP 11. As a part of this we are considering how we can ensure that SAP remains accurate, which will take into account a range of technologies including heat pumps and other electricity-based heating systems.

Grahame Morris:

[1414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to implement a nationwide training programme to develop high

professional standards and skills for energy efficiency and low carbon heating in the building and heat supply trades.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Building a highly skilled workforce is key to delivering our net zero ambitions on energy efficiency and low carbon heating.

In October last year, the Department announced that the TrustMark scheme would be expanded, so that any contractor installing energy efficiency measures under the Energy Company Obligation must be registered with the scheme. Industry is now delivering training to comply with the scheme, which ensures contractors meet industry standards and are committed to good customer service.

The Department is also working closely with industry to improve the offer to those seeking to train to become low carbon heating installers, and we are testing a range of options through engagement with industry, including where there might be opportunities for standardisation in the approach to training. Further details on this will be provided later this year.

■ **Hydrogen: Technology**

Damian Hinds:

[\[979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support the Government is providing to the development of hydrogen technologies.

Chris Skidmore:

Government is currently investing up to £108m in a range of innovation programmes to explore and develop the potential of low carbon hydrogen. This includes:

- Up to £20m to develop novel clean hydrogen supply methods,
- Up to £20m to test the potential for switching to hydrogen (and other low carbon fuels) across a range of industrial sectors,
- £25m to develop the safety of using 100% hydrogen in the home;
- £23m to support deployment of hydrogen vehicles and growth of refuelling infrastructure.

Government also announced the £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Production Fund in August 2019. The Fund aims to help deploy low carbon hydrogen production capacity to enable its greater use as a decarbonisation option across the energy system.

■ **Local Enterprise Partnerships**

Stephen McPartland:

[\[994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if she will make it her policy to abolish LEPs.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) continue to play an important role in providing a business voice to inform investment decisions and drive economic growth.

Government continues to support LEPs in fully implementing the recommendations in the 'Strengthening LEPs' report, published in July 2018, in order to maximise this role.

■ Minimum Wage

Alison Thewliss:

[\[1355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to her Written Statement of 7 January 2020, Official Report HCWS20, whether an equality impact assessment was carried out when setting those national minimum wage rates.

Kelly Tolhurst:

This April, the Government will be increasing the National Living Wage by 6.2% to £8.72, meeting the Government's target of reaching 60% of median earnings by 2020. Younger workers and apprentices will also see inflation beating increases in the NMW rates of between 4.6% and 6.5%. The Low Pay Commission estimates that these increases to the NMW and NLW will directly benefit over 2.8 million workers.

An equality impact assessment was carried out when setting these minimum wage rates. The evidence suggests that there will be disproportionate positive wage impacts on protected groups as a result of the proposed increase in the minimum wage rates. As in previous years, the equality impact assessment will be published within the Government's full impact assessment in due course.

■ Nuclear Power: Finance

Mrs Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[1064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if she will bring forward proposals for a new financing model for the nuclear power industry to increase levels of funding in that sector.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are committed to looking at alternative funding models that could improve the value for money of new nuclear projects. We have consulted on a Regulated Asset Base funding model as an option that could attract private sector capital at a lower cost to consumers. The consultation closed on 14 October 2019 and we are currently considering the feedback.

■ Whirlpool Corporation: Washing Machines

Carolyn Harris:

[\[160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the recall of washing machines by Whirlpool on Tuesday 17 December 2019 is being carried out at the request of the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is committed to protecting consumers from unsafe products. Legislation is in place to ensure that manufacturers only place safe products on the

market and take action where they identify a safety issue with products already on the market.

Therefore Whirlpool is responsible for the safety of the products it supplies and for taking effective action when unsafe products are discovered. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is the national regulator for product safety. It assessed the company's proposal for a recall against regulatory standards and best practice to ensure the proposed action was sufficient to address the risk and provided timely notification of consumers as to the action they need to take.

OPSS is now monitoring the recall closely and will hold the company to account if the recall is not effective.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what contact her Department has had with online marketplaces on the recall of washing machines issued by Whirlpool on Tuesday 17 December 2019.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is committed to protecting consumers from unsafe products. The Chief Executive of the Office for Product Safety and Standards, wrote to online platforms when the recall was announced by Whirlpool to ensure affected washing machines and other recalled items were not available on their platforms to protect public safety. OPSS is closely monitoring the situation.

Carolyn Harris:

[\[162\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the recall of washing machines by Whirlpool on Tuesday 17 December 2019 is effective.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is committed to protecting consumers from unsafe products. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) assessed Whirlpool's proposal for a recall of affected washing machines and served statutory notices requiring information from Whirlpool. This will enable OPSS to monitor the progress of the recall and assess whether further action is necessary to protect public safety and to hold the company to account.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Brexit: : Publicity**

Deidre Brock:

[\[146\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the Answer of 1 November 2019 to Question 7172, if he will publish the evaluations for the Get ready for Brexit campaign made under the Government Communication Service Evaluation Framework.

Chloe Smith:

Further to my answer of 1 November 2019 to Question 7172, any such publication would be released on GOV.UK.

■ **Census**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[1395\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment his Department has made of the potential risk of delay to the census 2021 after 21 March 2021.

Chloe Smith:

The 2021 Census is part of the Government's Major Projects Portfolio. As such the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) provides independent assurance for the project on behalf of the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury.

■ **Census: Sikhs**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[1396\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to R (Gill on behalf of the Sikh Federation) v The Cabinet Office [2019] EWHC 3407 (Admin), what assessment his Department has made of the potential risk of delay to the census 2021 as a result of legal challenge if the Sikh ethnic tick box response option is not included after the draft Census Order is presented to Parliament.

Chloe Smith:

It would not be appropriate to comment on an ongoing legal case.

■ **Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission**

Jon Trickett:

[\[1274\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission will require legislation to be established.

Jon Trickett:

[\[1275\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the proposed remit is for the Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission.

Jon Trickett:

[\[1276\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has for the structure of the Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission.

Jon Trickett:

[\[1277\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to identify potential members of the Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission.

Jon Trickett:

[\[1278\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether the Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission will be an independent body.

Jon Trickett:

[\[1279\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Constitution, Democracy and Rights Commission will be established.

Chloe Smith:

Further announcements will be made in due course.

■ Contingencies Fund

Alison Thewliss:

[\[1356\]](#)

To ask Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to his Written Statement of 20 December 2019, Official Report HCWS15, to which specific programmes and for which specific purposes he plans to allocate that cash advance from the Contingencies Fund.

Oliver Dowden:

The cash advance of £107.134 million will be noted in the Supplementary Estimate 2019-20. The Supplementary Estimate will be published in February 2020 and will detail each element of funding and its purpose.

■ Equal Pay

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1082\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the gender pay gap has been in each of the last 20 years.

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 [PQ1082.pdf]

■ Equal Pay: Disability

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1083\]](#)

To ask the Cabinet Office, what the pay gap for disabled people has been in each of the last 20 years.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[1084\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the pay gap has been for each ethnic minority community recorded in each of the last 20 years.

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 [PQ1083 and 1084.pdf]

■ Subversion: Russia**Neil Coyle:** [\[320\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the report of the Intelligence and Security Committee on Russia will be published.

Oliver Dowden:

In line with his responsibilities in the Justice and Security Act 2013, the Prime Minister carefully considered and approved the report, and is content that its publication would not prejudice the functions of those bodies that safeguard our national security.

We acknowledge the public's interest in the publication of the report, however the report itself is the property of the independent ISC, as such it is not for the Government to publish ISC reports; it is for the ISC to lay them before Parliament. Once a new Committee has been established, it will be up to them to choose when they wish to publish it. The process to establish a new Committee has already begun.

■ Zero Hours Contracts**Rachael Maskell:** [\[1073\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people are employed on zero-hour contracts.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1074\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many women are employed on zero-hour contracts.

Rachael Maskell: [\[1077\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people (a) aged under 16, (b) aged under 18, (c) aged under 21, (d) aged under 25 and (e) who are apprentices are employed on zero-hour contracts.

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 [PQ1073_ 1074_ 1077.pdf]

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS**■ Christianity: Oppression****Jim Shannon:** [\[299\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to provide support to (a) Kurdish Christians and (b) other persecuted Christian groups.

Andrew Selous:

(a) The Church of England is working closely to support Christian development and aid agencies to meet the humanitarian need of those who are displaced from the conflict in Syria.

The Church is continuing to encourage the Department for International Development and the wider international community to bolster the capacity of local civil society groups operating in the region. These groups, many of them faith-based, will be on the frontline of the humanitarian response in the months and years to come.

(b) The Church of England welcomes the decision by the Government to accept and implement the recommendations of the Truro Report to strengthen Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for persecuted Christians. Church of England officials are providing advice and support to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as it takes forward the implementation of these recommendations. The Church welcomes the Prime Minister's commitment made in his Christmas message to stand in solidarity with Christians everywhere and to defend their right to practice their faith.

DEFENCE**■ Armed Forces: Ambulance Services****Chris Stephens:**[\[1096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to improve UK armed forces battlefield ambulance capabilities; and if he will make a statement.

James Heapey:

As part of the programme to improve our battlefield ambulance capabilities we are undertaking a competition for vehicles that will deliver an ability to project clinical capability, including specialist teams as necessary, to the supported force with an appropriate level of protection, mobility and survivability. The ambulance capability will enable the efficient diagnosis, treatment and sustainment (in transit) for the full range of injury and illness expected.

■ Armed Forces: Children**Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[1272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he plans to introduce free wraparound childcare for armed forces families.

Johnny Mercer:

To make life easier for Armed Forces families balancing the competing demands of Service with home life, the Government has committed to providing funding for wrap-around childcare. Wrap-around care includes breakfast and after school clubs; these facilities provide modern dual-working families with the flexibility they need to manage their careers alongside homelife. Discussions are underway to consider the most efficient means of providing funding to families of children between the ages of four

and 11 and to confirm timescales for implementation. In parallel to these discussions I am setting up a dedicated childcare team with immediate effect, to help families by working with military establishments to demonstrate need and encourage local authorities to build capacity.

■ Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement

Chris Stephens:

[1098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress he has made on procurement under the (a) MRVP, (b) MIV and (c) Challenger 2 Life Extension programmes; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The Multi-Role Vehicle - Protected (MRV-P) programme is being delivered in two packages. The Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) has been identified as the preferred option for Package 1, Command, Liaison and Logistic Vehicles, procured through a US Foreign Military Sales case. A decision on the procurement of JLTV is due this year. For Package 2, Troop Carrying Vehicles and Future Protected Battlefield Ambulances, the competition is ongoing. Subject to the conclusion of current negotiations and internal approvals, the competition winner is planned to be on contract later this year.

For the Mechanised Infantry Vehicle programme, a contract was signed on 4 November 2019 between OCCAR and ARTEC. The Ministry of Defence aims to have the first vehicles delivered in 2023.

On the Challenger 2 Life Extension Programme (CR2 LEP), further to the expanded Assessment Phase, work is ongoing and current plans are for an investment decision in late 2020.

■ Army: Recruitment

Liz Saville Roberts:

[1415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will place in the Library a copy of the media buying brief for the 2020 army recruitment campaign.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Media Buying Brief for the 2020 Army recruitment campaign will be placed in the Library of the House shortly. It is currently being reviewed for any commercial sensitivities.

The Army's 2020 campaign is designed to highlight how being in the Army gives personnel a strong sense of self-belief and confidence that few other careers can. Early indications are that this campaign has been received well, with strong early January application numbers.

■ Defence: Labour Turnover

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 21 October 2019 to Question 105, Defence: Labour Turnover, what plans his Department has to collect data on the number of workers leaving the UK defence industry.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence has no plans to collect data on the number of workers leaving the UK defence industry.

As part of our Defence Prosperity Programme we are working with the Defence Growth Partnership and the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy to develop a new Joint Economic Data Hub (JEDHub) within the UK Defence Solutions Centre at Farnborough to improve how we quantify the defence sector's contribution to the UK economy.

■ HMS Dauntless

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[1301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timeframe is for HMS Dauntless to return to active duty.

James Heappey:

HMS DAUNTLESS will be the first of the Type 45 Destroyers to receive power and propulsion upgrades this spring and will return to sea for trials in 2021. Following completion of these sea trials she will return to the Fleet.

■ Iran: Electronic Warfare

Dan Jarvis:

[\[1376\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the risk of cyber-attack in the UK from Iran as a result of the assassination of Qasem Soleimani.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) places a high priority on assuring its systems and dedicates considerable resources to assessing cyber threats; we continue to apply all necessary mitigations to combat these threats. However, for the purpose of safeguarding national security, the MOD does not comment publicly on the specifics of our assessments and activities.

Dan Jarvis:

[\[1377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to protect the UK from Iranian-backed cyber-attacks.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Cyber is a tier 1 threat and remains a national priority. The National Cyber Security Strategy, published on 1 November 2016, sets out ambitious policies to protect the

UK in cyber space, supported by a £1.9 billion transformational investment. Our vision for 2021 is that the UK is secure and resilient to cyber threats, prosperous and confident in the digital world.

To operate and defend our networks and provide worldwide assured communications for defence, our Global Operations and Security Control Centre at Ministry of Defence Corsham is operational 24/7, equipped with sophisticated cyber defence capabilities.

Dan Jarvis: [\[1379\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on the risk of cyber-attack from Iran.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

The Secretary of State for Defence regularly speaks to his US counterparts about a range of topics, including the cyber threat from a wide range of hostile state actors.

■ Iran; Israel and Saudi Arabia

Scott Benton: **[R]** [\[458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) Israel and (b) Saudi Arabia to help ensure the adequacy of defences against the increased military threat to those countries from Iran.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

Following the attacks on Saudi oil production facilities on 14 September 2019, we are working with other international partners and the Saudi Ministry of Defence to consider how best to improve the effectiveness of Saudi air defence systems.

With Israel, the UK undertakes routine Defence Engagement, including joint exercises, exchanges, visits, and training. In this current period of tension between Iran and the US, Israel has not approached the UK for any additional support.

■ Islamic State

Scott Benton: [\[455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he is taking to work his (a) Iraqi and (b) Turkish counterparts to tackle the insurgent threat posed by ISIS.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan:

As part of the Coalition, the UK has provided support to the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces, which has been crucial in the fight against Daesh. We have trained over 114,000 Iraqi Security Forces and Peshmerga personnel to help build their capacity to ensure Daesh's enduring defeat.

Due to current circumstances, we have paused training with Iraqi Security Forces but we continue to train Kurdish forces in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. And we hope to resume counter-Daesh operations and training with the Iraqi Security Forces as

quickly as possible, but this will not be at the expense of the right force protection measures for UK troops.

We have been continuously engaged with Turkey as a NATO Ally from the outset in countering the threat from Daesh. Following the incursion into Northeast Syria, we welcome the ceasefire and we hope that this will allow us to continue to protect our mutual counter-terrorism interests.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones: [43]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which of his Department's procurement contracts exceeded the value of £1 billion in financial year 2019-20.

Mr Kevan Jones: [44]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which of his Department's procurement contracts exceeded the value of £500 million in financial year 2019-20.

Mr Kevan Jones: [45]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which of his Department's procurement contracts exceeded the value of £100 million in financial year 2019-20.

James Heappey:

Within financial year 2019-20, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has awarded nine contracts above £100 million, one contract over £500 million and one contract over £1 billion. A list of these contracts is below.

The table below represents contracts awarded up until 19 December 2019 and only includes direct contracts with suppliers; it does not include other procurement arrangements, for example, the international agreement with Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation to procure the Mechanised Infantry Vehicle. Extensions to existing contracts and phased or additional investments made as part of existing contracts are also not included.

CONTRACT TITLE	CURRENT SUPPLIER NAME
Over £1 billion	
Type 31 Design & Build Contract	Devonport Royal Dockyard Ltd
Over £500 million	
Capita Business Services Ltd	Provision of Defence Fire and Rescue Services
Over £100 million	
Pressured Water Reactor3 (PWR3) Manufacturing Contract	Rolls-Royce Submarines Ltd

CONTRACT TITLE	CURRENT SUPPLIER NAME
Strategic Weapons System in Service Support	Lockheed Martin UK Strategic Systems Ltd
Tempest Follow-on Contract	Rolls-Royce PLC
Tempest Follow-on Contract	BAE Systems (Operations) Ltd
Tempest Follow-on Contract	Leonardo MW Ltd
Microsoft M365 E5 Software Renewal	Software Box Ltd
EJISS (EJ200 In Service Support)	Rolls-Royce PLC
Client Side Support to the SKYNET Delivery Team	PA Consulting Services Ltd
Torpedoes Repair and Maintenance Contract	BAE Systems Surface Ships Ltd

Information about the contracts that we place with industry is available on GOV.uk as part of our MOD Trade, Industry and Contracts statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-trade-and-industry-index>.

In addition, MOD contracts worth over £10,000 are published on the Government's Contracts Finder website at: <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>.

Mr Kevan Jones: [46]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's current US dollar contract liability is.

James Heappey:

The total value of open contracts that have been placed with suppliers transacting in US Dollars is currently \$6.7 billion.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Procurement

Chris Stephens: [1027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent progress he has made on the procurement of Fleet Support ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Kevan Jones: [47]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, for what reasons the decision was taken to suspend the tendering process for the Fleet Solid Support Ships on 6 November 2019; and whether this decision has reduced the chances of the tendering process being concluded within the 2019-20 financial year.

James Heappey:

The decision to stop the Fleet Solid Support ship competition was taken because it had become clear that a value for money solution could not be reached. The Ministry of Defence is currently assessing the options, and as part of this process will review

the requirement and any procurement strategy. It is not possible to provide any further details until this work has been completed.

■ **Type 23 Frigates**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[1302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) original and (b) current timeframe is for the conclusion of the Major Life Extension (LIFEX) programme for the Type 23 frigates; and what additional cost to the public purse has been incurred as a result of a change to the original timeframe.

James Heappey:

The Type 23 Frigate class is continually being updated and upgraded to meet new threats or to replace obsolete technology. This is achieved via a Through Life Management Plan rather than any singular Major Life Extension programme.

With regards to the cost of the programme, this draws together a number of capability enhancements and the information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Unmanned Air Vehicles: Disclosure of Information**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[950]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Answer of 25 February 2019 to Question 223964, Unmanned Air Vehicles, for what reasons his Department did not disclose information about the collapse of a port main-landing gear in an incident involving an MQ-9 Reaper on 17 October 2015.

James Heappey:

The previous answer of 25 February 2019 to Question 223964 is still extant. The collapse of a port main-landing gear was irrelevant as the MQ-9 Reaper had reached the end of its service life.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Loneliness**

Tracy Brabin:

[1067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department has spent on tackling loneliness in each (a) region and (b) constituent part of the UK in each of the last three years.

Helen Whately:

DCMS has secured over £20million of new grant funding for organisations across England working on tackling loneliness and bringing people together.

This includes the £11.5m Building Connections Fund (delivered in partnership with The National Lottery Community Fund and Co-op Foundation), which launched in 2018. In addition, The People's Postcode Lottery has committed £5million of players

money to top up its existing grants to charities that combat loneliness, and the Health Lottery has committed £4m to charities that work to improve social links in areas facing disadvantage across England.

Government has since granted an additional £1,369,174 to the Co-op Foundation to tackle youth loneliness via co-design and community spaces.

£2,369,174 of this funding was contributed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

To date, government has spent a total of £6,775,297 on work to tackle loneliness across England through these funds.

The regional breakdown of the Building Connections Fund spend to date is as follows. It is not possible to separate out the DCMS element of this spend:

REGION	TOTAL
East Midlands	£717,560
East of England	£841,432
London	£1,254,052
North East	£933,572
North West	£822,266
South East	£1,017,672
South West	£1,225,764
West Midlands	£1,204,668
Yorkshire and the Humber	£1,082,361
Multi-region / National Projects	£1,049,572

The remainder of the £11.5 million is committed to administrative and evaluation costs. So far, £5,406,123.16 of the government contribution of £5,500,000 has been spent. All government funding will be spent by 31st March 2020.

The regional breakdown for the £1,369,174 granted to Co-op Foundation to tackle youth loneliness using co-design and community spaces funding is as follows.

REGION	TOTAL
East Midlands	£112,634
East of England	£79,132
London	£268,030
North East	£171,132
North West	£178,578
South East	£106,117
South West	£180,150
West Midlands	£113,406
Yorkshire and the Humber	£159,995

In addition, DCMS has spent over £1 million on other cross-England work on tackling loneliness as set out in the government's loneliness strategy, including the Let's Talk Loneliness campaign, the data pilots with local authorities and the cost of hosting the cross-government loneliness team.

As loneliness is a devolved issue, there has been no DCMS spend in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Staff

Tracy Brabin:

[1053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many civil servants in her Department work on projects relating to (a) digital, (b) culture, (c) media and (d) sport.

Nigel Adams:

At 31 December 2019 DCMS employed 1,264 Civil Servants, the majority of whom worked directly on projects relating to digital, culture, media and sport as set out in the table below. The staff not included in this table are either part of the corporate centre (e.g Finance and HR), part of cross-cutting teams working across multiple policy areas (e.g the department's Central Analytical Team) or part of teams which aren't directly linked to digital, culture, media or sport (e.g. the Office for Civil Society and the Gambling team).

WORK AREA	CIVIL SERVANTS
Digital	542
Culture	116
Media	57
Sport	50

The information in the table above relates to Civil Servants on DCMS' payroll. This includes permanent staff, those on fixed-term contracts, those on paid loan/secondment in/out of DCMS and those on paid maternity leave.

Tracy Brabin: [\[1058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many civil servants were employed by her Department in each year between 2017 and 2020.

Nigel Adams:

The number of Civil Servants employed by DCMS in each year between 2017 and 2020 is as follows:

DATE	HEADCOUNT
31 March 2017	656
31 March 2018	887
31 March 2019	1,188
31 December 2019 (latest available)	1,264

The department's headcount has steadily increased over the past four years due to an expanded policy remit and EU Exit preparations.

The information in the table above relates to Civil Servants on DCMS' payroll. This includes permanent staff, those on fixed-term contracts, those on paid loan/secondment in/out of DCMS and those on paid maternity leave.

This information is included in the DCMS Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Football

Tracy Brabin: [\[1062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much her Department has spent on grassroots football for (a) men, (b) women and (c) in total in each of the last three years.

Nigel Adams:

Through Sport England, Government is investing £24.6m in The Football Association over the course of 2016-21 for its work on grassroots participation, the football talent pathway, and coaching programmes. Within this, there is no specific ringfencing of funding between men's and women's programmes apart from £2.6m which is specifically reserved for women and girls talent programmes.

Separately, Government invested £18m in football facilities through the Football Foundation in each of 2017, 2018 and 2019. It is not possible to separate out the investment amounts by gender.

The Government has also committed to investing £550m into grassroots football facilities over the next 10 years to support plans to bid for the 2030 Men's FIFA Football World Cup.

■ Football Association: Bet365**Tracy Brabin:**[\[1440\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Football Association on its partnership with Bet365.

Nigel Adams:

I have spoken with the Chief of the Executive of the Football Association to hear the background of the sale of rights to IMG, which in turn resulted in Bet365 and other betting companies providing live streaming of FA Cup fixtures to account holders. Betting and Gaming Council rights holders in this deal have relinquished any exclusivity over these rights, so that they may now be streamed outside of betting environments, and the FA are exploring how they can rescind these deals. I shall be meeting with the FA this week to discuss their next steps.

■ Football: World Cup**Dan Jarvis:**[\[R\] \[1373\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the Prime Minister on hosting the 2030 FIFA World Cup in the North of England.

Nigel Adams:

The government will fully support the Football Associations in their plan to bid for the men's 2030 FIFA World Cup, including through investing an extra £550 million in grassroots football over the next 10 years. The government is committed to seeing the benefits of hosting the tournament spread across the country. The Prime Minister regularly engages with his ministers on all manifesto commitments.

■ National Lottery: Tickets

Tracy Brabin: **[1449]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions she has had with the National Lottery on releasing information on the geographical location of where tickets are purchased.

Helen Whately:

Following the discussion at the DCMS Select Committee on 24 October 2018, Ministers at the time wrote to Camelot who confirmed that they do not publish this information because it is commercially sensitive.

■ Religion: National Lottery

Tracy Brabin: **[1443]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate she has made of the proportion of (a) all lottery funding support bids and (b) successful bids for lottery funding support, from religious organisations.

Helen Whately:

Good cause income raised by the National Lottery funds arts, heritage, sport and communities (covering health, education, environment and charitable causes). It is distributed at arms length of Government by twelve Lottery Distributing Bodies.

Religious and faith based organisations are eligible to apply for National Lottery funding and are typically required to demonstrate that projects will benefit the wider community and will not have any religious content.

Information about the religious status of organisations that apply for grants is not consistently collected, so it has not been possible to analyse the data on this basis.

■ S4C: Public Appointments

Kevin Brennan: **[1296]**

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

Nigel Adams:

The appointment of the Chair of S4C is an ongoing priority for DCMS. An announcement regarding the preferred candidate will be made in due course prior to the candidate appearing before a Pre-Appointment hearing held by the Welsh Affairs and DCMS Select Committees. An interim Chair is currently in place.

EDUCATION**■ Breakfast Clubs: Schools****Angela Rayner:**[\[1022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's news story of 4 January 2020, Free meals and summer holiday activities for children, what estimate he has made of the number of children who will receive a free school breakfast as a result of the additional Government funding of up to £11.8 million to support disadvantaged families.

Angela Rayner:[\[1023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's news story of 4 January 2020, Free meals and summer holiday activities for children, what estimate he has made of the number of children who will be eligible for a free school breakfast as a result of the additional Government funding of up to £11.8 million to support disadvantaged families.

Michelle Donelan:

The department is investing up to a further £11.8 million into the National School Breakfast Programme using funds from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy revenues. This additional funding will kick-start or improve sustainable breakfast clubs in up to a further 650 schools. The total investment into this programme over 2018-2021 will be up to £35 million which will benefit up to 2,450 schools.

A contract was awarded to Family Action in March 2018 and will run until March 2021. This contract is based on recruiting schools in the most disadvantaged areas of the country, including the department's Opportunity Areas, to help ensure every child gets the best start in life. Our targets are therefore based on the number of schools we support, rather than targeting a specific number of children. Family Action have reported in the Food for Thought Progress Report 2019 that there are already more than 1,800 schools benefitting from the programme and estimate 280,000 pupils receiving a breakfast meal per day.

We will provide further information on the impact of the programme once the contract has concluded.

■ Pre-school Education: Closures**Rachael Maskell:**[\[1088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many maintained nurseries have closed in each of the last five years.

Nick Gibb:

Between 1 January 2015 and 1 January 2020^[1], 25 maintained nursery schools have closed. The table below sets out the number of outright closures and closures in order to merge with another school (amalgamation) in each of the past five years.

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Maintained nursery schools that have closed	2	1	2	6	3
Maintained nursery schools that have closed for amalgamation	3	5	1	2	0

[1] This data has been taken from Get Information about Schools (GIAS, the Department's register of schools). Responsibility for updating GIAS is shared between the Department, schools, and local authorities and therefore we cannot guarantee the accuracy of this data.

■ Pupil Exclusions

Marsha De Cordova: [1059]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) school students and (b) disabled school students were excluded from school in 2019.

Marsha De Cordova: [1060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) school students and (b) Black, African and Caribbean school students were excluded in 2019.

Marsha De Cordova: [1061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) school students and (b) BAME school students were excluded in 2019.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held centrally, as data on exclusions in 2019 is not yet available.

The National Statistics release 'Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England 2017 to 2018' includes information on the number and rate of permanent and fixed period exclusions.

The release is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2017-to-2018>.

In the national tables, table 1 has overall exclusion rates. The Department does not collect exclusion data for disabled students separately. Table 5 has exclusion rates by Special Educational Needs provision. Table 8 has exclusion information by ethnic group.

■ Schools: Finance

Paul Howell:

[R] [\[1034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the national funding formula for schools on levels of socio-economic inequality (a) in Sedgefield constituency and (b) nationally.

Nick Gibb:

The National Funding Formula commits extra funding to pupils with additional needs, including deprivation, low prior attainment, English as an additional language and mobility. This is because evidence shows that pupils with these characteristics are more likely to fall behind and need extra support to reach their full potential. In 2020-21, £6.3 billion will be allocated to 5-16 year olds with additional needs in England. Areas with high levels of additional needs will attract more funding and as a result Sedgefield receives higher than average per pupil funding. Next year, primary schools and secondary schools in Sedgefield will, on average, attract £4,496 and £5,609 per pupil respectively. This is above the national average of £4,352 for primary schools and of £5,578 for secondary schools.

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to increase the funding streams of all schools in England.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has committed to increase core schools funding by £2.6 billion next year, and by £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively. This has enabled a 5% increase to school funding next year alone, which will continue to be allocated via the National Funding Formula – ensuring that funding is based on schools' and pupils' needs and characteristics. On top of this, the Department will provide £1.5 billion per year to fund additional pension costs for teachers. As a result, every school will attract an increase to their core schools funding per pupil next year.

■ Schools: Inspections

Angela Rayner:

[\[1434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's press release, Raising expectations of children and parents, high standards for teachers and tackling bad behaviour: how schools in left behind areas can improve, published on 8 January 2020, whether he plans to fund Ofsted to trial a longer, deeper inspection approach with some of those schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is committed to tackling entrenched underperformance in schools wherever it exists.

Last September, following confirmation of the biggest funding boost for schools in a decade, totaling an additional £14 billion over three years, the Department announced that we will provide more support for persistently underperforming

schools from high-performing, experienced school leaders. These mechanisms are now being put in place.

We also confirmed that we would work with Ofsted so that it can provide more detailed analysis on areas of improvement for these schools. We have been doing so and will be confirming details in due course. This announcement can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-drive-to-continue-boosting-standards-in-schools>.

On 10 January, the Department also launched a public consultation on removing the exemption from routine inspection for schools previously rated outstanding by Ofsted. The aim is to lift the exemption from September 2020, subject to the consultation outcome and parliamentary approval. Ending the exemption will mean all parents have up to date information about every school and can be confident that their children's schools are continuing to deliver the best education. The Department will provide additional funding for these inspections for 2020-21, and funding for subsequent years will be determined through the forthcoming Spending Review.

The press release can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/raising-expectations-of-children-and-parents-high-standards-for-teachers-and-tackling-bad-behaviour-how-schools-in-left-behind-areas-can-improve>.

■ Sign Language: Education

Michael Fabricant:

[384]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) adding the teaching of basic English Sign Language to the curriculum and (b) providing support and guidance to schools in the teaching of sign language.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to supporting the education of all children and young people with special educational needs or a disability, including those with a hearing impairment.

The Department is aiming to introduce a GCSE in British Sign Language as soon as possible, so long as it proves possible to develop a qualification that meets the rigorous requirements that apply to all GCSEs. The Department is currently working with subject experts to develop draft subject content.

Schools may choose to offer basic sign language in their individual school curriculum or include it as part of their extra-curricular activities programme.

■ Special Educational Needs

Mr Steve Reed:

[1419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all mainstream schools can offer an inclusive education to all children with special educational needs.

Michelle Donelan:

We are committed to inclusive education of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. This commitment is reflected in the law on SEND and underpins all aspects of the SEND system. We have made our expectation clear that every school is a school for pupils with SEND and that every teacher is a teacher of pupils with SEND.

To support mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils with SEND effectively, we will provide, for example, an extra £780 million in high needs funding next year. This figure is an increase of 12% compared to this year, bringing the total amount for supporting pupils with the most complex needs (including pupils in mainstream schools who have an education, health and care plan) to £7.2 billion. This increase will be the largest year-on-year increase since the high needs funding block was created in 2013.

We have also launched a review of the SEND system, which is considering how the system has evolved since 2014, how it can be made to work best for all families and how we can ensure quality of provision is the same across the country. The review is also looking at how all schools and colleges can provide the best possible support to enable all children and young people with SEND to thrive and prepare for adulthood.

Our commitment to support for pupils with SEND is also reflected in the teacher-training approach that special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching. As part of teachers' initial training, qualified teachers must have demonstrated their ability to recognise and respond to a wide range of pupils' needs, including pupils with SEND.

Additionally, a SEND schools' workforce contract worth £3.9 million has been in place over the period 2018 to 2020 to equip the workforce to deliver high quality teaching to pupils with all types of SEND.

■ Students: Loans

Dr Matthew Offord:

[1442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to introduce Sharia compliant student loans.

Chris Skidmore:

The government remains committed to introducing an Alternative Student Finance product for tuition fee and maintenance loans. Details on implementation will follow the conclusion of the review of post-18 education and funding.

■ Teachers: North West**Ms Angela Eagle:****[1287]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to increase the numbers of teachers in (a) the North West, (b) Merseyside, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey.

Nick Gibb:

Ensuring the whole country has a strong teaching profession is a top priority for the Government. Last year the Department launched the first ever integrated strategy to recruit and retain more teachers. The strategy includes the biggest teaching reform in a generation, the Early Career Framework (ECF). The ECF provides new teachers with the solid foundations for a successful career in teaching, backed by £130 million a year in funding when fully rolled out in 2021. The Department has also committed to plans to raise starting salaries for new teachers to £30,000 by 2022-23, putting teaching on a par with other top graduate professions.

Beyond this, we are delivering some targeted initiatives that will benefit the North West, Merseyside, and Wirral. Schools in Greater Manchester will benefit from early roll out of the ECF in September 2020, with access to improved support for their early career teachers, including high-quality training.

The Department is also piloting a number of financial incentives. Teachers' Student Loan Reimbursement is being offered to languages and science teachers in 7 local authorities throughout the North West identified as having high need for teachers, including 3 in Merseyside. Additionally, the Department is offering mathematics, chemistry, physics and languages early-career retention payments with additional uplifts for teachers in 11 local authorities throughout the North West, including 4 in Merseyside.

The Department has made available over £20 million of scholarships funding in 2017-19 to support teachers and leaders in Category 5 and 6 areas to take up a reformed National Professional Qualifications, doubling our initial intended investment. There are 15 category 5 or 6 local authority districts throughout the North West, and 6 in Merseyside including Wirral. The aim of the investment is to retain good teachers in these areas and support their professional development.

In addition to this, the Department has set aside £30 million in tailored support for schools struggling with teacher recruitment and retention. This support is designed to help schools improve existing plans, join national programmes, build local partnerships or fund new initiatives. Throughout the North West, 36 schools have received support as part of this programme, including 2 schools in Merseyside.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Air Pollution: Urban Areas****Catherine West:**[\[1423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what additional steps her Department is taking to improve air quality in inner-city areas.

Sarah Owen:[\[1804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to support improvements to air quality in the parts of the country with the worst levels of air pollution.

Rebecca Pow:

Air quality is a key policy area for this Government and a great deal of work is being done to tackle air pollution. Implementing the commitments set out in the Clean Air Strategy, which was published last year, will help to clean up our air faster and more effectively in towns and cities.

The upcoming Environment Bill, which will shortly be reintroduced to Parliament, will deliver some key commitments in the Strategy. This includes introducing a duty to set a legally binding target for fine particulate matter concentrations, the pollutant of most harm to health. The Bill will also ensure that local authorities have a clear framework for tackling air pollution, and are better able to tackle a key source of fine particulate matter emissions – domestic solid fuel burning. It will also provide the Government with new powers to enforce environmental standards for vehicles and machinery.

The Government's Joint Air Quality Unit is also working with a number of local authorities to deliver compliance with legal limits for nitrogen dioxide in the shortest possible time. The unit provides these local authorities with guidance and support to develop local plans to identify and implement suitable measures to achieve this objective, supported by £572 million dedicated funding. In some instances local authorities will be implementing charging clean air zones to deliver these reductions, and the Government is working closely with these authorities to ensure the necessary IT systems are in place and ready to use.

Further, Defra's Air Quality Grant Programme provides funding to local authorities, funding projects in local communities to tackle air pollution and reduce emissions affecting schools, businesses and residents. Defra has awarded over £60 million in funding to local authorities since the grant started in 1997.

These measures will improve air quality across the country, including in inner-city areas.

■ Birds

Sir Christopher Chope:

[1270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if his Department will respond to the Wild Bird Populations in the UK 1970-2018 Report; and what steps his Department is taking to tackle the decline in the wild bird population in England.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra published the Wild Bird Populations in the UK 1970-2018 Report on 7 November 2019. The statistics show that whilst the average population trend for all bird species has changed relatively little compared with 40 years ago, there has been a marked difference in the position of individual species, with some species increasing and some species decreasing.

In England, agri-environment schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship, are the principal means of improving habitat provision for farmland birds and the wider environment on farmland by providing funding for activities such as conserving and restoring habitats including woodland creation. The Government's future approach to farm support will enhance the public goods that agriculture delivers and will play a pivotal role in meeting the legally-binding commitments on air, on water, and nature by which will be set out in the Environment Bill.

The network in England of over 4,000 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) protects the habitats of many species including wild birds. Many of these sites are also recognised for their international importance. These include [87 Special Protection Areas](#) (SPAs) classified to protect the habitats of rare and vulnerable wild birds. Our 25 year Environment Plan (25YEP) includes a goal to restore 75% of SSSIs by area to favourable condition by 2042.

Since 2012 Defra has created four new marine SPAs and extended eight others to protect foraging areas seabirds use while breeding. The Government is also developing a UK Plan of Action on Seabird Bycatch, working closely with our partners and stakeholders, in order to understand and mitigate the impacts of bycatch on seabird populations in UK waters.

Unsustainable harvesting and habitat degradation along the migratory routes of some UK species contributes to population declines. That is why the UK continues to work with international partners through, for example, the treaty on the Conservation of Migratory Species and the African Eurasian Water Birds Agreement, to conserve migratory species and habitats internationally.

The Government is developing a new Nature Strategy will set our ambition to conserve and enhance England's biodiversity, including wild birds, and deliver on our global targets and the goals set out under our 25YEP.

■ Fishing Catches

Luke Pollard:

[\[236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for what reasons under 10m fishing vessels in England are being required, under new licence conditions, to report all fish caught and landed when there are de minimis exemptions for over 10m vessels.

George Eustice:

For paper and electronic recording for vessels over 10m in length, there is an exemption on recording fish under 50kg in the log book. However, this information is supplemented by an additional requirement for a landing declaration which provides accurate weights of all fish caught. A similar exemption was considered for under 10m vessels, however, given some stocks catch limits are very small, applying a de-minimis exemption would not be appropriate.

Luke Pollard:

[\[239\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether European Court of Auditors reports have raised specific concerns on the information provided to the Marine Management Organisation on sales notes not providing sufficient data on catches by under 10m fishing vessels.

George Eustice:

In September 2013 the European Commission (EC) issued the UK with a European Union (EU) Pilot infraction letter that included concerns over control of under 10m vessel landings in south east England. A subsequent independent survey undertaken in response to the EC's concerns demonstrated that there were significant gaps in the data provided by sales notes and other documentation.

■ Fly-tipping

Alberto Costa:

[\[418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the powers available to local authorities to prosecute people responsible for fly-tipping.

Rebecca Pow:

Local authorities have a range of powers available to tackle fly-tipping. These include the power to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) of up to £400 for fly-tipping offences, including to those caught fly-tipping and householders who pass their waste to a fly-tipper. Local authorities also have enhanced powers to search and seize vehicles of suspected fly-tippers. Powers to issue FPNs provide local authorities with an efficient mechanism to hold fly-tipping perpetrators to account without having to go to court, which can be a time consuming, resource-intensive and expensive process. Additionally, the ability to issue FPNs can deter potential fly-tippers from fly-tipping in the first place.

Local authorities also have the ability to take those accused of fly-tipping to court. If a fly-tipper is convicted, it is punishable by up to £50,000 or 12 months imprisonment if convicted in a Magistrates' Court. The offence can attract an unlimited fine and up to 5 years imprisonment if convicted in a Crown Court. Defra has already worked with the Sentencing Council to amend sentencing guidance for magistrates to ensure that they are aware of local fixed penalty levels for these offences. The Resources and Waste Strategy published in December 2018 includes a number of commitments to improve this, including working with the Sentencing Council to increase magistrates' awareness of the prevalence and importance of waste crime, helping local authorities improve the quality of cases and ensuring that the Environmental Offences Definitive Guideline is kept up to date and that magistrates are effectively trained on it.

Recent figures showed that there were 76,000 fixed penalty notices issued by local authorities in 2018/19, up by 11% from 2017/18. Prosecution outcome figures from 2018/19 also showed that the value of total fines increased by 29% to £1,090,000.

■ Plastics

Grahame Morris:

[1348]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to (a) reduce plastic pollution and (b) increase plastic recycling.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government's Resources and Waste Strategy (RWS) for England, published in December 2018, sets out our plans to reduce, reuse, and recycle more plastic than we do now. Our target is to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the lifetime of the 25 Year Environment Plan, but for the most problematic plastics we are going faster - that is why we are working towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.

We have already made good progress. The Government's 5p plastic bag charge has led to a 90% reduction in the use of plastic carrier bags in the main retailers, and last year we consulted on plans to extend the charge to all retailers and on increasing the minimum charge to at least 10p. A summary of responses will be published in due course. We have also introduced a world-leading ban on the sale of microbeads in rinse-off personal care products.

The Government is committed to increasing recycling rates. The Environment Bill, which was cited in the Queen's Speech, introduces legislation so that a core set of materials, including plastics, will be collected from households and businesses from 2023. We will also introduce measures, through an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, to encourage producers to use plastic packaging that can be recycled. The Government also consulted on proposals to introduce a world-leading new tax on the production and import of plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content and the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme. Together these measures will increase the quality and quantity of plastics collected for recycling.

■ **Plastics: Waste Disposal**

Grahame Morris:

[\[1349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking to reduce the amount of recyclable plastics going to landfill.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government is committed to increasing recycling rates. The Queen's Speech committed the Government to bring forward our ambitious Environment Bill which introduces legislation so that a core set of materials, including plastics, will be collected from households and businesses from 2023. We will also introduce measures, through an extended producer responsibility (EPR) scheme, to encourage producers to use plastic packaging that can be recycled. The Government also consulted on proposals to introduce a world-leading new tax on the production and import of plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content and the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). Together these measures will increase the quality and quantity of plastics collected for recycling.

The Government also continues to incentivise the diversion of waste away from landfill, through the Landfill Tax. For example, the standard rate of Landfill Tax, which applies to household waste, has increased from £11 to £88.95 per tonne between 2000 and 2018; the proportion of local authority collected waste sent to landfill decreased from 79.0% to 10.8% over a similar period (2000/01 to 2018/19).

We will soon consult on proposals to implement changes made to the Landfill Directive as part of the Circular Economy Package, which will restrict waste that has been separately collected for recycling, such as plastic waste, being accepted at landfill sites.

■ **Tree Felling: New Forest**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[256\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what consultations were conducted with Burley Parish Council in advance of Forestry England commencing felling at Slap Bottom.

Rebecca Pow:

The application for a felling licence was placed on the public register for consultation by Forest Services for a period of 28 days from 25 September 2019; this period was subsequently extended to accommodate the parish council. Officials from Forest Services and Forestry England had a meeting with local residents on 22 October 2019. A further meeting took place on 18 November 2019, which included representatives from Burley Parish Council. At these meetings an explanation of the work proposed was provided and questions answered. Adjustments were made to the proposed felling area as a result. Forestry England officials continued to respond to further emails from Burley Parish Council over the following days and also spoke by telephone.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ **Armed Conflict: Children****Mrs Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[427\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to 2019 Unicef data recording more than 170,000 grave violations against children in war zones since 2010, what steps his Department is taking in co-operation with other countries to improve children's safety in those areas.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The UK is firmly committed to protecting children in armed conflict. We use our membership as a UN Security Council Permanent Member to prioritise conflict-related child protection issues in Council discussions and ensure that UN operations have the capacity and capability to address them. The UK is the largest single financial contributor to the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict, contributing £800,000 in the last five years. The office works with parties to conflict that are committing grave violations to develop and implement action plans with the UN to (1) verify and release any child soldiers associated with armed groups and forces, (2) prevent re-recruitment and (3) the perpetration of other grave violations. The UK increased our funding for the 2019/20 financial year by a further £450,000 to the SRSG's core mandate and £50,000 for activities relating to the SRSG's Global Coalition for Reintegration.

In 2018, the UK endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles, both key mechanisms for preventing grave violations against children. We collaborated with Sweden and others to agree Resolution 2427, adopted by the UN Security Council in July 2018, to strengthen protection mechanisms for children in armed conflict. We delivered a joint statement to the Human Rights Council in March 2019, reiterating our strong support for the mandate of the SRSG for Children And Armed Conflict, and called upon States to increase accountability for perpetrators of all six grave violations. Last year, the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UK signed up to the *UN Voluntary Global Pledge – for Every Child, Every Right*, which called for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to upholding and protecting child rights in the 21st century, and promoted children's perspectives in the development and assessment of strategies and programmes designed to realise their rights.

■ **Armenia: Gold****Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[1071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 5 September 2019 to Question 285002 on Armenia: Gold, whether UK public money in Lydian International's Amulsar mine via UK membership of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Financial Corporation is defined as an official UK investment.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[1072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department conducted a (a) cost-benefit and (b) risk analysis to its investment, via the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Finance Corporation, and support for Lydian International's Amulsar mine.

Christopher Pincher:

The United Kingdom's membership and support for international financial institutions helps advance sustainable and inclusive growth in developing economies. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Financial Corporation (IFC) have robust environmental, social and governance safeguards and review projects and investments to seek to ensure consistency with these. The United Kingdom uses its role as a leading shareholder of the EBRD and IFC Board to encourage robust standards to be met.

■ **Burma: Rohingya**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[1342\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the International Court of Justice on the case of *The Gambia v. Myanmar*.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We are following proceedings in The Hague closely and welcome the International Court of Justice's consideration of whether genocide has occurred. The UK is not currently involved in the case. UK Ministers have consistently expressed their profound concern at the horrific events of August 2017 in Rakhine state. The perpetrators of these atrocities should be held to account.

■ **China: Uighurs**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[1340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on China's claims that Uighur Muslims have been released from Xinjiang re-education camps; and whether he has received evidence of their release.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We note statements made by the Chinese authorities about the 'graduation' of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities from 'vocational education centres' in Xinjiang, but we have seen evidence to suggest these centres continue to operate. We have particularly serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in 'political re-education camps', systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam, and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities. We are aware of recent reports of forced labour, including from respected academics and credible non-governmental organisations. These reports are based

on first-hand testimony and documents from the Chinese authorities and add to the growing body of evidence about the disturbing situation that Uyghurs and other minorities are facing in Xinjiang.

The UK Ambassador to China raised our concerns most recently with Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang on 24 December 2019 and we regularly discuss concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang with likeminded partners including at the UN. We have issued or joined a number of statements of concern in recent months: on 29 October at UN Third Committee, the UK read out a joint statement signed by 22 others drawing attention to the human rights violations and abuses in Xinjiang and called on China to uphold its obligations to respect human rights; on 24 September, during the UN General Assembly Lord (Tariq) Ahmad called on China to allow UN observers immediate and unfettered access to the region; on 17 September, at the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UK again called for UN experts to be granted unfettered access to Xinjiang and raised our concerns on arbitrary detention.

Fiona Bruce:

[1341]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the validity of reports that Uighur Muslims who have been released from re-education camps have been subjected to forced labour.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We note statements made by the Chinese authorities about the 'graduation' of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities from 'vocational education centres' in Xinjiang, but we have seen evidence to suggest these centres continue to operate. We have particularly serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in 'political re-education camps', systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam, and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities. We are aware of recent reports of forced labour, including from respected academics and credible non-governmental organisations. These reports are based on first-hand testimony and documents from the Chinese authorities and add to the growing body of evidence about the disturbing situation that Uyghurs and other minorities are facing in Xinjiang.

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be granted unfettered access to Xinjiang and raised our concerns on arbitrary detention.

Fiona Bruce:

[\[1344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the validity of reports that Uighar Muslims have been released from re-education camps in Xinjiang, China.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We note statements made by the Chinese authorities about the 'graduation' of Uyghur Muslims and other ethnic minorities from 'vocational education centres' in Xinjiang, but we have seen evidence to suggest these centres continue to operate. We have particularly serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in 'political re-education camps', systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam, and extensive and invasive surveillance targeting minorities. We are aware of recent reports of forced labour, including from respected academics and credible non-governmental organisations. These reports are based on first-hand testimony and documents from the Chinese authorities and add to the growing body of evidence about the disturbing situation that Uyghurs and other minorities are facing in Xinjiang.

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■ Hong Kong: British Nationality

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he plans to provide British National Overseas passport holders in Hong Kong with (a) full UK citizenship and (b) a pathway to full citizenship.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

As the Foreign Secretary stated in Parliament on 26 September, the status of British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)) was a part of the delicate balance in negotiations that led to the Sino-British Joint Declaration. We are not seeking to change the status of any one part of that package but rather to ensure it is respected by both sides. As

such, we have no plans to change the status of BN(O) or to provide pathways to full citizenship beyond those that already exist. The best outcome for BN(O) is for the high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms set out in the Joint Declaration and provided for in the Basic Law to be upheld. This is where we are focusing our efforts.

■ Hong Kong: Health Professions

Fiona Bruce: [\[1343\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the validity of reports of the arrest and abuse of medical personnel at recent protests in Hong Kong that amount to violations of humanitarian law.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We are seriously concerned by reports of the arrest and abuse of medical personnel in Hong Kong. We expect the Hong Kong authorities to abide by international humanitarian laws and practices. It is vital that those who are injured are able to receive appropriate medical treatment. We expect any arrests and judicial processes to be fair and transparent. We have called consistently for a robust, independent inquiry into recent events in Hong Kong.

■ Hong Kong: Human Rights

Sarah Champion: [\[1369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what his policy is on the imposition of Magnitsky sanctions against (a) Government officials and (b) police officers responsible for violations of human rights in Hong Kong.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The UK will establish a UK autonomous global human rights sanctions regime once we leave the European Union. A global sanctions regime will allow us to respond to serious human rights violations or abuses anywhere in the world. The UK is committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. A human rights sanctions regime will help support our human rights objectives. We will look to cooperate with others, including the US and Canada, who use sanctions to address human rights. The proposed human rights sanctions regime is still in development.

■ India: Nationality

Afzal Khan: [\[1054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Indian counterpart on the violence used against students protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in India.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions across India are following reports on the protests against the

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens, as well as the Government of India's response. We raise our concerns with the Government of India where appropriate. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon discussed the Government of India's intent with, and popular response to, the CAA with India's Minister of State for External Affairs on 19 December 2019. The British High Commissioner in New Delhi also raised this issue with the Indian Government on 6 January.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[963]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an estimate of the number of people killed in connection with protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 in Uttar Pradesh state in the Republic of India since 11 December 2019.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions across India are following the situation and the Government of India's response closely. The UK has long regarded protest as a key part of democratic society. Democratic governments must have the power to enforce law and order when a protest crosses the line into illegality; yet must in turn act with restraint and proportionality. We encourage all states to ensure their domestic laws are enforced in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights abuses is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly, and transparently.

We trust the Government of India will provide reassurances to its citizens who are expressing concern about the impact this legislation may have.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[964]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the role of Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh state, in the Republic of India in connection with alleged (a) human rights abuses and (b) organised Islamophobic violence by (i) the police and (ii) others in that state following protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions across India are following the situation and the Government of India's response closely. The UK has long regarded protest as a key part of democratic society. Democratic governments must have the power to enforce law and order when a protest crosses the line into illegality; yet must in turn act with restraint and proportionality. We encourage all states to ensure their domestic laws are enforced in line with international standards. Any allegation of human rights abuses is deeply concerning and must be investigated thoroughly, promptly, and transparently.

We trust the Government of India will provide reassurances to its citizens who are expressing concern about the impact this legislation may have.

■ Iraq: Armed Forces**Jonathan Edwards:** [\[1334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the Gulf states on the relocation of UK military personnel out of Iraq.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

The Defence Secretary updated Parliament on this issue as part of his statement on 7 January. The safety and security of HMG personnel is of paramount importance and we keep our force protection measures under constant review.

■ Jawaharlal Nehru University: Violence**Jonathan Edwards:** [\[1339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department has held discussions with representatives of the Indian government on violence at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

Reports of attacks against students at Jawaharlal Nehru University are concerning. The British High Commission in New Delhi and our network of Deputy High Commissions maintain a continuous assessment of the human rights situation across India, and raise our concerns with Indian officials where appropriate.

■ North Korea: Guided Weapons**Mrs Andrea Jenkyns:** [\[428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the December 2019 missile tests by North Korea.

Mrs Heather Wheeler:

We are gravely concerned by North Korea's testing of ballistic missiles in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The UK continues to press for diplomacy and dialogue as the best way to resolve the situation. We have repeatedly called on North Korea to engage in good faith in negotiations with the US. We fully support US efforts to persuade North Korea to dismantle its illegal nuclear and missiles programmes and believe that sanctions should remain in place until North Korea takes concrete steps towards denuclearisation. It is our firm belief that complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation is the path to a peaceful and more prosperous future for the North Korean people.

■ Qassem Soleimani

Afzal Khan: [\[1055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking in response to the US killing of Qassem Soleimani.

Afzal Khan: [\[1056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the US killing of Qassem Soleimani on the security and stability of the middle eastern region.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We have always recognised the aggressive threat posed by the Iranian Quds force led by Qasem Soleimani. Following his death, we urge all parties to de-escalate. Further conflict is in none of our interests.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Arrowe Park Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments**

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[1291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients at A&E at Arrowe Park Hospital have had to wait over four hours to be seen in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested. Data is collected at trust level.

■ Cardiovascular System: Health Services

Emma Hardy: [\[193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will allocate new funding to tackle unmet needs in provision of vascular services in (a) England and (b) Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in the next 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Emma Hardy: [\[194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with relevant bodies on (a) the effect on patients of increased demand for vascular services and (b) increasing levels of capital funding for vascular services in Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust; and if he will make a statement.

Emma Hardy: [\[195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has held any meetings or discussions with relevant bodies to assess the effect of the reduction of the (a) number of vascular centres in England on rates of lower limb

amputations and (b) capacity at Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust's vascular service on its ability to meet the health needs of its population; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to providing NHS England with increased funding of £33.9 billion every year by 2023/24 through the NHS Long Term Plan agreed last year. The Prime Minister also announced an extra £1.8 billion in addition to the extra £33.9 billion, in cash terms, for local areas to deliver National Health Service frontline services.

The majority of capital investment in the NHS is a local responsibility, with available funds locally directed and prioritised within individual providers and sustainability and transformation partnership/integrated care systems.

The Government has supported this local decision making through the £1 billion boost to NHS capital spending in 2019-20, allowing existing upgrade programmes to proceed and tackling the most urgent infrastructure projects. The Department is not aware of a bid from Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust for capital funding as part of any of the waves of sustainability and transformation capital funding that have been awarded, so far totalling £3.3 billion.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working to improve vascular services nationally, including through working alongside regional teams and the 'Getting It Right First Time' programmes. Everyone, especially older and vulnerable people, should be able to access compassionate care. The Care Act 2014 enshrines in law that local authorities must assess and meet the needs of people in their area.

The Diabetes Transformation programme has a project in progress across the four Humber clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in respect of multi-disciplinary team foot care which aims to reduce lower limb amputations. This team has recently been expanded to include a vascular surgeon to support swift intervention if required at the early signs of foot disease. Humber CCGs have also provided all general practitioner practices with information to support them in maintaining their skills on how to effectively assess the feet of a patient with diabetes, in order to identify early signs of disease.

Two vascular surgeon consultants have been recruited to Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust to cover South and North bank Multi-disciplinary foot care teams.

An evaluation report is in development for Humber Coast and Vale sustainability and transformation partnership strategic planning Board and Elective Care Board.

■ **Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: Expenditure**

Ms Angela Eagle:

[1289]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the budget was for Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust in each of the last 10 years.

Edward Argar:

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

Reported income for the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust in the years requested is shown in the following table.

FINANCIAL YEAR	OPERATING INCOME FROM PATIENT CARE ACTIVITIES (£000)	OTHER OPERATING INCOME (£000)	TOTAL OPERATING INCOME (£0000)
2018-19	161,240	10,286	171,526
2017-18	153,709	9,529	163,238
2016-17	153,921	8,615	162,536
2015-16	153,964	7,624	161,588
2014-15	146,830	8,163	154,993
2013-14	147,355	5,261	152,616
2012-13	154,921	6,482	161,403
2011-12	152,844	7,175	160,019
2010-11	127,150	7,131	134,281
2009-10	123,683	7,522	131,205

Source: Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust published annual report and accounts, 2009-10 to 2018-19.

■ Chromosome Abnormalities

Paul Bristow:[\[355\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase awareness of BP deletion syndrome among healthcare professionals.

Paul Bristow:[\[356\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve outcomes for children born with BP deletion syndrome.

Jo Churchill:

Steps to increase awareness of rare conditions amongst health care professionals and improve outcomes for those living with rare diseases are being taken through the

implementation of the UK Rare Disease Strategy, which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rare-diseases-strategy>

The Department published an update to its implementation plan for achieving the commitments in the Strategy in England in February 2019 to coincide with Rare Disease Day, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-strategy-for-rare-diseases-2019-update-to-the-implementation-plan-for-england>

A second update to the implementation plan is due to be published in Spring 2020.

■ Continuing Care: Dorset

Sir Christopher Chope:

[943]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many applications using the NHS Continuing Healthcare Fast Track Pathway tool have been made in the Dorset CCG area in each of the last six months for which information is available; how many such applications were (a) successful and (b) rejected; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinanage:

Data on NHS Continuing Healthcare Fast Track for clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) is routinely published quarterly on the NHS England statistical webpage.

The following table provides the last six months of information which is Q1 and Q2 2019/20.

REPORTING PERIOD	CCG	NUMBER OF REFERRALS COMPLETED (INCLUDING DISCOUNTED REFERRALS)	NUMBER ASSESSED AS ELIGIBLE	NUMBER OF REFERRALS DISCOUNTED BEFORE ASSESSMENT
Q1 2019/20	NHS Dorset	438	381	57
Q2 2019/20	NHS Dorset	533	412	121

In providing this response we have interpreted:

- “how many applications using the NHS Continuing Healthcare Fast Track Pathway tool have been made in the Dorset CCG area” as “Number of referrals completed (including discounted referrals)”;
- “how many such applications were successful” as “Number assessed as eligible”; and
- “rejected” as “Number of referrals discounted before assessment”.

■ Doctors: Fees and Charges

Mr Steve Baker:

[283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on individuals of the level of fees charged by doctors to certify health prior to offers of employment; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

There are a number of specified reports and certificates that must be completed by general practitioners (GPs) for their patients free of charge, as these form part of the services they must deliver under their contracts with the National Health Service. Providing support to an employment application does not fall under part of those services. Accordingly, if a GP is asked to provide a report or certificate to certify a patient's health for the purposes of an employment application, then under General Medical Services (GMS) Regulations they are allowed to charge a fee for doing so. There is no statutory limit to the level of such a fee and this would ultimately be a matter for the practice. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement would expect the practice to charge a reasonable sum appropriate for the workload involved. The GMS and Personal Medical Services Regulations contain a list of statutory certificates that GP practices are required to provide without charge, and the British Medical Association publishes guidance to support GPs in deciding how much they should charge which is available at the following link:

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/fees/check-your-fee>

We recognise that there are concerns about some fees GPs charge for letters to certify a patient's health and the consistency of those charges, and the additional burden this can place on GPs. We are considering how best to work with GPs and other stakeholders to look at where it is necessary for GPs to provide medical evidence and, where it is, that any charges for that evidence, where applicable, are fair and consistent.

■ Doctors: Recruitment

Catherine West:

[1421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of recruitment of doctors after the UK has left the EU.

Edward Argar:

The Department monitors and analyses overall staffing levels across the National Health Service, and we are working across Government to ensure there will continue to be sufficient staff, including doctors, to deliver the high-quality services on which the public relies following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.

The Government has funded 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 by September 2020 to help deliver the expansion.

The interim NHS People Plan, published on 3 June 2019, puts the workforce at the heart of the NHS and will ensure we have the staff needed to deliver high quality care. The final NHS People Plan will be published in early 2020.

■ General Practitioners

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[1080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of trends in the number of GP partners taking on roles in surgeries on the ability of patients to access GP services.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[1081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of trends in the number of GP partners taking on roles in surgeries on NHS capacity to manage potential increased demand on GP services during winter.

Jo Churchill:

The Government wants everyone to be able to access a primary care professional when they need to. The actions set out in the NHS Long Term Plan, backed by the extra £4.5 billion of investment in primary and community care by 2023/24, and the five year contract framework for general practice, are already being implemented and will build the general practice workforce and improve access to primary care services.

Evening and weekend general practice appointments are routinely available across the country now to enable patients to find appointments at a time convenient to them, with millions of patients having already benefitted from this. It also provides additional capacity to help to reduce some of the pressure on general practice and the wider system. NHS England, working with stakeholders, is undertaking a national review of access to general practice services. The review's main objective is to improve patient access both in hours and at evenings and weekends and reduce unwarranted variation in experience.

■ GP Surgeries: Portsmouth

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[1052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of trends in NHS recruitment and retention on the ability of Hanway Medical Centre to continue to provide services to residents of the Charles Dickens area of Portsmouth.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has committed to growing the workforce by 6,000 more doctors in general practice and 6,000 more primary care professionals, such as physiotherapists and pharmacists by 2024/25. This is on top of the additional 20,000 primary care professionals NHS England are providing funding towards by 2023/24 in Primary Care Networks. Growing the workforce will mean bigger teams of staff providing a wider range of care options for patients and will free up more time for doctors to focus on those with more complex needs. This, alongside additional

support and increasing the use of technology in general practice will create an extra 50 million appointments a year by 2024/25 and improve patient access to primary care services.

NHS Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has advised that it has been aware of the intention of two general practitioners to retire for some time at the Hanway Practice and is working with the Hanway Practice to ensure that patients continue to receive high-quality medical care. The CCG further advised an engagement process is underway to support the development of a formal merger proposal and it expects to receive the proposal from the two practices concerned before the end of February.

■ Health Services: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski: [53]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of conduct of Telford Council in relation to the Future Fit process.

Daniel Kawczynski: [54]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support the 300 local clinicians in Shropshire to conclude the Future Fit process.

Daniel Kawczynski: [55]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost of the Future Fit process in Shropshire.

Daniel Kawczynski: [56]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the length of time taken by opponents of the Future Fit process for judicial review as at 1 January 2020.

Daniel Kawczynski: [57]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the length of time taken for discussions on the reconfiguration of A&E Departments in Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust.

Edward Argar:

Telford and Wrekin Council is an active member of the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. It has been fully involved in and scrutinised the Future Fit process and provided formal feedback to the public consultation undertaken by the NHS Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS Telford and Wrekin CCG. The outcome of the consultation was a decision to designate the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital as an emergency care site and the Princess Royal Hospital a Planned Care site, with a 24-hour Urgent Care Centre at both hospitals.

The Council referred the Future Fit plans to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who requested advice from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel. On

2 October 2019 the Secretary of State communicated his decision to locate the Emergency Care Centre for the region at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital whilst keeping the accident and emergency (A&E) at the Princess Royal Hospital (PRH) open as an A&E Local. He asked NHS England to work with the CCGs and Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust to develop the A&E local model and to set out details on how the model could be delivered at PRH. The Secretary of State received these details from NHS England on 5 November 2019 and requested further work, including the implementation of the A&E local model, on 6 January 2020.

Clinicians have been involved in the Future Fit process from the outset and are fully supported in bringing about the necessary changes to local hospital services in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

The consultation into the future of the hospitals in Shrewsbury, Telford and Wrekin has taken some time to conclude. This has been partly due to the robust nature of the assurance process and ensuring the views of the public and other stakeholders have been taken into account. CCGs have invested much time into this process to ensure that the right model was consulted on and people could have their say and their views considered. The process has also necessitated a revised business case to be submitted to NHS England and NHS Improvement.

The cost of the consultation process is in line with other similar consultations of this scale.

Ministers are not in a position to comment on the length of time taken by opponents of the Future Fit process for seeking legal advice on whether to proceed towards a judicial review.

■ HIV Infection: Drugs

Catherine West:

[1070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to undertake a public awareness campaign to educate people on PrEP.

Jo Churchill:

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) plays an important role in preventing HIV transmission. Currently, PrEP is funded through the three-year PrEP Impact Trial. A core function of the PrEP Impact Trial Community Advisory Board (CAB) is to raise awareness and uptake of PrEP in key populations including black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Further information about PrEP Impact Trial CAB activities and participating community groups can be found at the following links:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/spec-services/npc-crg/blood-and-infection-group-f/f03/prep-trial-updates/>

<https://www.prepimpacttrial.org.uk/faqs>

In addition, Public Health England's Innovation Fund has supported a number of community based projects aimed at increasing PrEP awareness in women, BAME

groups and trans communities; information on the projects funded in 2018 can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/innovative-hiv-prevention-projects-reached-170000-people-in-2018>

Stephen Doughty:

[1404]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress has been made on rolling out the routine commissioning of PrEP from April 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Doughty:

[1407]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether routine commissioning of PrEP will accommodate all communities that could benefit from that trial including (a) women, (b) people who identify as Trans or non-binary, (c) BAME communities and (d) gay and bisexual men.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is continuing to work closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England and local government to plan for routine commissioning of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) from April 2020. We will set out how commissioners will be supported shortly.

Routine commissioning of PrEP is expected to accommodate all individuals at risk of acquiring HIV based on clinical risk assessment. These assessments will be informed by current clinical guidelines produced by the British HIV Association and British Association for Sexual Health and HIV in relation to assessment of individuals at risk of HIV. These state that 'PrEP is indicated for those at greater risk of HIV acquisition and therefore comprehensive history taking and risk assessment, including both sexual and drug taking histories, are required to identify those most likely to benefit'.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[1405]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local authorities do not have a PrEP impact trial site.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[1406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to re-open the 40 PrEP impact trial sites that are not currently recruiting gay and bisexual men.

Jo Churchill:

Participation in the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) Impact Trial is on a voluntary basis and it is for clinics and local authorities to decide the number of allocated places they can accept.

As at the end of 2019, thousands of places remain available on the trial at over 100 clinic sites. It is the goal of this research to make full use of up to 26,000 places. Clinics that are able to do so, will be able to request additional places should they become available and continue recruitment of eligible gay and bisexual men. As

participation in this research trial is on a voluntary basis, a small number of closed clinics sites may not reopen.

■ Human Papillomavirus: Vaccination

Jim Shannon: [\[293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to introduce a HPV vaccine catch-up programme for boys in 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

There are no plans for a catch-up programme for older boys as evidence suggests they are already benefitting greatly from the substantial herd protection that has built up from the success of 10 years of the girls' human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme. The priority is to make sure that as many eligible 12-13 year-old boys as possible, are offered protection from HPV infection by maximising uptake in the boys' programme, which started from September 2019.

■ Lung Diseases: Medical Equipment

Luke Pollard: [\[233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the reasons for the shortage of prescription inhalers.

Jo Churchill:

The Department fully understands that maintaining access to prescription inhalers is vitally important to many people in this country.

Supplies of all prescription inhalers are currently available.

We continue to work closely with industry and partners in the health system to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised if supply issues arise.

■ Members: Correspondence

Gareth Thomas: [\[29\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Chief Executive of NHS England plans to respond to the letter of 26 September 2019 from the hon. Member for Harrow West on the provision of walk-in services.

Edward Argar:

NHS England has advised that it apologises for the delay in responding and a reply will be sent to the hon. Member very shortly.

■ Mental Health Services: Easington

Grahame Morris: [\[981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) increase access to and (b) improve the delivery of mental health services in Easington constituency.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is committed to ensuring that everyone who has a mental health need is able to access timely and effective treatment based on their clinical need. The NHS Long Term Plan commits the National Health Service to testing and rolling out comprehensive waiting time standards for adults and children over the next decade. This builds on the already established waiting time standards for children and young people's eating disorder services, early intervention for psychosis and adult Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services. These standards are all being met or on track for delivery by 2020/21 in line with previous commitments. Investment in mental health care is higher than ever before, this increased investment is intended to support improvements in every local area across the country.

In response to the commitments in the Five Year Forward View for Mental Health, the NHS Long Term Plan and the new Community Mental Health Framework for Adults and Older Adults, the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust Board have initiated the 'Right Care, Right Place' improvement programme that covers community, inpatient and urgent mental health care delivery for the population of Easington. This programme aims to deliver better experience and outcomes for services users and NHS staff by focussing on how the services of the Trust and their care-providing partners can work more seamlessly together.

■ NHS Trusts: Standards**Jeremy Hunt:****[958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and which NHS Trusts are failing to meet all four priority clinical standards for seven day services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not available in the format requested.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published seven day services self-assessment results for NHS Trusts, this data relating to each of the priority clinical standards for seven day services both for weekends, weekdays and overall as at July 2019 (latest data) is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/7-day-hospital-services-self-assessment-results/>

Jeremy Hunt:**[959]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and which NHS Trusts are failing to meet standard 2 (time to first consultant review) of the priority clinical standards for seven day services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not available in the format requested.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published seven day services self-assessment results for NHS Trusts, this data relating to each of the priority clinical

standards for seven day services both for weekends, weekdays and overall as at July 2019 (latest data) is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/7-day-hospital-services-self-assessment-results/>

Jeremy Hunt: [960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out (a) how many and (b) which NHS trusts are failing to meet clinical standard 5 (access to diagnostic tests) of the priority clinical standards for seven day services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not available in the format requested.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published seven day services self-assessment results for NHS Trusts, this data relating to each of the priority clinical standards for seven day services both for weekends, weekdays and overall as at July 2019 (latest data) is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/7-day-hospital-services-self-assessment-results/>

Jeremy Hunt: [961]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and which NHS Trusts are failing to meet standard 6 (access to consultant-directed interventions) of the priority clinical standards for seven day services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not available in the format requested.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published seven day services self-assessment results for NHS Trusts, this data relating to each of the priority clinical standards for seven day services both for weekends, weekdays and overall as at July 2019 (latest data) is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/7-day-hospital-services-self-assessment-results/>

Jeremy Hunt: [962]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and which NHS Trusts are failing to meet standard 8 (Ongoing review twice daily if high dependency patients, daily for others) of the priority clinical standards for seven day services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

This information is not available in the format requested.

NHS England and NHS Improvement have published seven day services self-assessment results for NHS Trusts, this data relating to each of the priority clinical

standards for seven day services both for weekends, weekdays and overall as at July 2019 (latest data) is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/7-day-hospital-services-self-assessment-results/>

■ **Physician Associates: Prescriptions**

Anne Marie Morris:

[1393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to consult on prescribing rights for physician associates; and whether that consultation will run in conjunction with the regulation of that group of professionals.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to considering the extension of prescribing responsibilities for this group once physician associates are brought into regulation.

■ **Physician Associates: Regulation**

Anne Marie Morris:

[1391]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals for the regulation of physician associates.

Anne Marie Morris:

[1392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department and the General Medical Council have reached an agreement on the funding arrangements for the initial costs associated with the regulation of physician associates.

Edward Argar:

On 7 February 2019 the Government published its response to the consultation on the Regulation of Medical Associate Professions in the United Kingdom, confirming its decision to introduce statutory regulation for physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs), formerly known as physicians' assistants (anaesthesia).

On 18 July 2019, the Government announced that it would be asking the General Medical Council (GMC) to take forward the regulation of these roles.

The Government is now working with the GMC and stakeholders to develop legislation to bring PAs and AAs into regulation. Funding has been agreed with the GMC to carry out development work.

We intend to consult on draft legislation later this year.

■ **Royal Bolton Hospital and Salford Royal Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments**

Barbara Keeley: [\[967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of changes in waiting times at A&E at (a) Salford Royal Hospital and (b) Royal Bolton Hospital since 2010.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ **Royal Bournemouth Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the annual capacity of the new accident and emergency department after the merger of the Royal Bournemouth and Poole hospitals; and how that will compare to the current joint capacity of the two departments at those hospitals.

Edward Argar:

Under plans by both the boards of The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, the annual capacity of the two hospitals will go up by 14,000.

It will be for NHS Improvement as the independent regulator to be assured that the integration of services within the planned merger of the two NHS Foundation Trusts ensures the delivery of high-quality National Health Service services.

■ **Salford Royal Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments**

Barbara Keeley: [\[968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients at A&E at Salford Royal Hospital have had to wait over four hours to be seen in each of the last four financial years.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ **Shingles: Vaccination**

Jim Shannon: [\[291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is Government policy to introduce a call and re-call system for shingles vaccinations to increase consistency with the approach to vaccinations for flu and pneumococcal disease.

Jo Churchill:

Immunisations play a critical role in preventative healthcare and in promoting health and well-being across the life course, particularly for older adults where protection against flu, pneumococcal disease and shingles is so important. The Department is

working closely with NHS England, NHS Improvement and Public Health England to develop a 10 year vaccine strategy to be published early in 2020. This will include a focus on improving immunisation uptake rates across the life course including through better use of call/recall.

The NHS Long Term Plan published in January 2019 committed to a review of general practitioner (GP) vaccination and immunisation standards which commenced in April 2019. One of the purposes of the review is to clarify what is expected of call/recall for all the National Health Service immunisation programmes.

Recommendations from the review will be implemented through the GP contract where appropriate, following the current negotiating period.

■ Strokes: Electronic Cigarettes

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[1397]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the findings of the study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine on 6 January 2020, what recent assessment he has made of the increased risk of stroke associated with vaping.

Jo Churchill:

The study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine on 6 January 2020 found that people who had used e-cigarettes only were at significantly lower risk of stroke than those who smoke. There was no significant difference in risk between non-smokers who use e-cigarettes and non-smokers who do not. The study can be found at the following link:

[https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(19\)30468-4/fulltext](https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(19)30468-4/fulltext)

Public Health England's advice remains that smokers should stop smoking completely and that e-cigarettes can be helpful, particularly for the most heavily addicted smokers. This can be viewed at the following links:

<https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/e-cigarettes>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/quit-smoking/using-e-cigarettes-vapes-to-quit-smoking/>

PHE keeps the peer reviewed research on e-cigarettes under continuous review.

■ Vaccination

Jim Shannon:

[292]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will work with the devolved Administrations to help ensure a consistent approach to GP item of service fees for vaccinations and immunisations for influenza and shingles.

Jo Churchill:

Policy officials engage with their counterparts in the devolved administrations in relation to immunisations on a regular basis and have shared updates on the

progress with NHS England and NHS Improvement's Vaccinations and Immunisations Review, committed to in the NHS Long Term Plan.

Health is a devolved matter and in England, the Statement of Financial Entitlements, which sets out the payment structure for general practitioner-offered immunisations, is agreed between NHS England, NHS Improvement and the General Practitioners Committee of the British Medical Association. As the negotiations to agree the terms of the 2020/21 Statement of Financial Entitlements is an ongoing confidential process, we are unable to share details of this with counterparts in the devolved administrations.

■ Vaccination: Older People

Jim Shannon:

[290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to increase the uptake of vaccines amongst older people.

Jo Churchill:

Immunisation plays a critical role in preventative healthcare and in promoting health and well-being across the life course, particularly in older adults when protecting against flu, pneumococcal disease and shingles is so important.

The factors that affect uptake of vaccination are complex and vary over time and by locality. Public Health England, along with other public health organisations and researchers, has worked to understand the relative impact of factors that are believed to affect uptake rates.

Because of the breadth of issues that can affect vaccine uptake, the Department is working closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement and Public Health England to develop a 10 year vaccine strategy to be published early in 2020, focused on improving immunisation uptake rates across all ages.

HOME OFFICE

■ Agriculture: Seasonal Workers

Dave Doogan:

[243]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the seasonal agricultural workers scheme before the 2020 harvest; and if she will ensure that the parameters of any limit on the number of migrant workers employed under that scheme are based on (a) quantified and (b) evidenced priorities of the (i) farming and (ii) processing sectors.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has committed to continue the Seasonal Workers Pilot and in our election manifesto we set out plans to increase the scheme to 10,000 places following the UK's exit from the European Union.

Details will be set out in due course.

Mark Pritchard:

[\[67\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme to allow the recruitment of seasonal labour for work in the non-edible horticulture sector.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has committed to continue the Seasonal Workers Pilot and in our election manifesto we set out plans to increase the scheme to 10,000 places following the UK's exit from the European Union.

Details will be set out in due course.

■ **Antisocial Behaviour: Rother Valley**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in Rother Valley.

Kit Malthouse:

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

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

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

■ **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence**

Owen Thompson:

[\[332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her timescale is for completion of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Victoria Atkins:

In accordance with the Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Ratification of Convention) Act 2017, the Government publishes an annual report on progress towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

The most recent annual report was published on 31 October 2019 and is available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843509/CCS0919132732-001_Istanbul_Convention_2019_Report_Option_A_Web_Accessible.pdf

■ Counter-terrorism

Dr Matthew Offord: [82]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the Prevent programme to ensure (a) its effectiveness and (b) that it has support from the communities it is seeking to protect.

Brandon Lewis:

We are subject to a statutory deadline to complete the review by August 2020. The next steps for the review will be considered in due course.

■ Death Certificates

Rosie Duffield: [180]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of developing a secure digital death certification service.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office continues to work with Department of Health and Social Care on taking forward the death certification reforms, which includes consideration of digital services.

■ Deportation: Compensation

Stephen Doughty: [1437]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much compensation her Department paid to people wrongly (a) detained and (b) deported by her Department in each of the last six months.

Kevin Foster:

Compensation data for people wrongly detained is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts but is not published on a month by month basis.

Published information for financial year 2018-19, for wrongful detention, can be found in the Home Office's 2018-19 Annual Report and Accounts on page 105.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807126/6.5571_HO_Annual_Report_201920_WEB.PDF

Compensation data is published in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts but is not published separately for wrongful deportation

■ Dorset Police: Council Tax

Sir Christopher Chope:

[1268]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to maintain the Police council tax precept in Dorset being increased by more than the level of inflation in 2020-21; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

Police council tax precept referendum limits for 2020/21 will be announced as part of the forthcoming police funding settlement.

As usual, it will then be for individual Police and Crime Commissioners to determine specific precept levels within these limits, taking into account the views of the local community and Police and Crime Panels.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Smuggling

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[335]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment the Government has made of the prevalence of illicit trade in (a) black market vaping liquid and (b) cannabis and THC vaping liquid; and what estimate her Department has made of the proportions of those products that contain synthetic cannabinoid Spice.

Kit Malthouse:

The government funded the Chartered Trading Standards Institute to undertake a review of compliance of nicotine vaping products. The latest report, 'The Tobacco Control Survey for England 2018/19: A Report of Trading Standards Service Activity' reports that of the 1,273 visits made by 69 councils to assess nicotine vaping product compliance, 17% of visits found non-compliant nicotine inhaling products, in line with the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. The report is available on the Trading Standards website: www.tradingstandards.uk

The government has made no assessment of the proportions of those products that contain synthetic cannabinoids.

■ Guardianship

Damian Hinds:

[71]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to provide independent legal guardianship for (a) separated, (b) unaccompanied and (c) trafficked children in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government takes its responsibility for the welfare of unaccompanied, trafficked and asylum-seeking children very seriously and has stringent safeguards in place.

Local authorities are responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children in their area, including separated, unaccompanied and child victims of modern slavery. Unaccompanied children looked after by local authorities are entitled

to the same services as any other looked-after child. Under these arrangements, unaccompanied children are assessed with regard to their individual needs and provided with access to education, accommodation and health services. They will be assigned a social worker and an independent reviewing officer, who are responsible for overseeing their care arrangements.

In addition, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in England are able to access independent advice and assistance on the asylum process and their interactions with other central and local government agencies, through the Refugee Council's Children's Advice Project. Scotland and Northern Ireland also provide separate guardianship services.

Local children's services will work in close co-operation with the police and other statutory agencies to offer potentially trafficked children the support they require. In addition to statutory support, the Government has successfully expanded Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) this year, so that ICTGs are operational in one third of all local authorities in England and Wales. ICTGs are an additional source of advice and support for all trafficked children, irrespective of nationality, and somebody who can advocate on their behalf.

These arrangements ensure unaccompanied children are provided with the support and advice that they need.

■ Gun Sports: Disability

Tim Loughton:

[\[1264\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of disabled recreational target shooters that have given up their licence since the introduction of restrictions on the use of firearms.

Kit Malthouse:

Statistics on the number of firearm and shotgun certificates on issue are published annually but they do not identify whether a certificate holder is disabled or where a certificate is voluntarily given up by the holder.

Firearms controls in this country are among the toughest in the world. They are kept under review and strengthened whenever necessary to protect the public from the misuse of firearms. For example, the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 recently banned the manufacture and sale of rapid-firing rifles, owing to the serious threat they present should they fall into the hands of criminals or terrorists. Possession of such rifles will be banned following a surrender and compensation scheme later this year.

■ John McCafferty

Damian Collins:

[\[280\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the findings of any review that has been carried out by the Home Office, or other public authority within her responsibility, of criminal cases in which Mr John McCafferty was involved in providing forensic evidence for the prosecution.

Kit Malthouse:

I am not aware of any such reviews carried out by the Home Office.

■ Knives: Slough**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[1417]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the level of knife crime in Slough constituency.

Kit Malthouse:

Statistics are collected at the Police Force Area level only. Statistics for lower levels of geography are not held by the Home Office. The Government takes seriously the levels of serious violence over recent months.

The following table shows the number of knife and sharp instrument offences recorded by Thames Valley Police for the financial year 2010/11 and the years ending June 2018 and June 2019, for the Thames Valley Police area:

NUMBER OF OFFENCES	% CHANGE YEAR TO JUNE 2019 COMPARED WITH:	
2010/11	1165	31
Year to June 18	1493	2
Year to June 19	1523	

The Government is strengthening police numbers over the next three years and increasing sentences for violent criminals. Police will be given more powers to stop and search those who have been convicted of knife crime. 6,000 additional officers will be recruited in England and Wales by March 2021 and their ranks will be increased by 20,000 over the next three years.

Funding for policing is increasing by £1 billion this year, including council tax and the Serious Violence Fund, through which, we are providing £63.4 million to the 18 police forces worst affected by serious violence to pay for surge operational activity, such as increased patrols, and £1.6 million to help improve the quality of data on serious violence, particularly knife crime, to support planning and operations. This includes an additional £20.8 million of surge funding to the Metropolitan Police. In addition, £35 million of the Serious Violence Fund is being invested in Violence Reduction Units (VRUs), which will form a key component of our action to build capacity in local areas to tackle serious violence.

The Government will change the law so that police, councils and health authorities are legally required to work together to prevent and tackle serious violence. The Offensive Weapons Act introduces new laws which to give police extra powers to seize dangerous weapons and ensure knives are less likely to make their way onto the streets in the first place.

■ Migrant Workers: Health Professions

Ruth Jones: [240]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the NHS Visa will be applicable to physiotherapists and other healthcare professionals who are employed by independent providers contracted to deliver NHS services.

Ruth Jones: [241]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the NHS Visa will be applicable to physiotherapists and other healthcare professionals who are employed by social enterprises contracted to deliver NHS services.

Ruth Jones: [242]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the NHS Visa will be applicable to civilian physiotherapists and other healthcare professionals who are employed by the Ministry of Defence.

Kevin Foster:

We will introduce an NHS visa scheme for qualified health professionals, offering fast-track entry, reduced visa fees and dedicated support to enter the UK with their families. Further details will be published in due course.

■ Muslim Brotherhood

Andrew Rosindell: [270]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to inform UK citizens of the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK will continue to take concerns about the Muslim Brotherhood seriously. The Government informed UK citizens of the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in its comprehensive review, completed in December 2015 and published on gov.uk. The review concluded the movement is a secretive organisation and that parts of it – globally – have a highly ambiguous relationship with violent extremism.

The Government keeps under review the views promoted and activities undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood's associates in the UK in accordance with the five commitments included in the former Prime Minister's statement to Parliament. The Government continues to stand by the judgments of the review, and we will continue to consider any new evidence on the Muslim Brotherhood's activities against the UK's legal thresholds.

■ Personation

Gareth Thomas: [1265]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of trends in the level of identity theft in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects information from the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau on the number of recorded frauds. From information held centrally, it is not possible to separately identify offences of fraud in which identify theft has been involved.

■ Police: Thames Valley**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[1451]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of police officers in the Thames Valley area.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office collects and publishes statistics on the number of police officers in each Police Force Area (PFA) in England and Wales in the annual 'Police workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin.

The number of officers in the Thames Valley area, in each year from 31 March 2007 to 31 March 2019, by headcount and full-time equivalence (FTE), can be found in open data tables available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817734/open-data-table-police-workforce.ods

We have also announced the allocation of 183 additional officers in Thames Valley Police by the end of 2020/21 as part of the Police Uplift Programme.

These new officers will be in addition to those hired to fill existing vacancies and the extra officers already being recruited due to the increase in police funding for 2019-20.

■ Rape**Catherine West:****[1425]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that male victims of rape and sexual violence receive adequate support when they contact the police.

Victoria Atkins:

Rape and sexual violence are devastating crimes and the Government is committed to ensuring that every victim has access to the specialist support they need. We expect every report of sexual violence and rape to be treated seriously from the time it is reported, every victim to be treated with dignity, and every investigation and prosecution to be conducted thoroughly and professionally.

We are deeply concerned by drops in criminal justice outcomes for rape cases, which is why we are conducting a thorough end-to-end review into the criminal justice response to rape. This review will inform a cross-system Action Plan which will seek to reverse this trend and we have committed to publish this later this year.

The Government is providing £32 million in funding until 2022. This includes £4 million for rape support centres, and £1 million for recruiting more Independent Sexual Violence Advisers. This additional funding forms part of a Rape Victims' Pledge to make rape victims' engagement with the criminal justice system simpler and less distressing through providing targeted information and support.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) areas with Government-funded male support centres have nearly quadrupled from 11 in 2018/19 to 41 from 2019/20. This support is in addition to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) funded National Male Rape support helpline (Safeline) and Male Rape Support webchat service (Survivors UK). The Home Office provides specific funding to male victims of rape via Survivors Manchester through the £150,000 National Sexual Violence Support Fund.

MoJ have also provided £68 million to PCCs in 2019/20 to commission victim support services based on local need, including additional support for victims of sexual violence and abuse, which includes male victims.

■ Youth Services

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[1418]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the availability of youth services on the level of violent crime committed by young people.

Kit Malthouse:

As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy there are a range of complex factors driving the increase in serious violence, most noticeably changes in the drugs market.

The Government is investing £220 million in early intervention and prevention initiatives to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence. We have provided £22 million through the Early Intervention Youth Fund, through which we are supporting 40 projects across England and Wales, and we are providing £200million through the Youth Endowment Fund which is a 10-year fund to prevent young people at highest risk of involvement in serious violence from becoming involved in crime and violence. Both these funds aim to support vulnerable young people to seek positive opportunities and lead lives free from violence and crime.

The Government recognises that local youth services are an important partner in tackling violent crime. In September 2019 the Chancellor announced £500million to go to a national Youth Investment Fund. This is a significant investment which will go towards building new youth centres across the country, refurbishing existing facilities, investing in activities for young people which teach important life skills, and investing in the youth work profession.

We are also providing £100million through the Serious Violence Fund in 2019/20 to the 18 police force areas worst affected by serious violence. £63.4 million of this fund was allocated to pay for an immediate surge in police operational activity; £1.6 million was deployed to improve the quality of data on serious violence; the remaining £35

million was invested in Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) which form a key component of our action to prevent violence by understanding its root causes. A further £35 million has been announced for VRUs for 2020/21.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Tim Farron:

[\[900109\]](#)

What recent assessment the Government has made of the effect on local communities of second home owners using council tax avoidance schemes.

Esther McVey:

The Government has removed the requirement to offer a council tax discount on second homes and 95 percent are charged the full rate.

We are considering consultation responses on the criteria under which a property is treated as a holiday let and becomes liable for business rates rather than council tax.

Dan Carden:

[\[900114\]](#)

What recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of changes in the level of local government funding on the most deprived areas.

Jake Berry:

The provisional settlement gives access to an extra £2.9 billion, the biggest year-on-year increase in a decade. This Government will ensure that this money is going to the right places – and the most deprived will get three times the spending power per home in government grants than the least deprived.

Peter Grant:

[\[900117\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the UK shared prosperity fund.

Jake Berry:

Government regularly engages the devolved administrations, and I spoke to counterparts in the devolved administrations regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund during the last Joint Ministerial Committee on Europe. My officials have also held 25 engagement events across the UK, attended by over five hundred representatives from a breadth of sectors.

Emma Hardy:

[\[900119\]](#)

What his Department's policy is on the One Yorkshire devolution proposals.

Jake Berry:

This government's ambition is for full devolution across England and we are committed to publish an English Devolution White Paper which will set out our plans.

Bambos Charalambous:

[\[900122\]](#)

When his Department plans to publish the Fair Funding review.

Luke Hall:

Our review of local authorities' relative needs and resources will develop a new, more robust and transparent funding formula which is fit for the future. We plan to share emerging results with the sector soon and consult in the Spring, with the aim of implementing the review in 2021-22.

Kevin Hollinrake:[\[900123\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the effect of Help to Buy on the number of homes purchased by first time buyers.

Esther McVey:

Over 192,000 (81 per cent) of sales through Help to Buy: Equity Loan from its start in April 2013 to 30 June 2019 have been to first-time buyers.

This has helped increase the number of first-time buyers to over 350,000 in 2018 – an eleven-year annual high, an increase of 84 per cent since 2010.

Alicia Kearns:[\[900124\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure the equity of local government funding in order to tackle rural disadvantage.

Luke Hall:

The Government takes funding for rural communities very seriously. Our Fair Funding Review will take a robust, evidence-based approach to assessing the costs of delivering services in all areas.

■ Affordable Housing: Construction**Caroline Nokes:**[\[100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what proportion of affordable housing units were built by (a) housing associations and (b) private developers in England in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Esther McVey:

The Department collects data on affordable housing through funding sources and does not differentiate between housing associations and developers. A full breakdown of affordable housing provision by funding source is available in live table 1011c: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>.

Caroline Nokes:[\[99\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the proportion of planning permissions granted that were for affordable housing units in England in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Esther McVey:

The Department publishes an estimate of the total number of housing units granted planning permission in the quarterly planning application statistics statistical release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/planning-applications-in-england-july-to-september-2019>

The statistics do not split permissions between affordable and market housing

Section I10 of the Local Authority Housing Statistics includes figures for the numbers of affordable units granted final planning permission during the year as part of developer (section 106) contributions. This will be a subset of all affordable planning permission. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2018-to-2019>.

■ Buildings: Insulation

Mr Steve Reed: [1016]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 11 February 2019 to Question 217589 on Buildings: Insulation, whether the referenced Task 6 Testing and Task 7 Assessment have now been completed.

Mr Steve Reed: [1017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 11 February 2019 to Question 217589 on Buildings: Insulation, when he plans to publish the (a) Task 8 Publishable report and (b) report on bespoke testing.

Esther McVey:

The report will be published shortly.

Mr Steve Reed: [1019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department is making an assessment of the potential merits of lowering the threshold at which combustible building materials can be used from 18 metres to 11 metres.

Esther McVey:

As stated in the explanatory memorandum, the Department intends to review the ban annually through monitoring arrangements and advice from bodies such as Building Regulations Advisory Committee for England. This will include considering the scope of the ban

The Department is currently undertaking this review and will report shortly.

Mr Steve Reed: [1020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 11 February 2019 to Question 217589 on Buildings: Insulation, which companies are represented on the Project Steering Group referred to in that Building Research Establishment report.

Esther McVey:

I refer the Hon Member to the answer to Question UIN 224341 on 21 February 2019.

Hilary Benn:

[\[267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of properties that have HPL cladding in (a) Leeds and (b) England.

Esther McVey:

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

■ Care Homes: Insulation

Mr Steve Reed:

[\[1399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department is making an assessment of the potential merits of adding care homes to the list of buildings to which the ban on combustible building materials applies.

Esther McVey:

[Holding answer 13 January 2020]: Relevant buildings for the purpose of the ban of combustible materials are defined in regulation 7(4) of the Building Regulations, these include buildings containing flats, hospitals, residential care premises, dormitories in boarding schools and student accommodation with a top occupied storey above 18 metres. This includes care homes. The Building (Amendment) Regulations 2018 are available at the following:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/1230/made>

■ Council Tax

Matt Western:

[\[1438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to publish the findings of his Department's review of council tax collection methods.

Luke Hall:

The Government has been working with local government and the debt advice sector to develop updated best practice guidance on the collection of council tax and will publish this guidance in due course.

■ Council Tax: Arrears

Matt Western:

[\[1439\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent assessment his Department has made of the (a) total value of council tax arrears

referred to bailiffs by local authorities and (b) value of arrears recovered by bailiffs in the last 12 months.

Luke Hall:

The Government does not hold data on the value of council tax arrears referred to, or recovered by, bailiffs. Statistics on the total council tax, including arrears, collected by local authorities for the financial years from 2014-15 are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/collection-rates-for-council-tax-and-non-domestic-rates-in-england-2018-to-2019>.

■ **High Rise Flats: Fire Regulations**

Mr Steve Reed:

[1018]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the height was for fire regulation purposes of the Cube building in Bolton that caught fire in 2019.

Esther McVey:

BRE Global Limited's measurements show that the height of the top occupied storey from ground level is 17.8 metres.

■ **High Rise Flats: Safety**

Mr Steve Reed:

[1430]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 7 January 2020 to Question 117, on High Rise Flats: Safety, whether any other mailboxes were set up by the Building Safety Programme to enable residents to report fire safety concerns in respect of the tower blocks in which they live.

Esther McVey:

[Holding answer 13 January 2020]: As noted in the answer to Parliamentary Question 117 on 7 January, following the Grenfell fire the Housing Checks mailbox was established to allow local authorities (LAs) and housing associations (HAs) to report their stock of buildings with unsafe Aluminium Composite Cladding. It was advertised on Gov.UK and we are aware that other organisations and bodies have sent mail to this inbox on housing safety issues. Residents that wish to email the department with concerns on building safety should do so through the online portal: <https://forms.communities.gov.uk>

Mr Steve Reed:

[1432]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 7 January 2020 to Question 117, on High Rise Flats: Safety, how many residents have used the online portal to report concerns on fire safety in their tower blocks in each month since June 2017.

Esther McVey:

[Holding answer 13 January 2020]: The Department is unable to provide the specific information requested as it is not readily accessible.

Housing: Construction**Sir Christopher Chope:****[1267]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of homes in respect of which planning permission for development was granted more than 24 months previously but in which no development has begun in (a) Dorset and (b) England; and if he will make a statement.

Esther McVey:

[Holding answer 13 January 2020]: The Department does not collect the requested data itself but instead purchases information from Glenigan Ltd on numbers of homes granted planning permission. For Dorset, as at 29 November 2019, there were 1,900 units with detailed planning permission granted more than 24 months earlier where the permission has not expired on sites which had not yet been completed. Of these, 1,400 units have started on site and 500 units are on sites yet to start. Of those yet to start, 300 are now 'progressing towards a start' and the remaining 200 units are on sites which have been sold, are due to be sold or on sites where information is unavailable.

For England, as at 29 November 2019, there were 312,000 units with detailed planning permission granted more than 24 months earlier where the permission has not expired on sites which had not yet been completed. Of these, 234,000 units had started on site and 78,000 units were on sites yet to start. Of those yet to start, 44,000 were 'progressing towards a start', 7,000 were on unstarted sites that are 'on hold' or shelved and the remaining 27,000 units are on sites which have been sold, are due to be sold or on sites where information is unavailable.

Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred and are subject to change as they are regularly updated.

Sir Christopher Chope:**[1271]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities are using the powers in section 94(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to ensure that developers complete developments which have already received planning permission.

Esther McVey:

[Holding answer 13 January 2020]: The Government's housing White Paper in 2017 announced proposals to speed up and simplify the completion notice process under section 94 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to give local planning authorities greater confidence, control and certainty in their use. These proposals require changes to primary legislation, and we will consider the scope to make them as we seek to make the planning system simpler and faster as part of the planning White Paper.

■ Mobile Homes: Fees and Charges

Valerie Vaz: [982]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to bring forward legislative proposals to change the pitch fee review inflationary index for park homes from the retail price index to the consumer price index.

Valerie Vaz: [983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions his Department has had with the devolved Administrations on the potential merits of changing pitch fee review inflationary index for park homes from the retail price index to the consumer price index.

Esther McVey:

We made a commitment in October 2018 to change the pitch fee review inflationary index from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) having considered the responses of residents and site owners to our review of park homes legislation. The required primary legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time is available.

The Government response to the review is available at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749771/Park_homes_Review_Government_response.pdf.

Park homes policy is a devolved matter and formal consultation with the devolved Administrations is not required.

■ Non-domestic Rates: Reviews

Andrew Gwynne: [1319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the Government's timescale is for completion of the review of business rates; and what effect undertaking that review will have on the delivery of the Government's review of needs and resources and the implementation of 75 per cent business rates retention by local government, due in April 2021.

Luke Hall:

The Government is committed to conducting a fundamental review of business rates. Further details on the review will be announced in due course. The Government recognises the role of business rates as a source of local authority income and will consider input from the sector as part of the review of business rates.

■ Owner Occupation

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[334\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on supporting people who are ready to move on from their first property to move up the housing ladder.

Esther McVey:

The Government is committed to making the housing market work for everyone, which means building the homes that people need in places that they want to live. This is why Government has set out reforms alongside £44 billion of financial support to increase housing supply and diversify the market. This includes, long term funding for infrastructure where people want to live and where there is the greatest housing need. Since 2010 over 1.5 million additional homes have been delivered in England and 2018-19 saw the highest level of net additions in the last thirty-one years. To help those looking to buy a home now, we are committed to making the buying and selling process quicker, cheaper and less stressful.

■ Planning Permission

Tracey Crouch: [\[279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance he issues to local planning authorities on the consideration of controversial planning applications during purdah.

Robert Jenrick:

To date, Government has issued no guidance to local planning authorities about consideration of planning applications during the pre-election period. Within my Department, caution is exercised during both general and local election periods, with no substantive decisions issued. During these periods, where I receive a request to intervene in a case, or a case is referred to me by an authority, I am able to delay a grant of planning permission while I consider whether or not to call-in an application, by means of a holding direction issued under section 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Local authorities should exercise good judgement about whether it is appropriate to determine cases of local or national significance or controversy during a pre-election period of sensitivity. I intend to work with the Local Government Association to ensure they provide suitable guidance to councils to this effect.

■ Shared Ownership: Housing Associations

Sir Gary Streeter: [\[R\]](#) [\[257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans the Government has to introduce a right to shared ownership for housing association tenants; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of such proposals on the provision of affordable housing in perpetuity.

Esther McVey:

The Government is committed to delivering home ownership to more people including those who currently cannot access it. That's why on 17 October, the government announced a new Right to Shared Ownership for Housing Association tenants.

The Right to Shared Ownership will apply to all new rental homes delivered through Government grant funding where perpetuity provisions do not apply. A Right to Shared Ownership sale will result in Government subsidy being recycled to support the delivery of future affordable homes to help meet the need of future generations.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction**Rachael Maskell:****[328]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) council houses and (b) housing association houses have been built in each of the last 10 years.

Rachael Maskell:**[329]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many (a) council houses and (b) housing association homes have been built in York in each year since 2010.

Esther McVey:

Figures for the number of starts and completions of new build dwellings split by local authority and tenure are published in the Departments live table 253.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building> The tenure captured in these statistics reflects the tenure of the developer building the dwelling rather than the intended final tenure, which can be different. In particular, there is a substantial quantity of affordable housing which is not captured because it is built in the private sector and then bought by local authorities and housing associations. The Department produces affordable housing supply statistics which give a more detailed breakdown of the provision of affordable housing.

Live table 1011C can provide a breakdown of affordable housing completions by funding source and local authority.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>

■ Social Rented Housing: Service Charges**Caroline Nokes:****[96]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans the Government has to protect social housing tenants from unreasonable service charges levied by social landlords.

Caroline Nokes:

[\[97\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the maximum limit is on service charges that can be passed on to tenants by social housing landlords.

Esther McVey:

There is no maximum limit on service charges that can be passed on to social rented tenants but they must be set in line with the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 with service charges payable only to the extent that the costs have been reasonably incurred. The reasonableness of the service charge a social housing landlord is seeking will depend on the nature of the works required and other contributing factors.

Social housing tenants have the ability to apply to the Property Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal for a determination where they do not believe the charges are reasonable, and must be consulted when major works are being proposed.

For those in Affordable Rent properties the calculation of their gross rent includes service charges. Gross rent for these properties is capped at 80 per cent of market rent.

■ Social Services: Children

John Spellar:

[\[900120\]](#)

What discussions he has had with local authority leaders on future funding of children's social care.

Luke Hall:

I have regular engagement with local authority leaders in my role as Local Government Minister on a wide range of issues, including children's social care.

Next year's Settlement provides councils with £1 billion of additional funding for social care, recognising their vital role in supporting the most vulnerable.

■ Urban Areas

Antony Higginbotham:

[\[900118\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support towns.

Robert Jenrick:

This Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund will support an initial 100 Town Deals, unleashing towns' economic potential and sharing prosperity across the country. We are forming a Towns Hub to make Whitehall work for towns and communities and have provided places with over £16 million capacity funding – to prepare their plans and secure up to £25 million each.

We will be investing in town centres and high streets to help them evolve – with more housing, safer streets, culture and transport to make them more accessible.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Iraq: Humanitarian Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[1416\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment he has made on the effect of the recent tensions between the US and Iran on the provision of humanitarian support in Iraq.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

It is critical that humanitarian actors can operate safely and without restrictions in Iraq. We are working closely with partners to ensure that there is no interruption to delivery, especially to those who remain displaced by the conflict against Daesh. DFID has committed £261m in humanitarian support to Iraq since 2014, providing a vital lifeline to millions with shelter, medical care and clean water.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[1035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she plans to take to ensure that the granting of licences by her Department to UK companies to export items to third countries for re-export within finished weapons to Saudi Arabia that could be used in Yemen does not violate the Court of Appeal's judgment of 20 June 2019.

Graham Stuart:

Licence applicants are required to tell us the final destination of the item to be exported, including where that item is incorporated into a higher-level product.

Government takes that final destination and the nature of the higher-level product into account when making decisions against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria and in the case of export to Saudi Arabia when ensuring compliance with the Court of Appeal's judgment.

■ Exports: Wales

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[1337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to promote Welsh exports at the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January 2020.

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[1338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with representatives of Trade and Invest Wales on promoting Wales' trading interests at the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January 2020.

Graham Stuart:

The UK-Africa Investment Summit will bring together UK and African business representatives, African leaders and delegations from 21 countries, international institutions, and young entrepreneurs. The Summit will create new lasting partnerships that will deliver more investment, jobs and growth, benefitting people and businesses across both Africa and in all four nations of the UK. This department engages with business across the whole of the UK to ensure that they have tools required to trade overseas; the Summit will be used as a platform to announce a number of commercial deals involving UK businesses and their partners across Africa. The Government will also announce further funding to reduce the cost of trading within Africa, and support businesses from across Britain and Africa to trade more and grow faster.

In September 2019, I met with the Noble Baroness Morgan of Ely, Welsh Government Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language, in Newport. We discussed how we might work together more closely on trade promotion and create greater synergies across our sector teams.

■ Raytheon: USA**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[1036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department has issued arms export licences for the export of items on the UK strategic export control list from Raytheon UK to the US since 20 June 2019.

Graham Stuart:

Export licences have been issued to Raytheon since 20 June 2019, permitting the export of controlled items to the US.

■ Trade Agreements**Stewart Hosie:**[\[1320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether there are trade working groups or equivalents with all the countries that his Department is or has been negotiating trade continuity agreements; and with which other countries there are trade working groups or equivalents.

Conor Burns:

We are working with countries across the world to develop our current trade relationships and ensure that Britain becomes a global free trade leader once we leave the EU.

Working groups are one means of engagement with our trading partners. Others include informal contact through our network of Posts, discussions with embassies in London, ministerial discussions and visits, the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys, and HM Trade Commissioners.

In addition to the ongoing engagement in the Trade Agreement Continuity Programme, we have established Working Groups with the USA, Australia, New

Zealand, China, India, Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE.

■ **Trade Agreements: Australasia**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[1335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the potential for changes to product standards in respect of trade agreements with (a) Australia and (b) New Zealand after the transition period.

Conor Burns:

The Government has been clear that we will not compromise on our world class environmental and consumer protection, animal welfare, and food standards. Any future trade agreements, including with Australia and New Zealand, must uphold our high standards and work for UK consumers and business.

JUSTICE

■ **Burial**

Sir Mark Hendrick: [\[385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of burials in England could be classified as natural burials for the most recent period in which figures are available.

Wendy Morton:

THIS INFORMATION IS NOT CENTRALLY RECORDED.

■ **Courts: Repairs and Maintenance**

Mr Gareth Bacon: [\[1093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to improve courtroom availability through court estate restoration and renewal.

Chris Philp:

HM Courts & Tribunals Service seeks to make sure that the court and tribunal estate is in the best possible condition to provide appropriate court and hearing room facilities.

Since the commencement of the Reform Programme, we have spent over £167m on capital projects investing in our buildings. This has delivered significant improvements, including replacing heating and cooling systems, lifts, roofs and windows.

We have also re-procured our facilities management contracts from April this year, which will allow us to improve the way our buildings are maintained day to day. Under

the new arrangements, facilities management work will be more user focused with new objectives based on previous customer experiences. Repair and improvement works will also be more efficient, with response times that match industry standards.

■ Duty Solicitors: North West

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[1288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure that adequate numbers of criminal duty solicitors are available in (a) the North West, (b) Merseyside, (c) Wirral and (d) Wallasey.

Wendy Morton:

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

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

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

■ Family Courts: Domestic Abuse

Louise Haigh: [\[484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress he has made on his Department's review of domestic abuse and the family courts.

Wendy Morton:

On 21 May 2019 we announced a public call for evidence led by a panel of experts to gather evidence on how the family courts protect children and parents in cases of domestic abuse and other serious offences.

The panel completed the call for evidence in September 2019, and published a Progress Update in October outlining the work completed and next steps.

The panel has been meeting regularly to discuss the wealth of evidence collected from 1,200 individuals and organisations, and are in the process of drafting their report. This will be published in due course.

■ Infant Mortality

Tim Loughton: [\[21\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to introduce regulations for empowering coroners to investigate stillbirths under the terms of the Civil Partnerships, Marriage and Deaths (registration etc) Act 2019.

Wendy Morton:

The Civil Partnerships, Marriage and Deaths (Registration etc) Act 2019 requires the Secretary of State to publish a report on the question of when and if so how the law should be changed to enable or require coroners to investigate stillbirths before the Lord Chancellor can exercise the power to make regulations to amend the relevant provisions of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The Government has consulted on proposals for coroners to investigate stillbirths and a report will be published in due course.

Legal Opinion**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[1408]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the number of people able to access early legal advice.

Wendy Morton:

Early legal advice is available for all legal cases within the scope of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO), subject to an assessment of means and merits. These cases fall within the category of "Legal Help".

We analysed trends in access to Legal Help as part of the Post-Implementation Review (PIR) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) which was published in February 2019. A copy of the PIR is available via:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777038/post-implementation-review-of-part-1-of-laspo.pdf

Alongside the LASPO PIR, we also published a Legal Support Action Plan which recognised the importance of early legal advice and need for more evidence in this area. We announced a number of initiatives and pilots to do this, including the expansion of early legal advice in a specific area of social welfare law, and launching a campaign to raise awareness of legal support, including legal aid. A copy of the Action Plan is available via:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/777036/legal-support-the-way-ahead.pdf

Paternity**Tim Loughton:****[1263]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether she has plans to undertake a review of the terms of the Legitimacy Act 1976 in relation to the registration of children born to parents who subsequently engage in a (a) marriage and (b) civil partnership.

Wendy Morton:

The Family Law Reform Act 1987 greatly reduced the practical significance in English law of the concept of legitimacy, so that children born outside marriage are not

stigmatised. The Government therefore has no plans to review the law on legitimacy at this time.

■ Prisoners: Religion

Dr Matthew Offord:

[1445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will collate statistics on the religious affiliations of the prison population.

Lucy Frazer:

Statistics on the religious affiliations of the prison population are published as part of the department's *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly* release.

The most recent data (based on the prison population as at 30 September 2019) can be found in Table 1.5 at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/842604/Population_Q2_2019.xlsx

■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Chris Stephens:

[1028]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of appeals to the Tribunals Service in (a) Glasgow South West, (b) Glasgow, (c) Scotland and (d) Great Britain for (i) personal independent payment, (ii) employment and support allowance, (iii) income support, (iv) jobseekers allowance and (v) tax credits were successful in the latest period for which figures are available.

Chris Philp:

Information about the outcomes of appeals in the First-tier Tribunal (Social Security and Child Support) (SSCS) is published at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/tribunals-statistics

SSCS appeals are listed into the hearing venue nearest to the appellant's home address. The published data (which can be viewed at the link above) provide information about the outcomes of (i) Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and (ii) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) appeals for hearing venues covering (a) Glasgow South West (b) Glasgow (c) Scotland and (d) Great Britain for the period July – September 2019, the latest period for which data are available. They also provide information about the outcomes for (iii) Income Support (IS). (iv) Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and (v) Tax Credits (TC) for (d) Great Britain

The tables below contain the requested information for (iii) IS, (iv) JSA and (v) TC for Glasgow and Scotland:

PROPORTION ¹ OF APPEALS DECIDED IN FAVOUR OF THE APPELLANT IN THE LATEST PERIOD FOR WHICH FIGURES ARE AVAILABLE (JULY – SEPTEMBER 2019)

IS

JSA

TC ²

PROPORTION ¹ OF APPEALS DECIDED IN FAVOUR OF THE APPELLANT IN THE LATEST PERIOD FOR WHICH FIGURES ARE AVAILABLE (JULY – SEPTEMBER 2019)

Glasgow South West ~ and Glasgow ³		17%	33%
Scotland	21%	27%	31%

¹ Proportion of decisions in favour, based on the number of appeals found in favour of the appellant as a % of the cases cleared at tribunal hearing.

² TC includes Working Family Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Working Tax Credit.

³ SSCS appeals for Glasgow South West constituents are heard in the Glasgow venue but this venue also hears appeals from other Glasgow constituencies. It is not possible to provide constituency-specific data.

~ Equates to a value of five or fewer

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the details are subject to inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale case management system and are the best data that are available.

PRIME MINISTER

■ SPAC Nation

Mr Steve Reed:

[\[1429\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, whether any officials of Number 10 met with SPAC Nation at Downing Street on 9 May 2018.

Boris Johnson:

I refer the Hon. Member to the contribution given by my Hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Helen Whately) during the adjournment debate on Thursday 8 January 2020, Official Report, Col.584.

SCOTLAND

■ Sovereignty: Scotland

Angus Brendan MacNeil:

[\[1321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will agree to the section 30 order requested by the Scottish Government for a Scottish independence referendum; and what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on a referendum of the (a) 2019 general election results in Scotland and (b) votes for a referendum in the Scottish Parliament.

Mr Alister Jack:

The Prime Minister has received the First Minister of Scotland's correspondence of 19 December 2019 seeking a transfer of power from the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliament to allow for an independence referendum. The Prime Minister will respond in due course. The UK Government remains committed to respecting the result of the 2014 Referendum as set out in the Edinburgh Agreement.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Middle East**

Stephen Doughty: **[1435]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what advice his Department has provided to (a) UK civilian airlines and (b) airlines operating in and out of UK airports on flying over (i) Iran, (ii) Iraq, (iii) the United Arab Emirates, (iv) Qatar, (v) Kuwait, (vi) Oman, (vii) Lebanon, (viii) Israel, (ix) Turkey and (x) Egypt.

Paul Maynard:

We are closely monitoring the developing situation in the region and have been keeping our advice to UK carriers under constant review. Both UK and foreign carriers continue to make their own routing decisions based on Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) and internal risk assessments.

Last week, the Department for Transport issued NOTAMs requesting that UK carriers avoid operating in Iranian and Iraqi airspace. This is in line with similar advice provided by international partners including the US, Canada, France and Germany.

■ Bus Services: Finance

James Cartlidge: **[343]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of innovation in the delivery of bus services funding; and if he will make a statement.

George Freeman:

In 2018/19, bus operators received around £2.1bn of support from the public sector, with around £1bn of funding for older and disabled people's concessions and £850m of subsidy for socially necessary services provided by local authorities and funded via MHCLG's Revenue Support Grant.

In addition, the Department for Transport provides £250m of support to local authorities and bus operators via Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG). In October 2019, the Government committed to review how BSOG is paid to ensure it supports the environment and improved passenger journeys.

In October 2019, the Government published A Better Deal for Bus Users, which sets out the Government's plans for buses, including providing local authorities with an additional £30m of funding in 2020/21 and publishing a buses strategy.

■ Cycling and Walking: West Midlands

Mr Andrew Mitchell:

[41]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding his Department has allocated to the West Midlands for projects relating to his Department's cycling and walking investment strategy in the last three years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Funding for cycling and walking comes from a variety of Government and non-Government sources. Government funding includes ringfenced and non-ringfenced funds. Over the last three years, local authorities in the West Midlands have received a total of approximately £56 million from ringfenced funds including the Cycle City Ambition fund, Bikeability and the Access Fund, and approximately £63 million from non-ringfenced funds including the Local Growth Fund, Transforming Cities Fund and National Productivity Investment Fund. The Department intends to publish further details of the funding that has been made available to local authorities for cycling and walking when it reports to Parliament later in 2020 on the progress that has been made in delivering the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

■ High Speed 2 Independent Review

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [1372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, on what date he plans to publish the Oakervee Review into High Speed Two.

Paul Maynard:

The Government has made clear its intentions to publish the report of the Oakervee review and the Transport Secretary has met Doug Oakervee to discuss the review. The Government will set out the next steps for High Speed 2 in due course.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Costs

Joy Morrissey:

[1358]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the report on HS2 published by Lord Berkeley on 5 January 2020, what recent assessment he has made of (a) the accuracy of the estimated cost benefit ratio of between 0.6 and 1 and (b) the value for money of the estimated cost of £107billion at 2019 detailed in that report.

Paul Maynard:

The Secretary of State commissioned the Oakervee Review to provide advice on how and whether to proceed with HS2, including examining the project's costs and benefit. Doug Oakervee's report will inform our assessment of the estimated cost if the Government decided to proceed. We will of course give appropriate consideration to Lord Berkeley's personal views.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Denham**Joy Morrissey:** [1047]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what compensation schemes for Denham residents have been put in place by HS2 Ltd.

Paul Maynard:

The Government has introduced a range of statutory and non-statutory property compensation schemes across the three phases of the HS2 route to support people and businesses impacted by the programme. Further details on all of the schemes can be found on the gov.uk website at <https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-if-affected-by-hs2>.

The schemes were introduced following extensive public consultation and will remain in place until one year after HS2 is operational.

In addition, HS2 Ltd supports local groups through the HS2 Community & Environment Fund and the HS2 Business & Local Economy Fund. This funding aims to add benefit over and above committed mitigation and statutory compensation to support communities and local economies along the route that are demonstrably disrupted by the construction of HS2. A total of £40 million is available for projects along the HS2 Phase One route. To date £112,000 has been awarded to projects based in the Beaconsfield constituency, with further funding also awarded to projects working across multiple constituencies in Buckinghamshire.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Freight**Joy Morrissey:** [1361]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies on High Speed Two of the National Infrastructure Commission's Report entitled Better Delivery: the challenge for freight, published in April 2019; whether High Speed Two will deliver the required additional capacity for future growth in freight; and what costed alternatives to High Speed Two his Department assessed to deliver similar future freight capacity.

Paul Maynard:

Government is considering the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Commission's study on the future of freight (Better Delivery: The Challenge for Freight, April 2019) and will respond in due course.

By replacing long distance passenger trains that currently run on the existing railway, HS2 will release spare capacity, particularly on the southern part of the West Coast Main Line. Subject to the outcome of the Oakervee Review and decisions by Government on whether and how to proceed with HS2, DfT expects to publish a Full Business Case which includes an assessment of the implications of HS2 for the freight industry.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Scotland

Joy Morrissey:

[1359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport of 10 July 2019, official report, column 203-204WH, what the (a) budget and (b) timetable is for extending High Speed Two to Scotland.

Paul Maynard:

As currently planned, HS2 trains will run directly to Scotland via a connection to the West Coast Mainline, improving journey times with London. The Department for Transport has been working closely with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to look at further options which, subject to having a good business case, could further improve journey times. In August 2019 the Prime Minister asked Doug Oakervee to chair an independent review of HS2 to provide advice on how and whether to proceed. The Government will set out the next steps for High Speed 2 in due course.

■ High Speed Two

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[938]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will list (a) the members of the HS2 Review Board who attended Board meetings of HS2 Ltd, (b) the dates of those Board meetings and (c) whether those members attended the whole of those meetings.

Paul Maynard:

a) The Chair of the Independent Review of HS2 Doug Oakervee and two of members of the Review Secretariat attended one HS2 Ltd board meeting b) which took place on 25 September 2019 to c) discuss one agenda item. They did not attend the whole of the meeting.

■ High Speed Two: Meetings

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[939]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons the Board minutes for HS2 Ltd have not been published since the September 2019 meeting; and if he will publish them immediately.

Paul Maynard:

HS2 Ltd are required to publish Board minutes within three months of the board meeting being held. The minutes from the September 2019 meeting have been published and are available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850254/190925_HS2_Board_Minutes.pdf

The minutes from meetings since September will be published and made available via the company's website as usual.

■ Manchester-Sheffield Railway Line

Robert Largan: [360]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress has been made on the proposed investment in the Hope Valley train line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail are working with suppliers on the detailed designs for the scheme and are very mindful of the sensitive nature of the National Park.

Work is underway to update the business case for the scheme to inform a final investment decision this Autumn. This is in line with our new approach to rail enhancements to ensure we address the needs of passengers and freight, and that funding commitments appropriately reflect the stage of development of schemes.

■ Maritime UK: Finance

Mr Kevan Jones: [1297]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to allocate funding from the public purse to Maritime Research and Innovation UK.

Ms Nusrat Ghani:

To date the Department for Transport has provided £3.3m to Maritime Research and Innovation UK (MarRI-UK). This funding has supported the establishment of MarRI-UK and two rounds of innovation funding - a £1.5m Clean Maritime Innovation Call and a £1.5m Technology and Innovation in UK Maritime Call.

Both calls take forward our Maritime 2050 ambitions set out in the Clean Maritime Plan and in the Technology and Innovation in UK Maritime Roadmap. The Government continues to support MarRI-UK in coordinating UK maritime research and development. It is MarRI-UK's intention to fund its core research programme through contributions from its members.

■ Midland Main Railway Line: Electrification

Alex Norris: [190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the work to electrify the Midland Mainline will commence.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Electrification works between Bedford and Kettering, as part of the Midland Main Line enhancement programme, are underway. Electric services on this route are planned to commence from December 2020.

The Midland Main Line enhancements programme will support better journeys from 2020, including faster journeys in the peak and more seats, with further improvements from 2022 with a fleet of brand new bi-mode trains.

■ Northern Rail Franchise

Robert Largan:

[\[359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made (a) of the performance of the current franchise with Northern Rail and (b) the level of service provided by Northern Rail to the (i) Glossop to Hadfield line, (ii) Hope Valley line and (iii) Buxton to Manchester line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Northern's recent performance has not been satisfactory, particularly in relation to train cancellations. The Rail North Partnership which manages the Northern franchise on behalf of the Department of Transport and Transport for the North is continuously assessing the operator's performance.

The Public Performance Measure (PPM) – the measure for train punctuality in Britain - for the Glossop to Manchester route which includes Hadfield was 82 per cent from October 13 to November 9. The Sheffield to Manchester route including Hope Valley was 52 per cent following severe weather disruption during this time and the Buxton to Manchester line was 81 per cent. The PPM average for Northern during this period was 71 per cent.

■ Railway Stations: Worcestershire

Harriett Baldwin:

[\[115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timescale is for the Office of Rail Regulation to approve the opening of Worcestershire Parkway station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Worcestershire County Council and its rail industry partners agreed in December 2019 that the new Worcestershire Parkway station would become fully operational early this year. The Department understands that the date for this will be confirmed as soon as possible, and that the ORR authorisation process is currently underway.

■ Railways: Compensation

Peter Kyle:

[\[1044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to introduce automatic compensation for rail passengers in respect of (a) delays and (b) poor service.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is working with the rail industry to introduce more automated Delay Repay compensation schemes across all DfT franchises to make claiming for delays easier, by notifying passengers where possible that they are eligible for compensation. Five DfT franchises now offer automated Delay Repay schemes, including smartcard holders on Govia Thameslink. This forms part of government's commitment to significantly improve compensation for passengers when things go wrong, as announced by the previous Secretary of State in October 2018.

In their Passenger's Charters, most TOCs offer more than the minimum standard for passenger compensation as set out in the National Rail Conditions of Travel (NRCoT). TOCs can, at their discretion, go beyond the commitments in their Passenger's Charter on a case by case basis to compensate for poor service.

■ Railways: Death

Andy McDonald:

[122]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many fatalities there have been on the rail network in each year since 2010.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Official statistics for fatalities on the mainline railway network in Great Britain are published by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), using information from the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB).

The latest statistics (for years up to 2018-19) are published on the ORR website at:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/health-and-safety/rail-safety/>

Statistics for fatalities and suicides from 2009-10 to 2018-19 are included in Table 1 below, separated by suicides and non-suicide fatalities.

Table 1: Number of mainline railway fatalities: 2009-10 to 2018-19

FINANCIAL YEAR	NON-SUICIDE FATALITIES	SUICIDES	TOTAL FATALITIES
2009-10	64	243	307
2010-11	39	209	248
2011-12	53	250	303
2012-13	49	245	294
2013-14	40	275	315
2014-15	49	286	335
2015-16	46	251	297
2016-17	39	237	276
2017-18	49	250	299
2018-19	40	271	311

These figures include passenger fatalities, public fatalities (including trespassers, level crossing users and suicides) and workforce fatalities. Workforce includes all fatalities that occurred whilst working for the railway, including those that did not

happen on the rail network (for instance, whilst travelling via road from one work station to another).

■ Railways: Disability

Peter Kyle:

[\[1042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve staff support for rail passengers with mobility challenges.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department is committed to ensuring that measures are in place for supporting passengers with additional needs, including those with mobility challenges on the rail network. As promised in the Inclusive Transport Strategy, we are supporting the Rail Delivery Group to improve the Passenger Assist system, including creating a new application for mobile phones that would be used for booking assistance.

The Department also worked with the Office of Rail and Road to review the Disabled People's Protection Policy guidance, now known as the Accessible Travel Policy guidance. The revised guidance includes strengthened provisions for staff support for disabled passengers.

■ Railways: Sanitation

Peter Kyle:

[\[1041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve toilet facilities on coastal rail routes in the South East.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Operators are required through their Franchise Agreements to achieve challenging satisfaction targets across a range of key measures which include toilet facilities at stations and on trains. The Department closely monitors this, and if these targets are missed, they must invest in improvements for passengers. Furthermore, toilet facilities at some stations are being improved as part of the £15m Passenger Benefit Fund, that was established by GTR following the May 2018 timetable disruption.

Toilet improvements have been requested by over half of the coastal stations as a high priority as part of the Passenger Benefit Fund. The Department will review these requests using its due diligence and approval process. The aim is to progress to implementation to realise the passenger benefits as soon as practicably possible.

■ Railways: Season Tickets

Peter Kyle:

[\[1045\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to introduce flexible season tickets for rail passengers.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

We require all new franchise bidders to bring forward proposals that meet the needs of passengers who work or commute fewer than 5 days a week. This could include

the use of multi-buy discounts such as carnet style tickets to provide passengers with a better deal than they get now.

Additionally, we are trialing a new, more flexible fares structure starting with part of GTR's network and will use the findings to inform development of wider plans to improve fares. As operators often serve diverse markets it is more appropriate to trial different reforms on certain operators.

The detailed design of the trial and locations are being developed by DfT and industry; and there will be a further announcement when that work is complete.

Keith Williams, who has been tasked by my Department with conducting a root and branch review of the railway, has been clear that fares reform is fundamental to the creation of a modern, customer focused railway. This represents an essential first step towards a major overhaul of the whole fares system.

■ Railways: Tickets

Peter Kyle:

[1043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve rail ticketing services (a) in stations and (b) online.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following the Department's recent work with the rail industry to roll out smart ticketing, train companies have greatly expanded the range of smart tickets that can be bought online and at stations. The Government wants to improve passengers' experience of buying tickets, which is why I wrote to train operators in the autumn asking for their plans to improve their customer offer. My department will work with train companies to deliver these improvements.

During the recent General Election the Government committed to extending contactless pay-as-you go ticketing to almost 200 more stations in the South East, meaning that 50 per cent of all rail journeys and almost all London commuter journeys can be completed using a contactless bank card. Pay-as-you-go means that passengers do not need to buy a ticket before travelling, which greatly simplifies rail travel and helps people commute more flexibly. Similarly, on 2 January the Government announced trials of part-time season tickets.

■ Railways: Walkden

Barbara Keeley:

[965]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase access to rail services in Walkden.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Northern is introducing refurbished trains that meet modern accessibility standards in the coming months, and these will serve Walkden. They will provide audio visual passenger information systems and wheelchair spaces among other accessibility features for disabled passengers.

In addition, Northern is required to spend at least £250,000 on station accessibility improvements in each year of its franchise and in addition deliver 10 accessible hub stations.

■ **Roads: Greater Manchester**

Barbara Keeley: [\[966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of new funding for road maintenance will be allocated to (a) Greater Manchester and (b) Salford City Council.

George Freeman:

The Government is committed to improving local infrastructure and expects to announce details of the available funding shortly. Individual allocations of this funding will be subject to Ministerial decisions.

■ **Roads: Merseyside**

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[1290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of new funding for road maintenance will be allocated to (a) Liverpool City Region and (b) Wirral council.

George Freeman:

The Government is committed to improving local infrastructure and expects to announce details of the available funding shortly. Individual allocations of this funding will be subject to Ministerial decisions.

■ **South Western Railway**

Bob Seely: [\[1402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what his policy is on the future of South Western Railway; and what plans he has for the future funding of the Island Line railway.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As part of responsible contingency planning, we have measures in place on every franchise to protect the interests of passengers and taxpayers, and to ensure that services keep running and the taxpayer is reimbursed if a franchise is unable to deliver the services required. The Island Line will continue to operate under the South Western Railway franchise. On 16 September 2019 I announced significant investment on the Island Line confirming our determination to provide passengers across the country with the modern rail network they expect.

■ **Tintwistle, Hollingworth and Mottram Bypass**

Robert Langan: [\[361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish an update on the planned Mottram bypass and Glossop Spur.

George Freeman:

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

■ West Midlands Rail Franchise**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the performance of West Midlands Railway services between Birmingham and Great Malvern station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department and West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) regularly monitor train service performance across the entire Franchise, and meet frequently with West Midlands Trains to support their plans for making services better and hold them to account when things go wrong. Since the timetable change, there has been a 3.89% (38.93% to 35.04%) reduction in right time arrivals in the Great Malvern and Malvern Link area, which is very disappointing. Since April 2019, a new 'On Time' performance measure was introduced. This new, tougher measure looks at the performance at every station along the route – not just whether trains reach their destination on time. This shows a collective commitment by industry and Government to provide a service on which passengers can rely.

In response to crowding issues, West Midlands Trains have added extra carriages to the 0647, 0736, 0807, and 0836 departures from Great Malvern, and the 1550 service from Birmingham New Street to Hereford. West Midlands Trains will also retain the Class 153 units until the delivery of their new trains later in 2020. These carriages will provide extra capacity for customers at Great Malvern station. West Midlands Trains has advised us they intend to recruit additional traincrew to make service delivery more robust.

Harriett Baldwin:[\[113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the performance of West Midlands Railway between Birmingham and Malvern Link.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department and West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) regularly monitor train service performance across the entire Franchise, and meet frequently with West Midlands Trains to support their plans for making services better and hold them to account when things go wrong. Since the timetable change, there has been a 3.89% (38.93% to 35.04%) reduction in right time arrivals in the Great Malvern and Malvern Link area, which is very disappointing. Since April 2019, a new 'On Time' performance measure was introduced. This new, tougher measure looks at the performance at every station along the route – not just whether trains reach their

destination on time. This shows a collective commitment by industry and Government to provide a service on which passengers can rely.

In response to crowding issues, West Midlands Trains have added extra carriages to the 0650, 0739, 0810, and 0839 departures from Malvern Link, and the 1550 service from Birmingham New Street to Hereford. West Midlands Trains will also retain the Class 153 units until the delivery of their new trains later in 2020. These carriages will provide extra capacity for customers at Malvern Link station. West Midlands Trains has advised us they intend to recruit additional traincrew to make service delivery more robust.

Harriett Baldwin:

[114]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what powers he has to require West Midlands Railway to compensate passengers for cancelled services.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Franchisees are contractually obliged under their Franchise Agreements to provide compensation to passengers in accordance with the National Rail Conditions of Carriage (NRCoC) and their Passenger's Charter. All Franchise Agreements require Franchisees to pay the compensation for delays which passengers are entitled to.

West Midlands Railway's Passenger's Charter commits them to offer a Delay Repay scheme. This entitles customers holding valid tickets to compensation for delays of 15 minutes or more, regardless of the cause. The Passenger's Charter was approved by the Secretary of State, and any future revisions to it must also achieve my consent.

The provisions within the Passenger's Charter are enforced by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) as part of the railway licencing arrangements.

TREASURY

■ Employment: Taxation

Gordon Henderson:

[102]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to (a) review the proposed changes to IR35 and (b) support people who are self-employed.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has commissioned a review of the off-payroll working rules reform (IR35). As set out at Budget 2018, the reform is due to be extended to all sectors from April 2020. The review will focus on the implementation of the reform, and consider whether there are any further steps the Government can take to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of the upcoming reforms. The off-payroll working rules do not affect the self-employed; part of the review will consider whether this is clearly understood by businesses in their implementation of the reforms. In parallel to the review, HMRC will be stepping up their efforts to support individuals and businesses in preparing for these changes and raising awareness of the reform.

The Government is committed to supporting self-employed professionals and consultants. From April 2019, the UK will have increased its Personal Allowance by over 90% in less than a decade. The self-employed have also been given access to the full rate of the new State Pension, worth over £2,000 a year more to a self-employed individual than under the previous system.

Budget 2018 announced that the Government is extending the New Enterprise Allowance, to help people start a business; introducing a £10m pilot to support self-employed training; and equalising the treatment of all self-employed people with respect to the Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[85]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the proposed review of the changes to IR35 will (a) begin and (b) conclude.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has commissioned a review of the off-payroll working rules reform (IR35). As set out at Budget 2018, the reform is due to be extended to all sectors from April 2020. The review was announced on 7 January and will focus on the implementation of the reform, including gathering evidence on the experiences of individuals and businesses. The review will consider whether there are any further steps the Government can take to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of the forthcoming reforms. The review will conclude in mid-February.

■ Equitable Life Assurance Society

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[203]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support people affected by the closure of Equitable Life.

John Glen:

After nearly 5 years of operation which saw over £1 billion paid to nearly 1 million affected policyholders, the Equitable Life Payment Scheme closed to claims in 2015. Further guidance on the status of the Payment Scheme after closure is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equitable-life-payment-scheme#closure-of-the-scheme>.

There are no plans to reopen the Payment Scheme or review the funding allocation made to it.

■ Mortgages

Dr Matthew Offord:

[84]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the lending requirements for mortgages to ensure the affordability of rents and repayments in relation to the current salary multiplier requirement.

John Glen:

The Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) 'Mortgage Market Review' regulations are based on the principle that mortgages should only be advanced where there is a

reasonable expectation that borrowers can repay. To provide new mortgage loans, all lenders must conduct an affordability assessment which includes a robust income and expenditure analysis, and the lender must obtain evidence of that income to support this assessment. Lenders must also comply with rules set by the Financial Policy Committee (FPC) at the Bank of England, intended to manage financial stability risks from the housing market, including a limit of 15% of new lending above 4.5 Loan-to-Income (LTI), and a stress test for loans at 3% above the Standard Variable Rate.

Both the FCA and the Bank of England keep their mortgage market regulations under review to ensure that they meet their objectives. In May 2016 the FCA conducted a review of the MMR, finding that the regulations had been implemented as desired protecting consumers without unduly restricting the availability of credit. The FCA's Mortgages Market Study of March 2019 also found that the market is working well for consumers. The FPC most recently reviewed their housing tools in December 2019 in their Financial Stability Report, including the 4.5 LTI cap, finding that they have had a positive impact in upholding strong underwriting standards to prevent an increase in the number of highly indebted households, whilst having only a limited impact on mortgage availability.

■ Pension Funds: Closures

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[204]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government has taken to prevent the closure of pension companies since the closure of Equitable Life.

John Glen:

The Government implemented a new solvency regime, set out in the Solvency II Directive, which came into force on 1 January 2016. This risk-based regulatory system, under which UK insurance companies are regulated, was developed by the European Commission over approximately 15 years with input from the UK Government, regulators and industry.

The Prudential Regulation Authority, the regulatory arm of the Bank of England, supervises UK insurance firms and groups under Solvency II. It has statutory objectives to promote the safety and soundness of the firms it regulates and contribute to securing an appropriate degree of protection for policyholders under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (sections 2b and 2c).

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Martyn Day:

[1398]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Answer of 4 November 2019 to Question 7187 on Revenue and Customs: Staff, if he will estimate the number of HMRC staff employed at the Bathgate Pyramids business centre who will relocate to the Edinburgh regional centre in September 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC expect a large number of staff in Bathgate (Pyramids Business Centre) to relocate to the Edinburgh Regional Centre when the office closes in September 2020. One-to-one meetings between staff and managers commenced in September 2019 and are now complete, but HMRC are still working through redeployment options for a number of colleagues. HMRC are committed to helping redeploy people and are unable to confirm the numbers of people that will be moving to Edinburgh Regional Centre until this important activity has been completed.

WALES**■ Trade Agreements: Wales****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[1312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent assessment he has made of the potential benefit to the Welsh economy of new free trade deals with developing countries.

Simon Hart:

We are working with countries across the world to explore the best ways to develop our current trade and investment relationships and ensure that Britain becomes a global leader in free trade once we leave the EU.

The UK's exit from the EU creates an opportunity for the UK to send a positive signal that our markets are open and we are determined to promote business with the developing world.

Increased trade and investment with developing countries creates opportunities for UK firms and consumers, for example lowering prices, and opening fast-growing markets for UK exporters.

My Department and others, including the Department for International Trade, are determined to ensure that the needs and interests of Wales are well represented and that any future trade deal works for the whole of the UK. We consult closely with the Welsh Government on this work.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Jobcentres: Glasgow****David Linden:**[\[185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on jobcentre users of the closure of Easterhouse Jobcentre.

David Linden:[\[186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on jobcentre users of the closure of Parkhead Jobcentre.

Mims Davies:

Customers previously served by Easterhouse and Parkhead Jobcentres are now served by Shettleston Jobcentre.

Our DWP estate announcement on 5 July 2017 confirmed that some smaller Jobcentres would merge with larger ones, and others would be co-located in local government premises. Merging our staff and services from some smaller or underutilised jobcentres, into larger Jobcentres nearby, makes better use of space and reduces costs to the taxpayer while still maintaining the same excellent level of customer service.

We are committed to retaining a Jobcentre Plus network and continuing to serve throughout GB to make sure they can continue to access the Jobcentre Plus services they need.

When closing or merging a Jobcentre, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) undertake an equality analysis as part of the detailed planning for service reconfiguration. This will include feedback from public consultation in those locations where this applied.

As part of the pre closure consultation work MPs and MSPs were invited to attend meetings with the local Service Leader as part of the consultation exercise to allow them to present constituent concerns; links were established with the hospital and Local Housing Associations to raise awareness of the closures; Customer Surveys were carried out to gather insight and to address any concerns; DWP staff attended meetings at the local Citizens Advice Scotland with key stakeholders, including providers and landlords, with a view to communicating the change.

In addition, to this stakeholder events were held giving all our stakeholders the opportunity to feed in concerns.

Outreach work continues in Easterhouse at Greater Easterhouse and John Wheatly College Supporting Hands. Employer Advisers attend weekly to provide updates on local vacancies and to help customers who wish to apply for these.

In Parkhead, we have set up a partnership with Cranhill Development Trust who attend Shettleston Jobcentre staff meetings and our staff also attend their meetings. This is a continual exchange of information on jobs and benefits to ensure the local community in Parkhead is supported.

David Linden:**[187]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government has taken to improve digital access for jobcentre customers in areas previously served by Easterhouse Jobcentre.

David Linden:**[188]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government has taken to improve digital access for jobcentre customers in areas previously served by Parkhead Jobcentre.

Mims Davies:

Customers previously served by Easterhouse and Parkhead Jobcentres are now served by Shettleston Jobcentre. A number of activities have been undertaken in Shettleston Jobcentre to improve digital access for customers including:

- Weekly sessions in the office's "Digi Suite" to provide help with job searching using smartphones and tablets.
- On-going customer sessions on digitally compiling a CV.
- On-going customer sessions on managing their Universal Credit account.
- Daily Drop in sessions to help customers upload medical certificates.
- Customer sessions providing support for customers applying for on-line vacancies I.E. HMRC, Royal Mail and Community Jobs Scotland vacancies.
- Daily full-time digital support provided for customers with Universal Credit access problems I.E. lost log in details, navigating their account, how to use of journal message etc.
- 15 customer access computers available for drop in use.
- 8 computers in the "Digi Suite" are available for group sessions.

In addition, Shettleston Jobcentre has a number of partners located within the office to provide supplementary support to customers. This includes:

- Citizens Advice located in jobcentre for "Help to Claim ".
- Jobs and Business Glasgow provide additional support with CV's, job searching, online support and confidence building.
- Momentum provide support with CV's, Job searching, online support and confidence building.

All MPs are encouraged to visit and engage with their local Jobcentres and the Service Leaders to keep up to date with innovations.

■ Occupational Pensions: West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine

Andrew Bowie:**[1780]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people in West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine constituency have (a) opted out after being auto-enrolled into a workplace pension and (b) saved more than the auto-enrolment minimum contribution.

Guy Opperman:

Automatic enrolment has achieved a quiet revolution through getting employees into the habit of pension saving. It has reversed the decline in workplace pension participation seen in the decade prior to its introduction. Since automatic enrolment started in 2012 participation rates have been transformed with 87% of eligible employees saving into a workplace pension in 2018, up from 55% in 2012.

The Department does not hold data for individual constituencies in relation to opt outs or the number of individuals who have saved above the automatic enrolment minimum contribution level. However, we do know that overall around 9% of automatically enrolled workers have chosen to opt out which is significantly below original estimates; and our latest evaluation report shows that, in April 2017, approximately 5.9 million eligible employees were already meeting the April 2019 minimum contribution rates.

I am providing the following information about the impact of automatic enrolment in your constituency, as of November 2019.

In the West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine constituency, since 2012, approximately 10,000 eligible jobholders have been automatically enrolled and 1,870 employers have met their duties.

Automatic Enrolment Evaluation Report 2018, available via the following weblink:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764964/Automatic_Enrolment_Evaluation_Report_2018.pdf.

The Pensions Regulator's data on Automatic enrolment declaration of compliance by constituency, available via the following weblink:

<https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/document-library/research-and-analysis/data-requests>

■ Poverty: Children

Neil Gray:

[317]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to reduce child poverty.

Will Quince:

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

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

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

There is clear evidence that children in working households are not only less likely to grow up in poverty – their life chances are also significantly better. We will therefore continue to reform the welfare system so that it works with the tax system and the labour market to support employment and higher pay. Promoting full-time work

through work incentives is a key feature of this approach, reinforced by the National Living Wage and the rising Personal Tax Allowance, which work together to promote independence from benefits.

■ Social Security Benefits

Neil Gray:

[319]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons her Department is increasing working-age benefits in line with the rate of inflation from April 2020 rather than an earlier date.

Will Quince:

The Secretary of State is bound by law to complete an annual review of benefit and pension rates to determine whether they have retained their value in relation to the general level of prices or – for pensions - earnings. This statute requires benefit and pension rates to be reviewed and set in each tax year. April 2020 is the new financial year.

The Secretary of State has completed her review and a Written Statement was tabled on 4 November:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-11-04/HCWS74/>

■ Social Security Benefits: Up-rating

Stephen Timms:

[942]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to (a) end the benefits freeze and (b) up-rate the value of (i) universal credit and (ii) other social security payments in the next twelve months.

Will Quince:

The freeze on working age benefits will end in April 2020.

A table of benefit and pensions rates pending Parliamentary approval were deposited in the House Library on 29 November 2019 -

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/business-papers/commons/deposited-papers/>

■ Social Security Benefits: York

Rachael Maskell:

[331]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been sanctioned in York in the last five years.

Mims Davies:

The information is **publicly** available on the link below.

The number of Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants who have been sanctioned by local authority and region is published at can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

We will be holding future stat-xplore training sessions for all MPs.

■ Television: Licensing

Chris Stephens:

[1095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost to the public purse was of providing free television licences to people over 75 for qualifying residents in (a) Glasgow South West constituency, (b) Glasgow city local authority area and (c) Scotland in 2018-19; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

In the 2015 funding settlement, the Government agreed with the BBC that responsibility for the concession will transfer to the BBC in June 2020.

On 10 June 2019, the BBC announced that the current scheme will end. From 1 June 2020, a free TV licence will only be available to a household with someone aged over 75 who receives Pension Credit.

2018/19 is the first year of the part funding agreement leading up to the BBC taking responsibility for policy and funding of the concession from June 2020. The figures in the table below therefore are DWP's share only, not the total expenditure.

The table below provides estimates of the costs for 2018/19 of providing free TV licences to people aged 75 years and over in Glasgow South West constituency, Glasgow City local authority and Scotland.

	EXPENDITURE (£M) (NOMINAL)
	2018-19
(a) Glasgow South West constituency	£0.5
(b) Glasgow City local authority	£3.0
(c) Scotland	£38.0

■ Universal Credit

Louise Haigh:

[493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make the assessment period for universal credit coterminous with HMRC deadlines.

Will Quince:

Entitlement to Universal Credit is calculated and paid monthly in arrears, in a single payment.

Assessment periods allow Universal Credit awards to be adjusted on a monthly basis, to reflect as closely as possible the actual circumstances of a household during that period. This helps to ensure that if a claimant's income changes, they do not have to wait several months for a corresponding change in their Universal Credit award.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

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.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 9 January 2020. The correct answer should have been:

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~~ **142,000** 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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Welfare Update

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Welfare Delivery (Will Quince):

[[HCWS29](#)]

I am announcing that from April 2020 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates will be increased in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), ending the freeze to the Local Housing Allowance and delivering on the manifesto commitment to end the benefit freeze.

The Rent Officers Orders for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, which provide for the increase, will be laid in the House later today and a corresponding provision will implement the changes for Northern Ireland

This increase will mean the majority of people in receipt of housing support in the Private Rented Sector will see their housing support increase, on average benefiting by around £10 per month.

This Government continues to spend around £95 billion a year on working age benefits, including around £23 billion to help people with their housing costs.

Ending the freeze to LHA rates ensures we are continuing to support the most vulnerable in society. And, as announced at the Spending Round in September 2019 there will be an additional £40 million in Discretionary Housing Payments for 2020/21, to help affordability in the private rented sector.

My Department will continue to work with colleagues across government on housing, including working closely with MHCLG to find ways to reduce homelessness and meet the cost of living in rented accommodation through good housing supply and a welfare system that supports the vulnerable.