



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 31 January 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:58 P.M., 31 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

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[7235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of apprenticeship starts there have been at level (a) 2 and (b) 3 and above in each year since 2009.

Michelle Donelan:

The number and proportion of apprenticeship starts at level 2 and level 3 + in each year since 2008/09 are shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. 7235_table
[7235_table_of_apprenticeship_starts_at_level_2_and_level_3+_for_2008_to_2018.doc]

■ Apprentices: Taxation

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[7276\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to make Apprenticeship Levy funding more flexible to enable businesses to access it for a wider range of accredited training.

Michelle Donelan:

The apprenticeship levy underpins our reforms to raise apprenticeship quality and support employers to make a long-term, sustainable investment in the skills that they need to grow. Income from the levy is used to fund apprenticeships in all employers (both in employers who pay the levy and employers who do not).

In response to employers, we have already introduced the flexibility for levy-payers to transfer up to 25% of their funds, enabling them to support apprenticeship starts in their supply chains or to meet local skills needs. In January, we extended the use of transfers to cover the full cost of training for 16 to 18 year olds and eligible 19 to 24 year olds in employers with fewer than 50 employees.

We are committed to improving the working of the apprenticeship levy to ensure it continues to deliver the skilled workforce that employers need.

■ Boarding Schools: Offences against Children

Steve Reed:

[\[6698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether it is his Department's policy that residential schools should be required to notify (a) Ofsted or (b) the Independent Schools Inspectorate on allegations of child sexual abuse.

Michelle Donelan:

It is not part of current policy that residential schools should notify Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate on allegations of child abuse. Statutory guidance in "Keeping Children Safe in Education" requires all schools to refer allegations of abuse against children to the local authority, who are the relevant agency to investigate.

■ Care Leavers and Children in Care

Steve Reed: [\[6699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to implement a nationally agreed framework that sets out the expectations for supported living of (a) care leavers and (b) children in care.

Michelle Donelan:

This is a priority area for this government. We are already considering where further changes should be made to ensure that semi-independent and independent settings are used appropriately and that they are of good quality. As set out in the manifesto, we are also committed to undertaking a review of the care system, considering how we support vulnerable children and young people in order to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

■ Children: Care Homes

Steve Reed: [\[6693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the finding by Ofsted on page 16 of its Annual Report 2018-19, published on 21 January 2020, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the lack of children's homes in the right places.

Steve Reed: [\[6695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase capacity in the the children's home care system.

Michelle Donelan:

All local authorities have a duty to ensure they have sufficient provision to meet the needs of children in their care. We recognise that some local authorities are facing challenges ensuring there is sufficient provision in their areas to meet the needs of children. We are continuing to take steps to understand this issue and support local authorities.

We are working to increase placement options so that children are placed in homes that meet their needs. This includes £5 million from our £200 million Innovation Fund to increase councils' residential capacity and improve commissioning practice. We also recognise that a lack of capacity in the fostering system can impact demand for children's homes places and we have made nearly £500,000 in seed-funding available for 7 partnerships to test new approaches to sufficiency planning and commissioning in foster care.

We provided funding to local and combined authorities to commission feasibility studies into opening new secure provision to increase available capacity. The Residential Care Leadership Board is also sharing learning across the sector. In 2020-21, local government is getting an additional £1 billion grant for adult and children's social care. This is on top of the continuation of the £410 million social care grant in 2020-21. This will support local authorities to meet rising demand.

The department is continuing to look at what else we can do to support local authorities to ensure that children in care are provided with suitable accommodation that meets their needs. As set out in the manifesto, we are committed to undertaking a review of the care system to make sure that all care placements and settings are providing children and young adults with the support they need.

Steve Reed:

[6694]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2018-19 Annual Report, published by Ofsted in January 2020, what steps his Department plans to take to reduce the level of skills shortages in the residential social care workforce.

Michelle Donelan:

The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 introduced for the first-time quality standards for children's homes. This includes the new and improved mandatory qualifications for those working in residential childcare, which were designed specifically to better meet children's needs, by ensuring each new entrant demonstrates their competence in the core knowledge and skills required. The Regulations set out that it is the children's home's registered person's responsibility to ensure staff have the necessary experience, qualifications and skills to meet the needs of each child, including any ongoing continuous professional development.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's Interim Report (April 2018) recommended further workforce regulation through introducing professional registration arrangements for staff in children's homes. The department responded by issuing a Call for Evidence in summer 2019 to gather sector perspectives on wider workforce issues including workforce regulation, qualifications, training and professional standards. We recognise that in order to provide good quality care, we need a high quality, motivated workforce that feel valued and is adequately trained and qualified. We are currently exploring options following on from the Call for Evidence findings. We also understand that some residential homes face challenges attracting and retaining the right number of staff and the department is in regular dialogue with the sector about this issue.

The care review is a fundamental part of this government's manifesto. We are moving forward with plans to review how we support vulnerable children and young people, in order to meet their needs and improve their outcomes.

■ Education: Males**Ben Bradley:****[6162]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support working class boys to close the attainment gap.

Nick Gibb:

Educational achievement is at the heart of this Government's commitment to ensure no young person is left behind because of the place or circumstances of their birth. Due to our reforms, 86% of pupils attend a Good or Outstanding school compared with 66% in 2010.

'Working class' is not a description recognised or measured by the Department. We measure the outcomes of those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds as defined by the benefit-related definition for 'disadvantaged'. We recognise that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – including those currently or formerly claiming free school meals and currently or formerly looked after - may face extra challenges in achieving their potential at school. We introduced the pupil premium in 2011 and have invested over £15 billion – and another £2.4 billion this year – so that schools have the resources to provide extra support for disadvantaged pupils of all abilities. White disadvantaged boys and girls constitute the largest group of eligible pupils and so benefit significantly from this extra support.

Against a background of rising standards, disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers. The attainment gap index shows that since 2011, the gap at the end of primary school has narrowed by 13% and the gap at the end of secondary school has narrowed by 9%. This indicates better prospects for a secure adult life for disadvantaged pupils. Our reforms, and the focus provided by the pupil premium, have supported this improvement.

The Department recognises there is more to do for disadvantaged pupils. Our ambition is to halve the number of children who finish Reception without the communication and reading skills they need to thrive. Our £72 million Opportunity Areas programme will focus resource on areas with low social mobility. We have also dedicated £24 million to Opportunity North East to address the specific challenges in that region.

The Department's establishment of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) with a £137 million grant has ensured that schools have access to high quality, evidence-based, effective practice drawn from hundreds of trials across England. We recommend that schools consult the EEF's resources, particularly its recent 'Pupil Premium Guide', when they are considering how best to support their pupils and close the attainment gap.

■ Foreign Students: EU Countries

Mr David Lammy:

[7103]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what effect the end of the transition period will have on UK students studying at universities in EU member states.

Chris Skidmore:

The UK Government has negotiated a deal which allows us to leave the EU without disruption on 31 January 2020. Under the Withdrawal Agreement, EU rules and regulations will continue to apply in the UK during the transition period until 31 December 2020. Throughout the duration of the transition period UK students studying in the EU will be able to continue their studies as they do now.

Our future relationship with the EU will be negotiated during this transition period. Protecting the rights of both UK Nationals in the EU and EU citizens in the UK is an absolute priority for this government, and it is of mutual interest to both the UK and the EU to agree a future partnership that helps to create a new generation of globally mobile, culturally agile people who can succeed in an increasingly global marketplace.

This is supported by the new Political Agreement, published in October 2019, which makes clear that the UK remains committed to exploring ongoing cooperation with the EU on education, science and innovation.

■ Gambling: Education

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[6730]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the findings of Gambling Commission's Young people and gambling survey 2019 published on 23 October 2019, what recent discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on educating school children about the risks of gambling and in-game loot boxes and (b) the Chancellor of the Exchequer on increasing the levies on gambling to pay for such education.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, meets regularly with Cabinet colleagues to discuss the agenda of the Department for Education. This includes relevant topics covered by the new subjects of relationships education (for primary age pupils), relationships and sex education (for secondary age pupils) and health education (for all pupils in state-funded schools). The Department for Education has worked with other Departments, including the Department for Health and Social Care, in developing the content for the new curriculum subjects which will be taught in schools from September 2020.

The Department for Education wants to equip young people for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society. The statutory guidance for the new subjects was published in June 2019, which is available at:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm>

[ent_data/file/805781/Relationships_Education_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf](#).

The subjects will support all young people in terms of managing risk, making informed decisions, as well as in key aspects such as mental wellbeing and online behavior. Under the topic of internet safety and harms, it sets out that young people should be taught about the risks related to online gambling, including the accumulation of debt, how advertising and information is targeted at them, and how to be a discerning consumer of information online.

■ Literacy: Primary Education

Mr Richard Holden:

[7234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of children in schools in North West Durham passed the phonics screening check (a) when it was introduced and (b) in the latest period for which figures are available.

Nick Gibb:

The Department introduced the phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils in 2012. The latest available figures are for the academic year 2018-19. Figures for the proportion of children in state-funded schools in North West Durham who met the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 are set out in the table below. As shown, 60% of pupils in state-funded schools in the parliamentary constituency met the expected standard in 2012, compared to 83% in 2019.

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in Year 1 in the phonics screening check

All state funded schools, England (2012, 2019)

	2012		2019	
	No. eligible pupils	% met standard	No. eligible pupils	% met standard
England	592,007	58%	649,152	82%
County Durham	5,402	60%	5,622	82%
North West Durham	959	60%	1009	83%

Equivalent figures for England and the local authority of County Durham are provided for context.

■ Mathematics and Science: Teachers

Gareth Thomas:

[\[7096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of vacancies for permanent science and maths teachers at high schools in London; what steps he is taking to fill those vacancies; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's latest statistics show that in London in 2018, there were 87 unfilled or temporarily filled full-time classroom teacher vacancies in science (including biology, physics, chemistry, computer science, general science and other science) and 55 full-time classroom teacher vacancies in mathematics. This is a 15% decrease in the number of vacancies in science and an 11% decrease in the number of vacancies in mathematics compared to 2017.

It is a top priority of the Department to ensure there are excellent teachers for every child which is why we launched the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy last year. We understand the challenge of filling vacancies is not just of recruitment, but it is also of retaining the teachers we do have. The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy includes the biggest teaching reform in a generation, the Early Career Framework (ECF). The ECF provides new teachers across all subjects with the solid foundations for a successful career in teaching, backed by £130 million a year in funding when fully rolled out in 2021.

As the economy improves, we know that the demand for talented graduates increases. To put teaching on a par with the top graduate professions, we have committed to plans to raise starting salaries for new teachers to £30,000 by 2022-23.

The Department understands that recruitment and retention challenges are more pronounced in some subjects than others, which is why we have targeted initiatives aiming to improve recruitment and retention in our priority subjects – including physics, chemistry, biology, computing and mathematics.

We have announced tax-free bursaries of £26,000 for physics, chemistry, biology, computing and mathematics trainees with a 2:2 or higher starting their teacher training 2020-21. Teachers in physics, chemistry and mathematics will also receive three early-career payments totalling £6,000 spread across years two, three and four of teaching.

The Department is also offering prestigious scholarship schemes to those starting their teacher training in 2020-21 for priority subjects including mathematics, physics, chemistry and computing. These scholarships are delivered in partnership with professional bodies and successful scholars will receive a bursary of £28,000 tax-free, as well as the same early-career payments as those who receive a bursary. All successful scholars will also receive a package of support provided by the professional bodies including free membership, resources and early career support.

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 recruitment and retention plans, join national programmes, build local partnerships or fund new initiatives. 27 schools in London are currently receiving this support.

■ Overseas Students: Commonwealth

Andrew Rosindell:

[7135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many university places were allocated to non-British Commonwealth citizens in each year from 2015 to 2019.

Chris Skidmore:

Information on students at UK higher education institutions (HEIs) is collected and published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). More information is available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk>.

The number of higher education entrants to UK HEIs from Commonwealth countries has been provided in the table.

A list of countries that are currently in the Commonwealth can be found here: <https://thecommonwealth.org/member-countries/all>.

Entrants to all levels of higher education by domicile prior to study

UK Higher Education Institutions

Academic years 2014/15 to 2018/19

	ACADEMIC YEAR				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Domicile¹					
UK	756,505	761,005	778,115	775,660	780,105
Other	51,405	46,750	43,420	46,115	52,235
Commonwealth ²					
Non-Commonwealth	180,890	184,670	191,950	201,585	215,285
Total	988,800	992,425	1,013,485	1,023,360	1,047,630

Source:

DfE analysis of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record

Notes:

Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5, so components may not sum to totals

¹ Domicile refers to country of student's permanent address prior to entry

² Commonwealth member countries as at 27 January 2020

■ Pupils: Sanitary Protection

Mr Richard Holden:

[7228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) recyclable and (b) reusable sanitary products have been included in the scheme to make free sanitary products available in schools.

Michelle Donelan:

The scheme provides a wide range of period products for schools and 16-19 organisations to choose from. This includes environmentally friendly pads, reusable pads, organic non-applicator tampons and menstrual cups. The ingredients for each product are provided on the ordering portal and in the scheme's guidance.

Schools and colleges know their learners best and have the freedom to select the most suitable products for their learners, considering cost and type of product. We are monitoring product choice closely and will continue to seek opportunities to encourage the use of sustainable products as the scheme develops.

■ Schools: Carbon Emissions

Afzal Khan:

[7249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in England are taking steps to insulate their buildings to meet local and national carbon reduction targets.

Afzal Khan:

[7251]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that schools are aware of the Salix Loan available to insulate school buildings and meet carbon reduction targets.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Department encourages schools to limit their impact on the environment by taking a range of actions including minimising heat loss through improved insulation. The Department has a programme of capital investment in schools and will have spent £22 billion on new and improved school buildings between 2017 and 2021.

The Schools Buying Strategy was created to help schools with procurement to help ensure they get the best value for money. There are a wide range of recommended frameworks and support which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools>. Advice on good estate management, including the Salix loan scheme can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools/information-training-and-tools>.

Salix Finance Ltd. was established in 2004 as an independent, publicly funded company through which interest-free government funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department for Education, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government provides the public sector with loans for

projects to improve energy, reduce bills and reduce carbon emissions. Schools can access Salix funding through three routes:

- 1) the Salix Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme for maintained schools.[1]
- 2) Salix Energy Efficiency Fund for academies administered directly by Salix.[2]
- 3) through the DfE's Condition Improvement Fund.[3]

[1] For maintained schools, information is available on gov.uk and promoted by the department at schools' events and shows.

[2] The department promotes the Salix Energy Efficiency Fund on gov.uk and will notify academies via an email bulletin.

[3] For academies that are eligible to apply to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), the department alerts them by direct email and also publishes information on Salix in the CIF applicant guidance which we have promoted on gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund>.

■ Schools: Music

Tulip Siddiq:

[6744]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what reports he has received of sexual harassment at (a) music schools and (b) conservatoires; and what steps his Department is taking to prevent harassment at those institutions.

Michelle Donelan:

Like all independent schools, music schools are required to meet the Independent School Standards. The Standards require that schools have regard to the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance. This requires schools to address sexual harassment appropriately, including duties related to allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff and reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment between children.

Independent schools (including music schools) are inspected by either Ofsted or the Independent Schools Inspectorate to test compliance with the Independent School Standards. Inspectors always assess compliance with the statutory guidance as part of their inspections. Breaches of the Independent School Standards are dealt with through the department's policy on regulatory and enforcement action against independent schools.

Complaints about specific schools received by the department are normally shared with the relevant inspectorate. These can be investigated fully at the next inspection and, if the concerns are significant, the department can commission an emergency inspection or bring forward the next standard inspection.

In relation to conservatoires, all Conservatoires UK members are signed up to its principles of best practice, which apply to teaching settings involving students who are 18 years of age or over.

Universities UK has a programme of activity to support their members and the wider sector to prevent and respond effectively to all forms of harassment and hate crime. Their programme in 2019-2020 includes a focus on staff-to-student sexual harassment. The Office for Students (OfS), which regulates higher education providers, published a consultation on 9 January. The consultation, which will conclude on 27 March, sets out proposals for a proposed set of expectations for the policies, processes and systems that the OfS expects providers to have in place to effectively address sexual misconduct and harassment.

■ Special Educational Needs

Steve Reed: [\[6691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will make an assessment of the proportion of pupils removed from the school roll without an exclusion with special educational needs.

Steve Reed: [\[6692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the role played by academic achievement in the removal from the school roll of pupils without an exclusion.

Nick Gibb:

A pupil's name can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in Regulation 8, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register. The Department does not hold information centrally on the reason pupils are removed from the school register.

The Department has made clear the practice of off-rolling, whereby children are removed from school rolls without formal exclusion in ways that are in the interests of the school rather than the pupil, is unacceptable. Informal or unofficial exclusions are unlawful and we have previously written to schools to remind them of the rules on exclusions. Any school off-rolling on the basis of academic achievement is quite simply breaking the law.

We are continuing to work with Ofsted to tackle the practice of off-rolling. Since September 2019, Ofsted's new education inspection framework details that where inspectors find off-rolling, this will always be addressed in the inspection report, and where appropriate, could lead to a school's leadership being judged inadequate.

Steve Reed: [\[6697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to increase the effectiveness of multi-agency working for children and young people with SEND.

Michelle Donelan:

Effective multi-agency working is integral to delivering joined-up and impactful support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

We are committed to improving the services and support that these children and young people receive, which is why this government announced an additional £780 million investment in high needs funding for 2020-21.

However, we recognise that funding alone is not enough and this government is taking active steps to improve join-up across education, health and care to support children and young people with SEND. We have established the SEND System Leadership Board, bringing together commissioners across education, health and care to improve the way partners jointly plan, commission and deliver SEND provision. In addition, in September 2019 we launched the SEND review. A key focus of this review is how we can improve cross-system working across education, health and care to support the most positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Dr Lisa Cameron:[\[7270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide additional support to schoolchildren with SEND.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has announced a £780 million increase to local authorities' high needs funding, boosting the budget by 12% and bringing the total spent on supporting those with the most complex needs to over £7 billion for 2020-21. In addition, we have launched a cross-government Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) review to improve how children and young people with SEND are supported in the current system.

We have also invested a total of £365 million through the special provision capital fund from 2018-19 to 2020-21. This funding can be used to create more places in special educational needs units and resourced provision in mainstream schools or colleges, in special schools, or in any of the other types of provision used by local authorities for pupils and students with education, health and care plans.

This government is also committed to expanding AP schools as well as delivering more school places for children with complex SEND including through the free schools programme. Currently there are 43 open special free schools and 47 open alternative provision free schools. These schools have helped to provide innovation, choice and higher standards for parents. There are a further 48 special free schools and 7 AP free schools due to open in the future.

■ Teachers: Migrant Workers

Mr David Lammy:

[\[7107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of teachers employed by the state sector are non-UK EU nationals.

Nick Gibb:

The Migration Advisory Committee's report, 'A full review of the Shortage Occupation List (May 2019)', estimated that around 4% of secondary school teachers and around 2% of primary and nursery school teachers were born in the EEA (excluding the UK).

The Department publishes data on the nationality of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) trainees. In 2019-20, there were 28,859 postgraduate new entrants to ITT whose nationality was known (98% of all postgraduate new entrants). Of these, 5% (1,484) were EEA nationals (excluding the UK). This is the same proportion as in academic years 2018-19, 2017-18, and 2016-17.

■ Young People: Religious Sects

Catherine West:

[\[6781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance her Department issues to (a) schools and (b) educational providers on protecting young and vulnerable people from cults.

Michelle Donelan:

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance is clear that schools and colleges should have in place robust systems for the safeguarding and protection of children. Staff should be alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate there is a safeguarding risk and they may be in need of help or protection. If staff have concerns about a child's welfare, they should act immediately, following their own organisation's child protection policy and taking advice from the designated safeguarding lead.

All schools must offer a broad and balanced curriculum, which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Citizenship in the curriculum teaches pupils how to explore political and social issues critically, to weigh evidence, debate and to make reasoned arguments.

From September 2020, relationships education for all primary aged pupils and relationships and sex education for all secondary aged pupils will be compulsory. Health education will also be compulsory for all state funded pupils. The subjects are designed to equip young people for adult life and focus, for example, on building positive relationships, developing physical and mental health, identifying risks and knowing how to seek help when needed.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Fuels: Northern Ireland**

Philip Davies: [\[8983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions she has had with her Irish counterpart on that Government's consultation on the regulation of domestic burning of solid fuels and peat; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Secretary of State has not had discussions with her Irish counterpart on the Irish Government's consultation.

■ Plastics: Malaysia

Dr Alan Whitehead: [\[7581\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if she will undertake an investigation into the reasons that plastic waste declared illegal by the Malaysian Government was granted permission to be exported.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK authorities did not authorise this shipment. Under the current EU legislation there is no obligation on the exporter to obtain permission for this type of waste prior to its export. As part of the Resources and Waste Strategy, the Government has committed to review the regulatory framework covering waste shipments to ensure that we improve the quality of UK waste exports.

In this case the paperwork necessary to allow the import of the 42 containers had not been put in place by the importer. UK exporters have an obligation to ensure appropriate permissions from overseas authorities have been obtained prior to export of any waste. The 42 containers of waste, which are in the process of being returned to England, were exported to Malaysia without an "Approved Permit" import licence from the Malaysian Department of National Solid Waste Management. The return of these containers is being managed and financed by the parties involved in the original export to Malaysia as it is their responsibility.

The Government is deeply concerned about the illegal trade in waste, including reports of illegal plastic waste exported from the UK to Malaysia. Recognising the difficulties experienced by some countries in managing imports of plastic waste, the Queen's Speech on 19 December last year included a commitment to ban the export of polluting plastic wastes to countries that are not members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. We will consult this year on the date by which this should be achieved.

■ Wildlife: Smuggling

Emily Thornberry:

[\[7175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to assist states in the Global South to tackle (a) poaching and (b) wildlife crime.

Rebecca Pow:

The UK Government is at the forefront of international efforts to protect endangered wildlife from poaching and illegal trade. We are investing over £36 million between 2014 and 2021 to support practical action in developing countries, including our counter-poaching Task Force in Africa, 75 projects so far funded from our Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and through the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime. We are also contributing £250 million to the Global Environment Facility between 2018 and 2022 which, amongst other things, supports the world's biggest fund for tackling illegal wildlife trade, the Global Wildlife Programme.

A further £30 million will be invested in tackling poaching and wildlife crime between 2021 and 2024 as part of the £220 million International Biodiversity Fund recently announced by the Prime Minister.

■ Wind Power: Seas and Oceans

Layla Moran:

[\[6767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that support for the deployment of offshore wind generation capacity to meet net zero emissions targets does not harm international marine species and habitats.

Rebecca Pow:

We fully support the growth of offshore wind and recognise the essential role it plays in meeting the net zero target. Defra has a significant interest in offshore wind development in terms of its potential to contribute to meeting the Government's climate change commitments, and we also have a critical role in ensuring the protection of our marine environment, particularly across our network of designated Marine Protected Areas.

We are working with other Government bodies, the Crown Estate, industry and wider stakeholders to mitigate against, and prepare for, any environmental impacts of growth in the offshore wind sector. This programme of measures will enable the responsible and sustainable growth of offshore wind.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE■ **Armenia: Gold**

Jon Trickett: [\[7583\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, how many times officials from his Department have visited the Amulsar gold mine in the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The British Ambassador to Yerevan at the time visited the Amulsar gold mine in Armenia for the ground-breaking ceremony in 2016.

Jon Trickett: [\[7584\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, whether his Department has received representations from the Government of Armenia on the Amulsar gold mine.

Christopher Pincher:

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office has received no representations from the Government of Armenia on the Amulsar gold mine.

■ **Burma: Rohingya**

Emily Thornberry: [\[7173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Court of Justice's decision concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar).

Dominic Raab:

We have welcomed the International Court of Justice's decision on provisional measures, which was clear that Myanmar must do more to protect the Rohingya. This decision reinforces the UK's policy on protecting the Rohingya. We urge Myanmar to comply with these measures in full. We urge Myanmar to implement the recommendations of the Annan-led Rakhine Advisory Commission and of the recent domestic Independent Commission of Enquiry.

■ **Chile: Demonstrations**

Emily Thornberry: [\[7164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Chilean counterpart on recent protests in that country.

Dominic Raab:

The British Government is concerned by events that have occurred in Chile. Our Ambassador in Chile has talked with representatives of the Chilean Government about the protests and has expressed concern about the violence and reports of

human rights abuses. Our Embassy in Santiago will remain in contact with the Chilean authorities, and we continue to monitor the situation closely.

■ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Disclosure of Information

Tulip Siddiq:

[7647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, for what reason document FCO 93/1981 has not been released to the National Archives; and if he will place a copy of the document into the library.

Christopher Pincher:

FCO 93/1981 is a 1979 Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) file entitled "Sale of military equipment from the USA to Jordan". It was released in full with no redactions to The National Archives (TNA) in January 2010. The FCO, like other government departments, is responsible for selecting its archive records for permanent preservation in line with the requirements of the Public Records Act. Records selected for permanent preservation are transferred to TNA where they are available to members of the public, subject to any legal exemptions.

■ Guinea: Demonstrations

Emily Thornberry:

[7168]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his counterpart in Guinea on reports that two people were killed by security forces during protests in that country.

Dominic Raab:

The British Government is concerned by reports of the deteriorating political environment in Guinea, and about demonstrations that have led to a number of violent incidents, including deaths. In its statement at the United Nations Human Rights Council's 35th Universal Periodic Review on 21 January, the UK urged the Government of Guinea to ensure the safety of journalists and human rights defenders, so they could exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association without fear of reprisals. We also said that it was crucial that elections were transparent, fair, timely and credible.

The United Kingdom supports freedom of expression as a fundamental human right alongside freedom of the media. We regularly raise our concerns about civic and political issues with the Government of Guinea, most recently by our Ambassador in Conakry who met Guinea's Minister for Foreign Affairs on 23 January.

The UK, alongside other international partners, has urged all parties to renew dialogue, avoid disproportionate use of force, and demonstrate calmness and restraint. The British Government stands ready to support Guinea in its efforts to become a more peaceful, stable and democratic country.

■ India: Internet**Emily Thornberry:** [\[7169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Indian counterpart on the effect on human rights of internet shut downs in regions of that country.

Dominic Raab:

The Minister of State for the Commonwealth, UN and South Africa *met India's Minister of State for External Affairs on 19 December 2019 and discussed, among other things, the human rights situation across India. The Minister of State raised the situation in Kashmir and when restrictions would be lifted. I will continue to monitor developments closely and raise concerns with the Government of India where appropriate.*

■ Indonesia: LGBT People**Emily Thornberry:** [\[7170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Indonesian counterpart on the effect on human rights of the Mayor of Depok's plan to enlist public order officers to raid residences of members of the LGBT community.

Dominic Raab:

Embassy officials took part in a meeting between likeminded partners and Indonesian Justice Minister Laoly on 14 January where serious concerns about the Mayor of Depok's plan were raised. The UK continues to advocate for minority rights, including lobbying to ensure that any changes to the Indonesian penal code do not discriminate against minority groups and holding a workshop in December 2019 which supported media reporting on LGBT rights. Ministers regularly raise concerns about minority rights, including LGBT rights, with Indonesia.

■ Jerusalem: Palestinians**Layla Moran:** [\[6753\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department can take to prevent the (a) eviction of Palestinians from and (b) demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

We are gravely concerned by the continued demolition of Palestinian property by the Israeli authorities. Demolitions and evictions of Palestinians from their homes cause unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians; call into question Israel's commitment to a viable two-state solution; and, in all but the most exceptional of cases, are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We have repeatedly made clear to the Israeli authorities our serious concern at the demolitions of Palestinian properties in Area C of the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, most recently on 17 December 2019. We call on them to cease the policy of demolitions and provide a clear,

transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C. We support Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or eviction through our legal aid programme. This helps residents challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system and remain in their homes.

■ **Libya: Peace Negotiations**

Emily Thornberry: [\[7171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the progress of the Libyan civil war peace talks in Berlin.

Dominic Raab:

The UK is clear that lasting peace and stability in Libya will come only through an inclusive political settlement. We are actively engaged in international diplomatic efforts to secure an end to the fighting and a return to the UN-led political process. The Prime Minister represented the UK at the Berlin conference on Libya on 19 January, alongside other international leaders. He urged those present to respect the UN Arms Embargo and support a ceasefire and a return to the UN-led political process. We now call on all countries to honour the commitments they made in Berlin and urge the Libyan parties to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

■ **Russia: Foreign Relations**

Emily Thornberry: [\[7176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Russian counterparts on (a) its conflict with Ukraine; (b) its involvement in mediation on the Libyan conflict and (c) the future of Syria.

Dominic Raab:

The Prime Minister met President Putin at the Berlin Conference on Libya on 19th January. They discussed our shared responsibility to address issues of international security including the conflict in Libya and the future of Syria.

The British Government has repeatedly called on Russia to fully respect Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity. What Russia has done and continues to do there clearly breaches its obligations under international law and presents a serious challenge to the international rules-based order.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Blood Cancer**

Henry Smith: [\[6642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reduce the number of people with blood cancer visiting their GP three or more times.

Jo Churchill:

In 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to roll-out Rapid Diagnostic Centres across the country to upgrade and bring together the latest diagnostic equipment and expertise. They will initially focus on diagnosing cancers where patients often present with non-specific symptoms, such as blood cancer, and may go to their general practitioner many times before being sent for appropriate tests.

Breast Cancer: Health Education**Dr Lisa Cameron:**[\[7260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of information on the (a) signs and (b) symptoms of secondary breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

By 2021, where appropriate every person diagnosed with cancer will have access to personalised care, including needs assessment, a care plan, health and wellbeing information and support. This will be delivered in line with the NHS Comprehensive Model for Personalised Care. This will empower people to manage their care and the impact of their cancer and maximise the potential of digital and community-based support. Over the next three years, every patient with cancer will receive a Personalised Care and Support Plan based on holistic needs assessment, end of treatment summaries, health and wellbeing information and support. All patients, including those with secondary cancers, will have access to the right expertise and support, including a Clinical Nurse Specialist or other support worker.

Cancer: Fertility**Paul Bristow:**[\[7284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that all young people with cancer receive advice on their fertility before beginning cancer treatment.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement expects all clinicians and trusts providing cancer services for children, teenagers and young adults to comply with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Clinical Guidelines and Quality Standards, including those that relate to fertility preservation.

Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Mr David Lammy:**[\[7101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were able to access medicinal cannabis on the NHS in each month in 2019.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Business Services Authority does not hold information on the number of patients able to access medicinal cannabis on the National Health Service, and therefore this information is not held centrally.

I refer the hon Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Inverclyde (Ronnie Cowan MP) on 23 January 2020 to Question [3830](#), which provides data on the number of cannabis-based medicines prescribed on an NHS prescription, dispensed in the community and submitted to the NHS Business Services Authority for reimbursement between January and October 2019 (October 2019 was the most recent dispensing data held at the time of production held the time of answering the question).

NHS: Staff**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[6688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for the publication of the final NHS People Plan.

Edward Argar:

The final NHS People Plan will be published by the National Health Service in early 2020 and will set out a clear framework for collective action on workforce priorities, with a focus on growing and sustaining a well-skilled workforce across the whole NHS.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**Buildings: Fire Prevention****Steve Reed:**[\[7216\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what (a) discussions, (b) meetings and (c) correspondence his Department has had with leaseholders of buildings requiring remedial fire safety works.

Esther McVey:

The Department has regular engagement with leaseholders living in buildings with unsafe cladding and we are aware of the concerns they have. Leaseholders can access specialist advice to understand their rights through the Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE). Government has allocated additional funding to LEASE to provide independent, free, initial advice to leaseholders on building safety issues to ensure they are aware of their rights and are supported to understand the terms of their leases. More information on LEASE, including how to contact them for advice, is available here: <https://www.lease-advice.org/>.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[8382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate his Department has made of the number of buildings in (a) Lewisham, Deptford

constituency, (b) London and (c) the UK which do not hold fire safety certification compliant with Advice Note 14, as recommended by the Independent Expert Advisory Panel.

Esther McVey:

As announced by the Secretary of State in his oral statement of 20 January 2020, Official Report, column 24, all previous building safety advice notes have been consolidated into one document - "Advice for Building Owners of Multi-storey, Multi-occupied residential buildings".

This is Government advice for use by Building Owners to make sure their buildings are fire safe. It is not a compliance document. Therefore the information requested is not held.

■ **Buildings: Insulation**

Steve Reed:

[6703]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department will be providing funding for the remediation of Aluminium Composite Material cladding on buildings below 18m in height.

Esther McVey:

Building safety is the responsibility of the building owner and they must remedy any safety risks uncovered. Building owners should consider all routes to meet costs, protecting leaseholders where they can – for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work.

We are aware of the concerns of leaseholders about meeting the cost of remediation. We do not want the cost to be a barrier to remediation, so the Department is considering options to support leaseholders with Her Majesty's Treasury.

Steve Reed:

[6704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure that residents living in blocks below 18m in height with Aluminium Composite Material cladding are made aware of the composition of that cladding.

Esther McVey:

The Government has been clear that building safety is the responsibility of the building owner. Building owners should inform residents if their building has unsafe ACM cladding.

Steve Reed:

[7214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 22 January 2020 to Question 4752 on Buildings Insulation, if he will write to owners of buildings with unsafe combustible cladding that is not ACM cladding to communicate his Department's policy that remediation costs should not be passed onto leaseholders.

Esther McVey:

The Government has made clear that building safety is the responsibility of the building owner, and they must remedy any safety risks uncovered. Building owners should consider all routes to meet costs, protecting leaseholders where they can – for example through warranties and recovering costs from contractors for incorrect or poor work. These expectations have been made clear to building owners.

Vicky Foxcroft:**[8383]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of leasehold properties that are located in buildings which are not compliant with his Department's fire safety guidance for external walls, Advice Note 14, in (a) the UK, (b) London and (c) Lewisham, Deptford constituency.

Esther McVey:

Information on the number of dwellings in high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings with ACM cladding systems unlikely to meet building regulations yet to be remediated in England is available in the monthly building safety programme data release here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-safety-programme-monthly-data-release-december-2019>. The Department has also commenced a data collection exercise which will enable us to build a picture of external wall systems in use on high rise residential buildings. The exercise will collect data on residential buildings 18 metres and over covering private and social buildings, student accommodation and hotels in England. We will publish appropriate summary information from the data collection in our monthly Building Safety Programme data release in due course.

■ First Time Buyers: Affordable Housing**Mr David Lammy:****[7100]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many affordable starter homes were built in (a) Tottenham, (b) Islington, (c) Barnet, (d) Haringey, (e) Enfield, (f) London and (g) England in each of the last four years.

Esther McVey:

Starter Homes were a policy of the previous administration which they decided not to take forward.

Data on the delivery of different types affordable housing by area is published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>

■ Social Rented Housing**Mr David Lammy:****[7097]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to increase the provision of social housing in England.

Esther McVey:

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of genuinely affordable homes. We have made £9 billion available through the Affordable Homes Programme, delivering approximately 250,000 new affordable homes to March 2022. Councils can bid into this programme to secure funding for new council homes. We also abolished the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap and have given councils a longer-term rent deal for 5 years from 2020. The total number of households on local authority waiting lists is down by 37 per cent compared to 2012. 464,000 affordable homes have been delivered in England since April 2010, including 141,000 new social rent homes.

We will also fulfil our manifesto commitment to renew the Affordable Homes Programme, building hundreds of thousands of new homes for a range of people across the country and providing further stability for councils to build new social homes.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction**Mr David Lammy:**[\[7106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many social houses are projected to be built in England over the next five years.

Esther McVey:

The Government is committed to increasing the supply of social housing and has made £9 billion available through the Affordable Homes Programme to March 2022 to deliver approximately 250,000 new affordable homes in a wide range of tenures, including at least 12,500 for Social Rent.

We will renew the Affordable Homes Programme, building hundreds of thousands of new homes for a range of people in different places.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**■ Amazonia: Tree Felling****Emily Thornberry:**[\[7172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of deforestation in the Amazon on trends in the level of malaria throughout the world.

Dr Andrew Murrison:

Whilst DFID has not carried out an assessment on a relationship between malaria and Amazonian deforestation, we are at the forefront of international efforts on both issues. On malaria we are the second largest country donor, including our announcement in June 2019 to contribute up to £1.4 billion to the Sixth Replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and this Government has committed to lead efforts towards ending the malaria epidemic.

DFID also tackles illegal logging and promotes the sustainable trade in timber, working with companies to eliminate deforestation from supply chains.

■ **Development Assistance Committee**

Emily Thornberry: [\[7167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what representations he has made to the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate on changes to the Development Assistance Committee criteria.

Andrew Stephenson:

The UK continues to make representations regarding Development Assistance Committee criteria for Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The ODA rules enable a broad range of activities to be defined as ODA. They need to continue to evolve as development challenges change and to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since 2012 the UK has led the way in modernising the rules, securing reforms. We continue to keep scope for improvements under review and actively push for reforms when we consider the rules are out of date.

TRANSPORT

■ **Aviation: Crew**

Henry Smith: [\[7187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 January to Question 2479 on Aviation: Crew, if he will undertake a review of the licensing of pilots over the age of 65 who are fit and healthy in relation to UK domestic routes after the UK leaves the EU.

Paul Maynard:

We cannot commit to a formal review of the licensing of pilots over the age of 65 at this stage. However, we continually review matters of aviation safety, and are working closely with the CAA to fully understand the evidence base around this issue. This includes, but is not limited to, the EASA report referred to in the response to Question 2479.

■ **Aviation: Fares**

Alberto Costa: [\[6721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the charity sector continues to have access to airline charity fares.

Paul Maynard:

The Government recognises the importance of charity fares provided by airlines to assist charitable organisations in performing charity work overseas. However, this is a commercial decision and a matter for individual airlines.

■ East Midlands Rail Franchise**Andy McDonald:** [\[6705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of his Department's decision to delay the re-tendering of the East Midlands Trains franchise from October 2015 to August 2019 on the compliance of that operator's fleet with rail accessibility requirements which came into force on 1 January 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

No specific assessment on rolling stock compliance has been made regarding the effect of re-scheduling the franchise competitions. We continue to push the rail industry for continuous improvement to deliver accessible journeys, and an accessible fleet is planned to be in place on the East Midlands franchise from December 2020.

■ Luton Station**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[7283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans his Department has to improve Luton train station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Luton station is due to benefit from a share of the £300m Access for All funding. Subject to a feasible design being identified, the station will receive a step free route from the station entrance, to and between all platforms. The project is due to complete by 2024 at the latest.

Furthermore, as part of GTR's May 2018 Passenger Benefit Fund, Luton was allocated £80,000. Following the passenger consultation last year, we are assessing the feasibility of the schemes passengers have suggested and will be making a decision on taking these forward shortly.

■ Railways: Wales**Jessica Morden:** [\[6624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Welsh Government on the provision of cross-border rail services.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Since the General Election I have spoken to the Minister for Economy and Transport on this subject. Officials in the Department have regular meetings both with officials from Welsh Government and Transport for Wales on cross border rail services.

■ Roads: Lincolnshire**Gareth Davies:** [\[6766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many accidents there were on the Lincolnshire stretch of the A1 since 2015; and how much funding the Government plans to allocate for highways in Lincolnshire to improve road safety in the next 12 months.

George Freeman:

The Department holds information on personal injury accidents only and the latest available statistics on road safety are for the calendar year 2018. 2019 statistics will be available in September 2020.

REPORTED ROAD ACCIDENTS WITH A PERSONAL INJURY ON THE A1, LINCOLNSHIRE, 2015-2018

Year	Number of road accidents
2015	49
2016	44
2017	38
2018	41

Source:
DfT,
STATS19

The second Road Investment Strategy will confirm the Government's plans for the strategic road network. We expect this to be published in due course.

■ South Western Railway: Finance**Andy McDonald:**[\[6706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2020 to Question 1753, what assessment he has made of the (a) forward and (b) backward looking financial ratios of First/MTR on South Western Railway received by his Department on 20 January 2020.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The latest financial ratios received by South Western Railway on 17th January 2020 confirmed that they were fully compliant with the relevant financial ratio requirements of its Franchise Agreement.

■ Thomas Cook: Insolvency**Gill Furniss:**[\[7267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure the prompt completion of outstanding customer claims for compensation as a result of the collapse of Thomas Cook.

Paul Maynard:

We are sympathetic to those affected by the collapse of Thomas Cook and passengers with ATOL protection are entitled to a full refund on any future bookings.

Following the collapse of Thomas Cook, the Government and the CAA together carried out the largest peacetime passenger repatriation. Consequently, the CAA are undertaking the UK travel industry's largest ever refund programme.

In order to process refund claims as quickly and efficiently as possible, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) set up an automated claims process for claims to be submitted online, using the dedicated Thomas Cook claims website. Over the last four months the CAA have processed more than 95% of the claims they have received which totals over £310 million of ATOL payments to over 320,000 customers. They are still receiving hundreds of claims per week. If people require further assistance they should contact the CAA.

■ Transport: Scotland**Andrew Bowie:**[\[6725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to improve transport connections between the North East of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

George Freeman:

The UK Government recognises the social and economic importance of improving connectivity across all parts of the UK. Whilst responsibility for transport infrastructure in Scotland lies with the Scottish Government, where there are areas of cross-border interest, my ministerial colleagues and I remain keen to collaborate with our Scottish counterparts. For example, the Dundee PSO study on Carlisle to Edinburgh line. We always stand ready to work with Members to develop new links.

TREASURY**■ Brexit: Costs****Mr David Lammy:**[\[7108\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of preparations for the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

Rishi Sunak:

On 1 August 2019 the government made £2.1bn available for the 2019-20 financial year, to support preparations to leave the EU without a deal. Some of this funding supported measures necessary to prepare for the UK's future outside the EU, whether via a deal or "no deal".

This provision was additional to the £4.2bn of "core" funding already provided by the government between 2016-17 and 2019-20, for departments and devolved administrations to prepare for Brexit in any scenario.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Access to Work Programme****Marion Fellows:****[6723]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 15 January 2020 to Question 3803 on Access to Work Programme, how many people with (a) learning disabilities and (b) autism spectrum disorders received funding in the latest period for which figures are available.

Justin Tomlinson:

Table 8 of the Access to Work Statistics shows the number of people who have received an Access to Work payment broken down by primary medical condition.

The list of primary medical conditions used is consistent with that used for the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and so includes learning disabilities but not autistic spectrum disorders.

Subject to successful expansion of the list of conditions to include autism in the LFS, we propose to expand the Access to Work list to also include autistic spectrum disorders in future.

The Access to Work Statistics can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/access-to-work-statistics-april-2007-to-march-2019>

■ Access to Work Programme: Epilepsy**Ruth Jones:****[6793]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the Access to Work scheme is adequately funded so that people with epilepsy can access their full entitlement.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work is a demand-led discretionary grant scheme that offers up to £59,200 funding per year for in-work support for people whose disability or health condition affects the way they do their job. In 2018/19, the Access to Work expenditure increased to £129.1 million, a new record amount, equating to a 14% increase in real terms expenditure on 2017/18.

The amount an individual receives from Access to Work is based on their individual in-work support requirements. The latest Access to Work statistics, published in August 2019 and covering the period up to March 2019, show that around 2.5% of people supported by the scheme give 'Epilepsy' as their primary medical condition

■ Employment: Epilepsy**Ruth Jones:** [\[6791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the disability employment gap for people with epilepsy.

Ruth Jones: [\[6792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to tackle the disability pay gap for people with epilepsy.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to reducing the disability employment gap and seeing a million more disabled people in work between 2017 and 2027. We support disabled people, including people with epilepsy, to enter employment and stay in work through a range of programmes such as the Work and Health Programme, Access to Work and the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme.

To support disabled people to stay in work and progress, we published a voluntary reporting framework on disability, mental ill health and wellbeing in November 2018. This is aimed at large employers (with over 250 employees) and it is recommended that they publically report on the pay and progression of disabled people at regular intervals. The framework can also be used to support smaller employers who are keen to drive greater transparency in their organisation or industry.

From April 2019, Jobcentre Plus introduced an enhanced Disability Employment Adviser and a new Disability Employment Adviser Leader role, putting in place more than 800 staff who support their colleagues to provide high quality services to disabled people and those with health conditions. Universal Credit provides us with the opportunity to support people who are in work to progress and increase their earnings.

We will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People before the end of 2020. This will look at ways to improve opportunities and access for disabled people in terms of housing, education, transport and jobs. The health and disability benefit system aspects of the strategy will be considered in a separate Green Paper. This will look at how we can further improve our support for people with disabilities and health conditions, supporting people into work where possible and enabling people to live independent lives.

Ruth Jones: [\[6794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate she has made of the number of people with epilepsy that are in employment.

Justin Tomlinson:

There are around 60,000 working age disabled people with epilepsy in employment in the UK, including around 40,000 who report epilepsy as their main health condition.

Source: Annual Population Survey, April 2018 to March 2019.

Notes:

- Data is subject to sampling variation and precision is limited by small sample sizes. Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 5,000 people.
- Figures are for the working age population, comprised of people aged 16 to 64.
- Disability status is defined according to the Government Statistical Service harmonised standard, in line with the Equality Act 2010 core definition.
- 'Main health condition' refers to the health condition that the survey respondent considers their main condition

Ruth Jones:

[6795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of employment support available for people with epilepsy, and whether her Department plans to introduce new measures to improve the employment rate of people with epilepsy.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government supports disabled people, including people with epilepsy, to enter employment and stay in work through programmes such as the Work and Health Programme and Access to Work.

The latest statistics for The Work and Health Programme were published in November 2019, covering the period up to August 2019. They showed that 73% of starts to the programme were for people with a health condition or disability. The figures are not disaggregated by health condition or disability, so we cannot say how many participants had epilepsy.

The latest Access to Work statistics, published in August 2019 and covering the period up to March 2019, show that around 2.5% of people supported by the scheme give 'Epilepsy' as their primary medical condition.

In December 2019 we launched the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme. This is a new, voluntary, contracted employment provision designed to help disabled people with complex needs or barriers, including those with fluctuating conditions like epilepsy, who want to work but also require specialist support to achieve their goal of sustained employment.

We will publish a National Strategy for Disabled People before the end of 2020. This will look at ways to improve opportunities and access for disabled people in terms of housing, education, transport and jobs. The health and disability benefit system aspects of the strategy will be considered in a separate Green Paper. This will look at how we can further improve our support for people with disabilities and health conditions, supporting people into work where possible and enabling people to live independent lives.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Ian Lavery: [7206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of personal independence payment in (a) Wansbeck constituency (b) Northumberland and (c) England.

Ian Lavery: [7207]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are in receipt of disability living allowance in (a) Wansbeck constituency, (b) Northumberland and (c) England.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested on Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is published and is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ Poverty: Children

Ms Angela Eagle: [8151]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many children lived in (a) poverty and (b) extreme poverty in (i) the North West, (ii) Merseyside and (iii) Wallasey in each of the last 10 years.

Will Quince:

The tables below provide estimates of the number of children in the North West living in households where equivalised income is a) below 60% of median income and b) below 50% of median income. Information is only available for regions on an average of three financial years as the sample sizes in the survey used to collect income data are not large enough to provide robust single year estimates. Estimates for geographical areas that are smaller than regions are not possible due to sample sizes so it is not possible to provide estimates for Merseyside and Wallasey.

Relative low income sets a threshold as a proportion of the UK average (median) income and moves as average income changes over time. Absolute low income takes the 60 per cent of median income threshold from 2010/11 and moves this in line with inflation. This is designed to assess how low incomes are faring with reference to inflation.

Number (millions) of children living in households with equivalised income below 60% of median income in the North West

3 YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE LOW INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	RELATIVE LOW INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)	ABSOLUTE LOW INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	ABSOLUTE LOW INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)
2015/16 to 2017/18	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4
2014/15 to 2016/17	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4
2013/14 to 2015/16	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.4
2012/13 to 2014/15	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4
2011/12 to 2013/14	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5
2010/11 to 2012/13	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5
2009/10 to 2011/12	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5
2008/09 to 2010/11	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5
2007/08 to 2009/10	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5
2006/07 to 2008/09	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5

Number (millions) of children living in households with equivalised income below 50% of median income in the North West

3 YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE LOW INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	RELATIVE LOW INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)	ABSOLUTE LOW INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	ABSOLUTE LOW INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)
2015/16 to 2017/18	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2014/15 to 2016/17	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2013/14 to 2015/16	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3

3 YEAR AVERAGE	RELATIVE LOW INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	RELATIVE LOW INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)	ABSOLUTE LOW INCOME (BEFORE HOUSING COSTS)	ABSOLUTE LOW INCOME (AFTER HOUSING COSTS)
2012/13 to 2014/15	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2011/12 to 2013/14	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2010/11 to 2012/13	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2009/10 to 2011/12	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2008/09 to 2010/11	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2007/08 to 2009/10	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3
2006/07 to 2008/09	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3

Numbers are rounded to the nearest 0.1 million children

■ Universal Credit

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[7142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the transition to universal credit does not have a disproportionate effect on those with mental health issues.

Justin Tomlinson:

Universal Credit is simpler and fairer than the legacy benefit system and is designed to target resources at those that need them most, and to provide support for people who can't work or need help moving towards the labour market. Our work coaches all undertake a robust training process which includes: a focus on health conditions and disabilities, and how to tailor service delivery according to the needs of claimants with mental health conditions.

We are currently testing a range of additional support offerings and employment provision, including more integrated health and employment support. This includes the Local Supported Employment trailblazer, which will be focusing on people with a learning disability or autism who are known to Adult Social Care, or those in touch with mental health services.

We have been testing the impact of including a healthcare professional in the conversation between the work coach and the claimant, allowing work coaches to address more of the claimants' needs at one time.