



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 6 March 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:31 P.M., 06 March 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Domestic Abuse: Males

Jim Shannon:[\[23478\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps the Government is taking to (a) tackle the rise in reported male domestic abuse and (b) improve rates of prosecution for male domestic abuse.

Michael Ellis:

The CPS takes cases of domestic abuse extremely seriously and is determined to provide all victims, irrespective of gender, with the greatest possible protection from offending and reoffending.

The CPS provides comprehensive guidance and training on domestic abuse to prosecutors. This includes specific guidance on how to deal with cases involving male victims. The CPS has also led the implementation of a national Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework in magistrates' courts across England and Wales. The framework aims to ensure consistent good practice by all criminal justice agencies that deal with cases of domestic abuse.

■ Slavery: Car Washes

Mr Steve Baker:[\[23669\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, how many cases have been brought by the Director of Public Prosecutions in respect of modern slavery at hand car washes; and how many convictions there have been as a result of those cases.

Michael Ellis:

The data published by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) shows the number of defendants prosecuted for offences of human trafficking for all forms of exploitation. To obtain details on the number of defendants prosecuted for offences relating to exploitation at hand-car washes would require a manual examination of individual case files to be undertaken at a disproportionate cost.

The table below shows the number of defendants prosecuted in cases flagged as human trafficking offences in England and Wales from 2015/16 to September 2019.

CONVICTIONS		NON-CONVICTIONS		TOTAL	
VOLUME	%	VOLUME	%		
2015 - 16	192	65.1%	103	34.9%	295
2016 - 17	181	61.4%	114	38.6%	295

2017 - 18	185	65.1%	99	34.9%	284
2018 - 19	219	68.0%	103	32.0%	322
April - Sept 19	114	72.2%	44	27.8%	158

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Counterfeit Manufacturing

Sir John Hayes: [\[21881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of counterfeit goods are sold (a) online and (b) offline.

Sir John Hayes: [\[21882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of counterfeit goods on UK businesses.

Sir John Hayes: [\[21883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of value of counterfeit goods sold in the UK that have been imported from overseas, by country, in each of the last three years.

Amanda Solloway:

In 2017 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published 'Fake Goods, Real Losses – Trade in Counterfeit Products and the UK Economy'. This report available at https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/trade-in-counterfeit-products-and-the-uk-economy_9789264279063-en was updated in 2019. The most recent report estimates that the value of imports of counterfeit and pirated goods to the UK accounted for as much as GBP 13.6 billion in 2016.

The report also provides information on the value of counterfeit goods sold in the UK and their originating countries.

■ Counterfeit Manufacturing: Tobacco

Sir John Hayes: [\[21884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to tackle the sale of counterfeit cigarettes in Lincolnshire.

Amanda Solloway:

Trading Standards are the lead organisation for enforcement of IP at the point of sale, tackling counterfeits and piracy. Local enforcement will be a local matter, in this instance for Lincolnshire Trading Standards.

CABINET OFFICE■ **Cabinet Office: Flags**

Philip Davies: [21190]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) Union Jack, (b) St George, (c) Scottish Saltire and (d) Flag of Wales flags his Department owns.

Philip Davies: [21204]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many times the (a) Union Jack, (b) St George's flag, (c) Scottish Saltire and (d) the flag of Wales has been flown from the Cabinet Office in each year since 2015.

Chloe Smith:

10 Downing Street is an integral part of the Cabinet Office and is included in this answer.

Cabinet Office and 10 Downing Street owns 29 Union Flags (including internal ceremonial flags), 3 St George's, 4 Scottish Saltires and 2 Flags of Wales.

The information on how many times each flag has been flown is not held centrally.

■ **Food Poverty: Ministerial Responsibility**

Luke Pollard: [21295]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which Government Minister has responsibility for hunger.

Chloe Smith:

This issue cuts across multiple departmental responsibilities, as is the case for many complex concerns, and therefore engages various Ministers including in DHSC and DWP.

Details of Ministerial responsibilities can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

■ **Offences Against Children**

Sarah Champion: [21311]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including posthumous forfeiture in the process for removal of an honour in relation to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

Sarah Champion: [21312]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of including in the criteria for forfeiture of honours (a) convictions (b) cautions and (c) cases decided by trial of the facts in relation to child sexual abuse.

Chloe Smith:

The government has transformed its response to tackling child sexual abuse. The honours system has been substantially reformed over the last 25 years, with police checks carried out on all nominees.

Forfeiture cases are considered through the Independent Forfeiture Committee and for forfeiture policy through the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (known as HD Committee). The Committees will carefully consider the recommendations made by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

■ Offences against Children: Disclosure of Information

Sarah Champion: [\[21313\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress has been made on revising policies on whistleblowing that cover child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Sarah Champion: [\[21314\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will take steps to ensure that Government Departments (a) review their child safeguarding policies and to (b) publish the procedures to accompany those policies.

Chloe Smith:

The Civil Service takes safeguarding of children, as well as other vulnerable groups, very seriously and has taken steps to support departments to encourage positive workplace behaviours and ensure appropriate measures are in place to handle concerns raised by employees.

Departments have a whistleblowing policy in place, which has been reviewed and refreshed.

■ Public Appointments: Equality

Seema Malhotra: [\[23397\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent steps his Department has taken to increase diversity on public boards.

Michael Gove:

Annual reports by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and the Cabinet Office include data on those taking up and holding public appointments. The government has published and is implementing the Public Appointments Diversity Action Plan, available on gov.uk. I will keep this plan under review and the next update will reflect the Government's levelling up agenda, including regional diversity, and diversity of thought.

DEFENCE■ **Hospital Ships**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[24267\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans his Department has to provide crew to operate the proposed hospital ship.

James Heappey:

RFA ARGUS is the Ministry of Defence's Primary Casualty Receiving Ship. The consideration of options to deliver the capabilities provided by ARGUS after she leaves service remains ongoing.

■ **Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Crew**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[21170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many pilots previously serving in Nimrod aircraft have returned to serve in the UK's P-8 aircraft in the last three months.

James Heappey:

No former Nimrod pilots have re-joined the Service to fly the P-8A in the last three months.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[21171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many specialist pilots he employs who are able to operate P-8 aircraft.

James Heappey:

The RAF does not recognise the term specialist pilot. We have a sufficient number of trained pilots to meet our operational commitments. However, I am withholding information on the number of pilots qualified to operate the P-8 aircraft as it would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the Armed Forces.

■ **Warships**

Luke Pollard: [\[21399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the number of Royal Navy Frigates and Destroyers will be (a) more or (b) less than 19 in each year in the next 10 years.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 26 February 2020 to Question 2046.

We remain committed to ensuring the Royal Navy has the ships and capabilities required to fulfil Defence commitments now and in the future.

Attachments:

1. Warships [Hansard Extract Wednesday 26 February 2020 UIN 2046.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Lotteries**

Philip Davies: [\[21948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Gambling Commission plans to announce the outcome of their consultation into Society Lotteries; and whether that announcement will include the implementation date for the new society lottery sales limits.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Gambling Commission's consultation on changes to its licence conditions and new transparency measures closes on 12 March. Secondary legislation to implement the reforms to society lotteries announced in July 2019 was laid in January 2020 and is scheduled to be debated on 9 March in the House of Lords, and 10 March in the House of Commons. The Gambling Commission expects to publish its response to the consultation in April, subject to the replies it receives.

A 3-month notice period for the sector is also required before the Gambling Commission is able to bring the changed licence conditions into force, so I therefore expect these changes to be introduced in the summer.

EDUCATION**■ Children in Care: Location**

Paul Maynard: [\[21211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what data his Department holds on the geographical location of looked-after children placed by their local authority in out-of-area placements.

Vicky Ford:

The department collects two separate pieces of information in relation to placement location, the distance the child is placed away from their home postcode, and whether the placement is located inside or outside their responsible local authority. These figures were published in tables A4 and A5 of the statistical release 'Children looked after in England including adoption: 2018 to 2019' at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>.

To calculate the distance the child is placed away from their home postcode, the department does collect some postcode information but coverage is not complete as in some instances distance is recorded instead. The department does not hold the full address of a child's placement centrally.

■ Children: Social Services**Dame Diana Johnson:** [21911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the effect on children in Hull of the findings of Ofsted's inspection of children's social care services in Kingston upon Hull City Council published in May 2019.

Vicky Ford:

Ofsted found children's social care services in Hull to be inadequate in May 2019. Subsequently, a monitoring visit by Ofsted in January 2020 showed that services for children, young people and families in Hull were still in need of improvement.

Following the original inadequate judgement and in line with the department's intervention policy set out in 'Putting Children First', we appointed an improvement adviser, Paul Moffatt. Paul Moffatt reports regularly to ministers on progress in Hull and led a Department for Education review of progress in December 2019.

'Putting Children First' is available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care>.

Dame Diana Johnson: [21912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the SEND local area inspection of Hull City Council by the CQC and Ofsted that took place in October 2019 and Ofsted's inspection of children's social care services in Kingston upon Hull City Council published in May 2019, if he will make an assessment of the capacity of that local authority to improve the (a) SEND and (b) child protection services it provides.

Dame Diana Johnson: [21913]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to appoint a Commissioner to oversee children's services provision in Hull.

Vicky Ford:

In the 'Putting Children First' guidance, the department is clear that where failure occurs in children's social care services we expect most councils to improve with support and challenge from experts, especially when failure is not persistent or systemic. It also highlights that we will review councils' progress towards improvement. Where insufficient progress has been made, we have the right to appoint a commissioner to review whether services should remain in council control. The guidance is available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/putting-children-first-our-vision-for-childrens-social-care>.

An Ofsted monitoring visit, published in February 2020, found that progress to improve children's social care services in Hull has not been good enough to date. The department is aware the council has made changes to the leadership of its social care services and is considering the next steps in our intervention in Hull.

The joint Ofsted and Care Quality Commission SEND local area revisit to Kingston-upon-Hull in October 2019, published on 23 December 2019, found that sufficient

improvement had been made in two out of the four significant weaknesses identified in the October 2017 inspection.

The department is clear that progress with addressing the remaining weaknesses must be accelerated, and has requested local area leaders submit an updated action plan setting out how they will achieve this. This action plan must be co-produced with partners and outline how the local area will report on progress and impact, as well as how partners, including families, will be kept fully aware and informed of progress.

The department will review the plan with partners, including NHS England, as part of our assessment of the most appropriate actions that will bring about the required improvement in services. We are working with the newly appointed leadership team at the City Council to establish a joint approach to driving improvement across both services.

■ Department for Education: Flags

Philip Davies:

[\[21940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many times the (a) Union Jack, (b) St George's flag, (c) Scottish Saltire and (d) Welsh flag has been flown from the headquarters of his Department in London in each year since 2015.

Nick Gibb:

The table below shows the number of times per year that each flag has been flown from the Department for Education's London headquarters, since 2015.

FLAG TYPE	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Union	365	366	365	365	365
St. George's	0	0	0	6	3
Scottish Saltire	0	0	1	1	0
Welsh	0	1	0	0	0

■ Pupil Premium: Breakfast Clubs

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[21329\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he provides to schools in England on allocating pupil premium funding to the provision of free breakfasts.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are allocated around £2.4 billion each year through the pupil premium to improve outcomes for their disadvantaged pupils. School leaders have the freedom to use the grant in a way that best meets the needs of their school and its pupils and are encouraged to make evidenced based decisions, drawing on information from the Education Endowment Foundation, in particular the recently published Pupil Premium

Guide, available here:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Pupil_Premium_Guidance_iPDF.pdf.

The guide recommends that, as well as focusing on developing high-quality teaching and targeted academic programmes, schools should invest their pupil premium in wider strategies that support pupils' readiness to learn - this may include providing a breakfast meal.

In addition, the Department is investing up to £35 million into the National School Breakfast Programme between 2018 and 2021, using funds from Soft Drinks Industry Levy revenues. This includes our recent announcement that the programme will be extended by a further year until March 2021, with an aim of helping to establish or improving up to 650 more clubs, further details are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-meals-and-summer-holiday-activities-for-children>.

Overall, this money will help to establish or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas.

■ Pupils: EU Nationals

Andrew Griffith: [\[22065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many boarding pupils at maintained secondary schools are from EU member states.

Nick Gibb:

In January 2018, there were 738 boarding pupils in state-funded secondary schools who were born in EU member states. Information on pupil nationality and country of birth has not been collected by the Department since the 2017-18 academic year and, as such, this is the latest available data.

■ Schools: Blackpool

Paul Maynard: [\[21221\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has allocated to schools in Blackpool in each year since 2009-10.

Nick Gibb:

The revenue funding allocated for schools for financial years 2009-10 to 2018-19 for Blackpool local authority (LA) is shown in the table below.

FINANCIAL YEAR	BLACKPOOL LA (£ MILLIONS)
2009-10	98.6
2010-11	103.2
2011-12	102.9

FINANCIAL YEAR	BLACKPOOL LA (£ MILLIONS)
2012-13	105.3
2013-14	114.6
2014-15	117.2
2015-16	117.8
2016-17	116.8
2017-18	118.4
2018-19	122.9

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Coal

Ben Bradley:

[\[22051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that people in coalfield communities are not disproportionately economically affected by the proposed ban on coal.

Rebecca Pow:

As stated when we consulted on our proposals, we want to ensure that our measures achieve environmental and health benefits but do not have an adverse impact on vulnerable groups. Our response to the consultation on the cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood, published on 21 February, reflects this approach.

We know that the burning of coal for domestic purposes is harmful to human health and the environment. That is why we will be working to help households that currently burn the most polluting solid fuels to shift to the most suitable, cleaner alternative for them. We will use the phased transition period to work alongside coal merchants to advise and educate their direct delivery customers on the benefits of alternative fuels. Analysis has been carried out that shows cleaner alternative fuels, such as Manufactured Solid Fuels (MSFs), are more energy efficient than coal, making them cheaper to burn. MSFs are available to be purchased in all areas of England.

■ Dogs: Meat

Chris Evans:

[\[21249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ban the consumption of dog meat.

Victoria Prentis:

It is already illegal to sell dog meat for human consumption and the Government has seen no evidence that dog meat is being sold or consumed in this country. We are confident that the current position in this country sends a clear message that the slaughter and consumption of dogs will never be acceptable.

■ **Heating**

Philip Davies: [21188]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to reduce the amount of wet wood (a) sold and (b) burnt in England for domestic heating; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government response to the consultation on cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood was published on 21 February 2020. This outlines plans to restrict the sale, distribution and marketing of wet wood. The proposed policy will require suppliers of wood sold in volumes below 2m³ to have their product tested and certified to show that its moisture content is below 20%, those supplying wood in volumes greater than 2m³ will be required to provide their customers with instructions for seasoning wet wood, which will be accompanied by a warning advising that the wood is not suitable to be burnt without appropriate drying. Further to this, retailers of wood in volumes below 2m³ will be required to store it in a way that ensures its moisture content is kept below 20%.

■ **Heating: Carbon Emissions**

Philip Davies: [21187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the potential reduction in emissions that will result from the phasing out of coal and wet wood for domestic heating from February 2021; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government recently published its response to the consultation on using cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood, which included proposals for the regulation of the sales, distribution and marketing of bituminous coal and wet wood sold in units of up to 2m³ and restricting the sale of manufactured solid fuels with a sulphur content greater than 2%. A full impact assessment was published alongside the Government response and is available on the GOV.UK website. This analysis estimates the following cumulative emission reductions between 2020 and 2030: 91.53kt of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), 24.9kt of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and 430kt of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/air-quality-using-cleaner-fuels-for-domestic-burning>

■ Sewage: Rivers

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:

[\[21144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold discussions with the Environmental Agency on reducing levels of raw sewage discharged into (a) main and (b) non-main rivers by water companies.

Rebecca Pow:

Ministers hold regular discussions with the Environment Agency (EA), on all environmental issues including water quality. My officials also regularly meet with their EA colleagues to discuss waste water management, including sewage discharges.

In England, the majority of the sewerage system is 'combined', meaning that sewage is collected along with rain water run-off. Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the sewerage system operate to reduce the risk of sewer flooding of homes and land during heavy rainfall. To prevent discharges, between 2015 to 2020 water companies are installing monitors on up to 13,000 of the 15,000 CSOs in England. These will measure how often and for how long they operate, helping inform where improvement works may be required and providing information to the public about spills. This information has been used to help develop the environmental programme that the water companies will be implementing over the next five years, which includes almost £4 billion of investment to reduce pollution from sewage.

All discharges from CSOs require a permit issued by the EA, containing conditions to protect the environment. The EA has the powers to take action if water companies breach their permits and cause harm to the environment.

■ Solid Fuels: Heating

Philip Davies:

[\[21189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to his Department's press release entitled, Government takes bold action to cut pollution from household burning, published on 21 February 2020, what the evidential basis is for the statement that manufactured solid fuels are cheaper than house coal; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Defra recognises that on face value, manufactured solid fuels (MSFs) are more expensive than coal, however, we are also aware that MSFs burn more efficiently than coal. Recent tests have found that coal is actually more expensive than MSFs when energy efficiency is taken into account. These tests suggest that coal burned on an open fire is more expensive per unit of heat output in all areas of England compared to the cheapest MSF fuel. The full results of the fuel efficiency tests have been published on gov.uk and can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/867429/burning-wood-consult-bsria-report1.pdf

■ Tree Planting

Kerry McCarthy: [\[21905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the English Tree Strategy will include a target to plant 30,000 hectares of trees per year during this Parliament.

Rebecca Pow:

Our manifesto committed to increase tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees per year by 2025. As forestry is devolved, we are working with the Devolved Administrations to determine how we collectively meet this commitment. We will need to significantly increase tree planting in England, and the forthcoming consultation on the English Tree Strategy will take views on whether a target should be set for England.

■ Tree Planting: Costs

Kerry McCarthy: [\[21907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of planting 30,000 hectares of trees per year by 2024.

Rebecca Pow:

We are committed to increasing tree planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees per year by 2025. As forestry policy, and budgets to support it, are devolved we are working with the Devolved Administrations to determine how we deliver this UK commitment.

The Nature for Climate fund announced in the manifesto will support a range of measures to increase tree planting in England whilst delivering other environmental benefits. This will build on current grant incentives and schemes to create woodlands.

We will need a range of effective measures that support farmers and land managers to plant and maintain trees and will consult on options to do this through the upcoming England Tree Strategy consultation.

■ Tree Planting: Finance

Kerry McCarthy: [\[21906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how much funding will be allocated for woodland creation and tree planting grants under the Countryside Stewardship scheme for 2020-24; and what the average funding per hectare has been under Countryside Stewardship to date.

Victoria Prentis:

Funding has been allocated under the Countryside Stewardship scheme for woodland creation and the associated maintenance payments for the financial years 2019/20 to 2023/24 as follows:

(£000's)	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
CS Woodland Creation Total	5,233	5,157	5,386	5,566	5,746

It has been estimated that in the earlier years of the Countryside Stewardship, the average cost per hectare was £4,243. More recent applications, since 2018, had a value of £4,153 per hectare. These figures are for capital grants only and exclude the additional annual maintenance grants, worth £200/ha for 10 years, also available.

■ Waste Management

Steve Double:

[\[21397\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of which waste streams should be included in the proposed extended producer responsibility scheme in the Waste and Resource Strategy.

Rebecca Pow:

In the Resources and Waste Strategy, we committed to looking into and consulting on extended producer responsibility (EPR) for five new waste-streams by 2025, and consulting on two of these by 2022. We have currently identified our five priority waste-streams as: textiles; fishing gear; certain products in construction and demolition; bulky waste; and vehicle tyres. This list is not fixed and does not exclude the potential to review and consult on EPR for other waste streams if these are identified as being of equal or higher priority.

We are currently undertaking further scoping and research work to inform our prioritisation of these waste-streams for consultation on the basis of environmental impact.

We have also already consulted last year on EPR for packaging through our reforms to the packaging producer responsibility system. We will consult again this year.

■ Water: Pipelines

Thangam Debonnaire:

[\[21279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has in place to ensure that water utility companies (a) repair leaks in their networks and (b) take other steps to reduce water waste.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government welcomes the water industry commitment of a 50% leakage reduction by 2050. This commitment forms part of a target set by Ofwat which is bound to financial penalties or rewards based upon performance as part of the Price Review (PR) process.

In PR19 Ofwat set out a £51 billion five-year investment package for the 2020-25 period, including requirements for water companies to cut leaks by 16% and reduce mains bursts by 12%

Water companies provide data to the Environment Agency on water losses. In 2018-19 reporting period 1570.5 MI/d was lost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Bangladesh: Disinformation

Emily Thornberry:

[\[21928\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Bangladeshi counterpart on the conviction of 35-year old Mohammad Monir to seven years in jail under the Information and Communication Technology law for distorting and posting photos of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of the case of Mohammed Monir. We continue to be concerned by government action against freedom of expression and Bangladesh remains a Human Rights Priority Country for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We regularly engage with the Bangladeshi Government to address the full range of our human rights concerns, including freedom of expression. We have also made public statements urging the government to engage constructively with civil society and the media to ensure that legislation such as the Digital Security Act is implemented in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Constitution of Bangladesh.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Lisa Nandy:

[\[23529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if the Government will take steps to work with its (a) international and (b) European counterparts on reducing the risks of (i) infection and (ii) transmission of covid-19.

Nigel Adams:

The UK continues to support global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. We have world leading medical expertise, an unparalleled diplomatic network and experience working with countries to overcome public health emergencies. Our overseas missions have prioritised efforts to engage foreign governments on COVID-19 response. The UK is also working closely with our G7 partners, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the EU and other international partners.

Through the WHO, the UK is funding efforts to reduce the risk of the spread of the disease by supporting developing countries most at risk of coronavirus. This includes training rapid response teams and medical staff to identify and respond to symptoms,

raising awareness in developing countries of how to avoid coronavirus and predicting the spread of the virus to better target future support.

■ Nigeria: Politics and Government

Emily Thornberry:

[\[21924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of President Buhari's suspension of Justice Walter Onnoghen as the Nigerian chief justice on (a) judicial freedom and (b) democracy in Nigeria; and if he will make a statement.

James Duddridge:

The UK raised its concern about the suspension of the former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Walter Onnoghen, in a statement on 26 January 2019 and in a meeting with Foreign Minister Onyeama alongside our US and EU colleagues on 28 January 2019. The timing of the suspension, so close to national elections in February 2019, risked affecting both domestic and international perceptions on the credibility of those elections. Our subsequent assessment of the elections was that the Nigerian people could have confidence in the outcome; the result declared by the Nigerian election commission was consistent with the result obtained through the civil society Parallel Vote Tabulation process. However, we were concerned by reports of violence and misconduct. We expressed our deep concern at similar reports from the Bayelsa and Kogi state elections in a joint statement with European and US partners on 17 November 2019. We continue to support Nigeria and its civil society in drawing lessons from these elections and strengthening its democracy.

■ Pakistan: Earthquakes

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[22036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department will take to ensure the wellbeing of Baloch people in the event of further earthquakes in that region.

Nigel Adams:

In response to the September 2013 earthquake in Balochistan, the UK provided relief and recovery interventions worth £2.5m. Monitoring of this assistance was carried out by third parties because some areas, including in Balochistan, were inaccessible for British Government staff.

The National Disaster Consortium (NDC), led by the UN International Organisation for Migration Pakistan under our Multi Year Humanitarian Programme, provides rapid responses to any humanitarian emergency throughout Pakistan. In Balochistan, we are providing drought and snow emergency response through the NDC.

■ Zimbabwe: Human Rights**Emily Thornberry:****[21927]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the human rights situation in Zimbabwe.

James Duddridge:

The UK is seriously concerned about the challenging human rights situation in Zimbabwe. We saw a significant increase in human rights violations in 2019, including abductions, arrests and assault of civil society, trade union and opposition activists and the banning of protests. Zimbabwe remains one of the UK's 30 Human Rights Priority Countries globally. The UK Ambassador last met Vice President Chiwenga on 9 December 2019 and discussed the economic crisis and political situation in Zimbabwe, reinforcing the need for comprehensive political and economic reform and the protection of the poorest. The UK is providing £128 million of aid to Zimbabwe during this financial year 2019/20 focusing on poverty reduction, humanitarian assistance and standing up for human rights and the rule of law. No money is channeled directly through the government. DFID has also committed £49 million through a new Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Resilience Programme (ZHARP) to support people who do not have access to the food they need.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Abortion****Fiona Bruce:****[21970]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that doctors do not falsify abortion consent forms.

Helen Whately:

The principle of consent is an important part of medical ethics and international human rights law. Consent from a patient is required for all medical procedures, including abortion. In line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines on Abortion Care, informed consent should be obtained and documented. Healthcare professionals should ensure that women have the information they need to make decisions and to give consent in line with General Medical Council guidance and the 2015 Montgomery ruling which made clear that any intervention must be based on a shared decision-making process, ensuring the patient is aware of all options and supported to make an informed choice by their healthcare professional. Any doctor suspected or found to have falsified a consent form should expect to be subject to disciplinary and regulatory action. The guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng140/chapter/Recommendations>

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**Jim Shannon:**[\[21262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help reduce the number of people being admitted into hospital as a result of consumption of alcohol.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has an existing programme of work at both national and local levels to reduce the health harms from alcohol and to help reduce the number of people being admitted to hospital. Our overall aim is to see joined up services ensuring people can be directed to the appropriate service wherever and whenever they look for help. As part of our NHS Long Term Plan, alcohol care teams will be introduced in hospitals with the highest number of alcohol-related admissions and we expect this to prevent 50,000 admissions from alcohol related harm over five years.

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Young People**Jim Shannon:**[\[21259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce alcohol consumption among young people aged under 18 years old.

Jo Churchill:

The Government takes seriously the issue of alcohol consumption by those aged under 18 years. We are encouraged to see that alcohol consumption is generally on the decline among younger drinkers but we are not complacent. The Department and Public Health England (PHE) are working with other Government departments to help prevent young people from developing alcohol and drug problems. This includes supporting investment in programmes which have a positive impact on young people, giving them the confidence, resilience and risk management skills to make healthy choices. Examples of this include PHE's Rise Above, an online resilience building resource aimed at 11- to 16-year-olds, which provides resources to help young people develop skills to make positive choices for their health, including alcohol use and PHE's FRANK website and helpline, which provides a service for people who are concerned about their own or others' drugs and alcohol consumption.

Further, the Department for Education's statutory guidance: Relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education will become mandatory from September 2020. Through this, education on drugs, alcohol and tobacco will become compulsory at state-funded primary and secondary schools.

■ Blood Cancer: Diagnosis**Martyn Day:**[\[21367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure GPs are using the latest NICE cancer symptom guidance on diagnosing blood cancer symptoms.

Jo Churchill:

Once the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) publishes clinical guidance, health professionals and the organisations that employ them are expected to take it into account when deciding what treatments are suitable for each patient.

NICE updated referral guidelines for suspected cancer published in June 2015 with general practitioners urged to think of cancer sooner and lower the referral threshold for tests.

■ Blood Cancer: Health Services**Martyn Day:** [\[21364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) increase the adequacy of and (b) reduce the waiting time for the appraisal process for blood cancer patients to receive treatment.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is committed to publishing guidance within 90 days of a new cancer drug receiving its licence. If NICE's draft recommendation, which can be published before a licence is granted, is positive, NHS England will make funding available immediately from when the license becomes effective and before the final guidance is published. The forecasted mean time from a new cancer drug receiving its licence to published final guidance in 2020/21 is now 1.5 months, a reduction of 13.5 months from 2012/13.

■ Cannabis: Medical Treatments**Colum Eastwood:** [\[21318\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in the Northern Ireland Executive on the provision of medicinal cannabis in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not had any recent discussions with the Northern Ireland Executive on the provision of medicinal cannabis in Northern Ireland.

Policy on the availability of medicines, including medicinal cannabis, funded by the Health and Social Care Board in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

■ Cholesterol: Prescriptions**Jim Shannon:** [\[21265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department issues on the prescription of (a) statins and (b) other cholesterol control medications.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not issued any guidance on the prescription of statins and other cholesterol control medications.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), the national body responsible for issuing best practice guidance for the National Health Service in England, has published a clinical guideline on cardiovascular disease. This guideline, 'Cardiovascular disease: risk assessment and reduction, including lipid modification' was last updated in September 2016 and makes recommendations on the effective use of statins. NICE's guideline is available at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg181

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has also published 'Statins: benefits and risks' which includes a section on things to consider when prescribing statins) and 'Statins: interactions, and updated advice for atorvastatin' which are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/statins-benefits-and-risks>

<https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/statins-interactions-and-updated-advice-for-atorvastatin>

■ Coronavirus**Caroline Lucas:****[21223]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to provide guidance on the medical accuracy of (a) the term Wuhan coronavirus and (b) other terms related to covid-19 to (i) the media and (ii) other relevant bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The term 'Wuhan coronavirus' is no longer used. Since 12 February 2020, Public Health England (PHE) and the Department have used the terminology used by the World Health Organization that is: the illness is referred to as COVID-19 and the virus is SARS-CoV-2.

When communicating to the media and other relevant bodies, PHE and the Department mainly talk about the disease, using the term COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Carla Lockhart:****[20009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on coordinations of additional measures to respond to a potential covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has worked closely at Ministerial and official level with our partners in the devolved administrations since the beginning of the outbreak to formulate an

effective response. Alongside this, Professor Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer, is working with his counterparts in the devolved administrations to ensure the response is effective across the whole United Kingdom.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[21270]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans NHS England has to issue protective masks to GP surgeries to help protect staff from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England has published interim guidance for primary care. The main principles of the advice are to identify potential cases as soon as possible, prevent potential transmission of infection to other patients and staff, advice to avoid direct physical contact, including physical examination, and exposures to respiratory secretions and to isolate the patient, obtain specialist advice and determine if the patient is at risk of COVID-19.

Within this guidance under actions to take it is advised that if entry to the room or contact with a patient suspected of having COVID-19 is unavoidable in an emergency, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in line with standard infection control precautions, such as gloves, apron and fluid resistant surgical mask.

General practitioner surgeries should continue to use their current procedures for ordering, supplying and procuring PPE and use their usual contracted routes should any escalation be needed.

Janet Daby:

[21359]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department has provided to employers with staff who have recently returned from areas with prominent cases of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Department and Public Health England have advised that individuals returning from travel to high-risk areas should self-isolate at their residence and call NHS 111 for advice. Guidance for employers and businesses is available online and includes advice for situations where a member of staff or public with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 has been in the workplace.

The guidance for employers and businesses can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19#what-to-do-if-a-member-of-staff-or-the-public-with-suspected-covid-19-has-recently-been-in-your-workplace>

■ Coronavirus: Northern Ireland

Colum Eastwood:

[22063]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the supply of medicines to Northern Ireland is not affected by the outbreak of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The National Health Service and wider health systems throughout the United Kingdom are extremely well prepared for these types of outbreaks and follow tried and tested procedures of the highest standards to protect staff, patients and the public. The Department has stepped up its efforts to assess risks to the availability of medicines and medical products and put in place contingencies to help ensure uninterrupted supply to the entire UK, including Northern Ireland.

The steps being taken to protect UK supplies in response to the outbreak were set out in the Department's press statement issued on 11 February 2020. This statement is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-monitor-impact-of-coronavirus-on-uk-medicine-supply>

The Department has worked closely at Ministerial and official level with our partners in the devolved administrations since the beginning of the outbreak to formulate an effective response. Alongside this, Professor Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer, is working with his counterparts in the devolved administrations to ensure the response is effective across the whole UK.

■ Dental Services: Midlands

Jonathan Ashworth:

[21269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason the commissioning of orthodontic services in (a) Central and (b) East Midlands has been discontinued.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England is responsible for commissioning orthodontic services from specialist practitioners in primary care, to meet local need.

NHS England halted orthodontic services in the Midlands and East region due to concerns about the way the process was managed. Across the region NHS England has extended all existing providers contracts for a further two years, which will now expire in 2022.

NHS England will be working across its national team and its Midlands and East regions to undertake a lessons learned exercise. This exercise will inform the decision making around the next steps for orthodontic procurements across those regions.

■ Electronic Cigarettes: Public Places**Alex Cunningham:**[\[21254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the ban on smoking in enclosed public spaces to include vaping.

Jo Churchill:

Currently, there are no plans to do so. Public Health England's 2018 evidence review found that to date, there have been no identified health risks of passive vaping to bystanders. The report can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-evidence-review>

■ Gender Recognition: Leeds**Hilary Benn:**[\[21147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average waiting time was for an appointment at an NHS Gender Identity Clinic in the Leeds clinical commissioning group area in the 12 months for which figures are available.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not collected centrally.

■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control**Henry Smith:**[\[21241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's Pandemic Influenza Response Plan, published on 15 August 2014, what plans his Department has to produce a more general pandemic response plan to inform and support sectors of society in responding to pandemics.

Jo Churchill:

The United Kingdom is well prepared for outbreaks of infectious diseases, with well-rehearsed and robust plans in place to respond.

National and international surveillance systems support the assessment of the risk to the UK posed by both influenza and other infectious diseases. When the Department identifies a pandemic risk facing the UK, we work with expert stakeholders to produce guidance to support all sectors in mitigating the risk to the public.

The National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies (NRR) provides an assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different civil emergency risks, including pandemics. Local planners use the NRR to highlight risks to sectors of society to raise awareness and guide contingency planning.

■ Malnutrition

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[21271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent malnutrition in (a) hospitals, (b) care homes and (c) primary care settings.

Jo Churchill:

Malnutrition is a common health problem, affecting all ages and all health and care settings.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standard for nutrition support in adults (QS24) requires that all care services take responsibility for the identification of people at risk of malnutrition and provide nutrition support for everyone who needs it. An integrated approach to the provision of services is fundamental to the delivery of high-quality care to adults who need nutrition support.

■ Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership: Pay

Mr Mark Francois: [\[21898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the salary band is of the new independent chair of the Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[21899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the salary band is of the chief executive of the Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[21900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the salary is of the new interim joint accountable officer for the Mid and South Essex clinical commissioning groups.

Mr Mark Francois: [\[21901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the salary band is of the convenor for the Mid and South Essex clinical commissioning groups.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 3 March 2020]: Professor Mike Thorne was appointed as independent chair on a two year fixed term in October 2019 following open competition and receives £60,000 per annum.

The executive lead for the Health and Care Partnership is a joint role with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Joint Accountable Officer. At the conclusion of the initial recruitment process in January no appointment was made. The Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership are at the initial stage of re-commencing the recruitment process for a permanent appointment. In the meantime, to ensure continued momentum, Anthony McKeever has been selected to be appointed as interim Joint Accountable Officer for the five CCGs and the executive lead for the Health and Care Partnership. The interim Joint Accountable Officer and executive

lead for the Health and Care Partnership will be paid in line with standard salary bands. This is in line with other interim accountable officer roles across the country and meets national guidance set out for the recruitment to such positions.

Dr Anna Davey, chair of Mid Essex CCG, receives no remuneration for her role as convenor on behalf of the five CCGs.

■ Opiates

Jim Shannon:

[21264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) tackle addiction to and (b) promote the benefits of opioid medications.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with the Department and other system partners to oversee implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Public Health England review on dependency-related medicines. The implementation is considering change across data and information technology; enhancing clinical leadership; raising awareness; local support and research.

The immediate focus for implementation will be on reducing opioid prescribing rates. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with partners to share best practice, understand variation in prescribing and develop guidance for appropriate prescribing of opioids to local systems.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is currently developing a guideline on Safe prescribing and withdrawal management of prescribed drugs associated with dependence and withdrawal. It will include supporting guidance for clinicians on how to ensure opioid medications are prescribed safely and appropriately. The project website can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/indevelopment/gid-ng10141>

■ Pre-eclampsia: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[21263]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the (a) effective treatment and (b) early diagnosis of pre-eclampsia.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The only way to treat pre-eclampsia is to deliver the baby. The Saving Babies' Lives care bundle recommends the use of available algorithms to identify women at risk for pre-eclampsia. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance, recommending treatment with aspirin from the first to the third trimester of pregnancy, for women at risk of preeclampsia and associated preterm birth is in place.

In 2019, the Accelerated Access Collaborative (which brings together industry, government, regulators, patients and the National Health Service to accelerate the introduction of ground-breaking new treatments and diagnostics) began supporting

implementation of a new Placental Growth Factor Blood test which can indicate whether a woman has the disease and whether they will need delivery soon.

■ Prostate Cancer: Blood Tests

Dan Carden: [\[22030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many men aged over 50 years old received the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test under the NHS Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme in each year since 2015; and how many of those patients were subsequently diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not collected centrally.

Dan Carden: [\[22031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many men aged over 50 (a) requested and (b) were refused a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test under the NHS Prostate Cancer Risk Management Programme in England in each year since 2015.

Jo Churchill:

This information is not collected centrally.

■ Prostate Cancer: Older People

Dan Carden: [\[22032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many men over 50 years old have been diagnosed with prostate cancer in each year since 2015.

Jo Churchill:

The following table sets out how many men in England aged 50 or over were diagnosed with prostate cancer in the years from 2015:

YEAR	AMOUNT OF MEN 50 AND OVER
2015	40,805
2016	40,690
2017	40,717

■ Public Bodies: Liability

Ellie Reeves: [\[21286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether a duty of care that an individual removes from their relatives automatically passes to a public body from which that individual is receiving care.

Helen Whately:

Both the National Health Service and local authorities owe a common law duty of care to the people within their care.

■ **Twins Trust****Laura Trott:**[\[22055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has of the progress being made by the Twins Trust's Quality Improvement Programme in reducing the number of (a) perinatal deaths and (b) neonatal admissions by 2025; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department provided grant funding for the Twins Trust Maternity Engagement Project which provided evidence that implementing National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on managing twin and multiple pregnancies can significantly reduce twin stillbirths, neonatal deaths and neonatal admissions. The two year evaluation demonstrated an 18% reduction in neonatal deaths, a 7% reduction in stillbirths, a 23% reduction in neonatal admissions, and a 6% reduction in emergency caesarean sections.

Based on the evidence generated through the Engagement Project, the Saving Babies' Lives care bundle (version two) strongly encourages providers and commissioners to implement NICE guidance and stipulates best practice for multiple pregnancies.

HOME OFFICE■ **Animal Experiments: Licensing****Caroline Lucas:**[\[21224\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2020 to Question 1331 on Animal Experiments: Licensing, which provision of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) authorises the forced swim test under multiple generic project licences; whether the forced swim test is authorised to satisfy regulatory requirements; and for which regulatory requirements has the forced swim test been authorised under multiple generic project licences in the UK.

Victoria Atkins:

There is no specific provision in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA) that authorises the forced swim test within multiple generic project licences. Project licence applications that include force swim test are authorised if the harm-benefit analysis is favourable.

The forced swim test may be needed to satisfy the requirements of a regulator. If a regulator requires the use of the forced swim test, the harms are considered as part of the harm-benefit analysis.

The Home Office does not hold information on the specific regulatory requirements for which the forced swim test has been authorised.

■ **Biology: Research**

Henry Smith:

[21239]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the UK Biological Security Strategy, published June 2018, what steps he has taken to establish a central point of contact (a) on dual-use biological research and (b) to review the Government's approach to dual-use bio research.

James Brokenshire:

We continue to support and recognise the value of biological research.

The potential security risk from dual-use of some biological research is recognised in the UK Biological Security Strategy and Government departments continue to monitor emerging technologies and work to mitigate these risks, whilst continuing to build the right regulatory environment for innovation.

Henry Smith:

[21240]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the UK Biological Security Strategy, published in June 2018, what steps she is taking to promote a responsible biological sciences research culture in the UK.

James Brokenshire:

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC), both part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), have a position statement in place on Dual Use, jointly with the Wellcome Trust <https://mrc.ukri.org/research/policies-and-guidance-for-researchers/managing-risks-of-research-misuse/>

The research community must take active steps to develop mechanisms of self-governance, and that through doing so researchers can ensure that responsibly conducted research is not unnecessarily obstructed. UKRI-BBSRC and UKRI-MRC also have internal processes in place to review research grant applicants where Dual Use concerns arise during the course of peer review.

■ **European Arrest Warrants**

Stella Creasy:

[22383]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department's policy on implementation of European Arrest Warrants (EAW) will be maintained during the transition period; and whether she plans to take steps before the end of that period to (a) process and implement outstanding EAWs, (b) ensure that legal proceedings for pending EAWs are not to required to re-start and (c) reduce the risk of potential legal challenges to EAWs in the event that legal proceedings are required to re-start.

James Brokenshire:

European Arrest Warrants issued during the Transition Period are valid for the whole of that period.

The Withdrawal Agreement provides that at the end of the Transition Period, in the absence of any other arrangements, procedures under the European Arrest Warrant Framework Decision will continue to conclusion in circumstances where an arrest has already been made. This is implemented in the UK by the Law Enforcement and Security (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which provide for extradition proceedings which have begun before 31 December 2020 to continue to conclusion.

■ Extradition: Offenders**Hywel Williams:**[\[22366\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2020 to Question 1876, on Extradition: Offenders, what discussions (a) officials and (b) Ministers in her Department have had with their (i) Austrian, (ii) German and (iii) Slovenian counterparts on the extradition of criminals during the transition period.

James Brokenshire:

Home Office officials and Ministers regularly engage with their international counterparts in EU Member States on security cooperation. Engagement also takes place between the law enforcement agencies and prosecution services responsible for the execution of individual warrants, including with Austria, Germany and Slovenia where appropriate.

■ Home Office: Legal Costs**Stephen Timms:**[\[22349\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what his Department's (a) budget and (b) expenditure was on immigration litigation in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office Annual Report and Accounts each year report details of certain Immigration litigation costs under the Parliamentary Accountability Disclosures section, specifically Losses and Special Payments. This disclosure does not show separate, full details for Immigration Litigation nor details of associated budgets. Refer to the links below for published information that relates to immigration litigation in the previous five financial years.

2018-19 pages 104-105

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

2017-18 pages 96-97

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727179/6_4360_HO_Annual_report_WEB.PDF

2016-17 pages 88-89

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627853/ho_annual_report_and_accounts_2016_2017.pdf

2015-16 pages 107-108

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539638/HO_AR_16_gov.pdf

2014-15 pages 153-154

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441282/HO-AR15_web.pdf

■ Immigration Controls

Alyn Smith: **[19890]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her policy on checks at UK borders has changed since the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020.

Chris Philp:

There will be no change to checks at the UK border for the duration of the transition period.

After the end of the transition period, free movement will end. The Government set out further details of the future immigration system in its policy statement published on 19 February.

Caroline Lucas: **[21964]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the policy statement, the UK's points-based immigration system, published on 19 February 2020, what the planned timescale is for refining that system post-implementation; and what plans she has to consult (a) applicants, (b) businesses and (c) other organisations in that process.

Kevin Foster:

The new points-based system will be introduced from 1 January 2021. The operation of the system will be kept under review and, as the policy statement published on 19 February makes clear, further changes will be made following consultation with stakeholders across our United Kingdom.

A programme of engagement will begin this month to raise awareness of the new system, ensuring those affected by the changes are fully aware of what it means for them and understand how the system will operate.

■ Immigration Controls: Gender

Caroline Lucas: **[21958]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the policy statement, the UK's points-based immigration system, published on 19 February 2020,

whether her Department has conducted a gender-based impact assessment of that policy proposal; and if she will publish that impact assessment.

Caroline Lucas: [\[21959\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the policy statement, the UK's points-based immigration system, published on 19 February 2020, whether her Department has made an assessment of the effect of a points-based system on (a) businesses and (b) the (i) transport and storage, (ii) construction, (iii) hospitality and tourism, (iv) agriculture, (v) food and food processing, (vi) wholesale and retail, (vii) manufacturing, (viii) education, (ix) and arts sectors; and if she will publish impact assessments on those sectors.

Caroline Lucas: [\[21960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her 19 February 2020 policy statement entitled The UK's points-based immigration system, whether she plans to make (a) financial and (b) technical support available to employers to invest in technology and automation prior to the implementation of that policy on 1 January 2021; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

The Government published "The UK's Points-Based System: Policy Statement" on 19 February.

Following advice from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) the Government will reduce the general salary and skills thresholds for those who wish to come to the UK to work. There will also be an element of "tradeable" points which will mean those who do not meet the general salary threshold may still be able to enter the UK if, for example, they have a job in a shortage occupation.

We recognise these proposals represent significant change for employers in the UK. We will deliver a comprehensive programme of communication and engagement in the coming months to ensure those affected understand the way our new system will work.

In delivering on its manifesto commitments for a new points-based system, the Government has considered relevant views, evidence, and analysis. We will also keep labour market data under careful scrutiny.

■ Migrant Workers

Caroline Lucas: [\[21962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the policy statement, the UK's points-based immigration system, published on 19 February 2020, what the timescale is for the production and publication of the Migration Advisory Committee's shortage occupation list; and whether that list will include health and social care workers.

Kevin Foster:

We will shortly be commissioning the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to produce a shortage occupation list covering all jobs encompassed by the new skilled worker route, for introduction from January 2021, and to keep the list under regular review.

It is right the Government waits for the MAC's recommendations before commenting on whether specific occupations will be included and taking any final decisions.

■ Migrant Workers: India**Gareth Thomas:**[\[21135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that (a) IT businesses and (b) restaurants attract skilled workers from India after the transition period; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

On 19 February the Government published a policy statement outlining the principles of the UK's Points-Based Immigration System, for introduction from January 2021. The system will ensure we are able to attract the brightest and best people globally. It will be based on the skills and talents which people can bring rather than their nationality.

We welcome genuine visitors from all over the world and will continue our generous visitor provisions but with simplified rules and guidance.

The creation of the Graduate route clearly demonstrates the Government's support for our education sector and adds further value to our world-beating offer for international students. This is reflected in the number of sponsored Tier 4 student applications from Indian nationals increasing by 93% in the year ending December 2019; the highest level since 2011.

■ Prevent Independent Review**Afzal Khan:**[\[23540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the date for the completion of the independent review of Prevent.

Afzal Khan:[\[23545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 29 January 2020 to Question 6769 on Counter-terrorism, if she will publish a timetable for the recruitment of the Independent Reviewer of the Prevent programme.

James Brokenshire:

The Government is committed to the Independent Review of Prevent.

We will be running a full and open recruitment process to appoint the next reviewer. Further details on the next steps, including details of the recruitment exercise, will be announced as soon as possible.

■ Refugees: Children**Dan Carden:** [\[23489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to facilitate the resettlement of vulnerable child refugees from Greek islands.

Dan Carden: [\[23494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many unaccompanied refugee children the UK has resettled from Greece in (a) each year since 2016 and (b) 2020.

Chris Philp:

Under Article 8 of the Dublin Regulation which concerns unaccompanied minors the UK accepted for transfer 196 requests from the Greek authorities between 2016 and 2019. By year this is broken down as follows; 2016 – 10, 2017 – 17, 2018 – 69, and 2019 – 100. The data for 2020 will be published as part of the annual data release on the Dublin regulation and is scheduled for release at the end of 2020.

Under Article 17.2, the discretionary article of the Dublin Regulation allowing Member States to agree responsibility for an asylum claim, the UK accepted a further 81 requests from the Greek Authorities between 2016 and 2019. A proportion of these transfers were unaccompanied children; however, an exact breakdown is not available.

The UK will continue to be bound by the Dublin Regulation provisions during the Transition Period, allowing us to continue to transfer family reunion cases to the UK throughout 2020, and we will continue to process all family reunion requests that have been submitted but not completed under Dublin before the end of the Transition Period.

We will cease to participate in EU instruments at the end of the Transition Period, including the Dublin Regulation. This means that the ability of unaccompanied children to use Dublin to reunite with family will end, unless a replacement agreement is negotiated. The Government has been clear that it is committed to seeking such an agreement with the EU, thereby ensuring these children can continue to reunite with family at the end of the Transition Period. We made this commitment clear in the UK's approach to negotiations on our future relationship, published on 27 February.

The Government remains fully committed to relocating the specified number of 480 unaccompanied children to the UK under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the Dubs Amendment) as soon as possible. Over 220 children were transferred to the UK under section 67 when the Calais camp was cleared in late 2016. Since then we have been making further progress with Greece and the other participating states, to transfer more eligible children to move closer to achieving this commitment. We will publish a full data set on the transfers once we have fulfilled this commitment.

Section 67 is just one way in which the Government supports children in need of protection. The Government's long-standing policy is to provide support to and resettle the most vulnerable refugees directly from conflict regions. In total, the UK

provided protection to over 7,700 children in the year ending December 2019, and 42,500 since the start of 2010. In 2019 the UK received 3,651 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children up 19% from 2018.

■ Refugees: Greece

Dan Carden: [\[23491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support the Government provides to the Hellenic Coast Guard to assist in its response to the arrival of refugees and migrants.

Chris Philp:

The United Kingdom provides support to the Greek authorities under a bilateral agreement.

During 2019/20 the Government has deployed one cutter and crew to the Aegean to support the Hellenic Coastguard to deliver humanitarian assistance in the region.

■ Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships

Paul Blomfield: [\[21404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the proposed electronic system for registering marriages will provide for the inclusion of the details of both parents on marriage certificates.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is currently working on implementation plans to introduce the provisions in The Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration Etc) Act 2019.

This will facilitate an update of the marriage entry to include the names of both parents of a couple.

■ Religious Buildings: Security

Theresa Villiers: [\[19782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding has been (a) allocated and (b) disbursed from the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme.

Theresa Villiers: [\[19783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which places of worship have received funding from the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office does not disclose details or confirm individual grants for individual places of worship that have received funding through the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme, as disclosing the identities of the places of worship may put their security at risk.

For the first three years of the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme, £800,000 was allocated each year. Over those three years, the Home Office awarded 134 grants worth approximately £1.5 million – with 63 to churches, 49 to mosques, 5 to Hindu temples, and 17 to gurdwaras.

For the fourth year of the scheme, the then Home Secretary announced last year an uplift of funding to £1.6 million for 2019-20. The Home Office is currently finalising applications with a view to informing applicants in the near future.

■ Unemployment

Caroline Lucas: [\[21965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of (a) students, (b) sick people, (c) people looking after family or home, (d) retirees and (e) other people classed as economically inactive who (i) are able and (ii) would like to work; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Immigration must be considered alongside investment in and development of the UK's domestic labour force. There are over eight million economically inactive people in the UK, nearly two million of whom say they want a job.

3.8 million more people are now in work compared to 2010, and our new points-based immigration system will encourage businesses to support more people into employment.

In delivering on its manifesto commitments for a new points-based system, the Government has considered relevant views, evidence, and analysis, especially from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[22021\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her statement on Sky news on 19 February 2020 that businesses should skill up the 8.5 million economically inactive, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on providing additional to help (a) students, (b) long-term sick, (c) carers and (d) retired people into work.

Kevin Foster:

Immigration must be considered alongside investment in and development of the UK's domestic labour force. There are over eight million economically inactive people in the UK, nearly two million of whom say they want a job.

3.8 million more people are now in work compared to 2010, and our new points-based immigration system will encourage businesses to support more people into employment.

In delivering on its manifesto commitments for a new points-based system, the Government has considered relevant views, evidence, and analysis, especially from the independent Migration Advisory Committee.

■ Visas: India

Gareth Thomas:

[\[21134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to encourage more (a) skilled workers, (b) tourists and (c) students from India to secure visas to (i) work, (ii) visit and (iii) study in the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

On 19 February the Government published a policy statement outlining the principles of the UK's Points-Based Immigration System, for introduction from January 2021. The system will ensure we are able to attract the brightest and best people globally. It will be based on the skills and talents which people can bring rather than their nationality.

We welcome genuine visitors from all over the world and will continue our generous visitor provisions but with simplified rules and guidance.

The creation of the Graduate route clearly demonstrates the Government support for the education sector and adds further value to our world-beating offer for international students. This is reflected in the number of sponsored Tier 4 student applications from Indian nationals increasing by 93% in the year ending December 2019; the highest level since 2011.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Leasehold: Reform

Daisy Cooper:

[\[22054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Written Statement of 31 October 2019 on Leasehold update, HCWS55, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals on leasehold and commonhold reforms.

Luke Hall:

We are moving towards legislation on leasehold reform, reaffirming our commitment to making the system fairer for leaseholders. This will include measures to ban the sale of new leasehold houses, restrict ground rents to a peppercorn for future leases, give freehold home owners equivalent rights to challenge unfair charges, and close loopholes to prevent unfair evictions

The Government supports the increased use of commonhold. Reform to commonhold legislation is needed to support greater take up of the tenure. That is why the Government is working closely with the Law Commission as part of their 13th Programme of Law reform to reinvigorate commonhold and provide greater choice for consumers. The Law Commission undertook a consultation earlier this year and are now analysing responses. They will report back to Government later in the year.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Agreements

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[22022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her Answer of 26 February 2020 to Question 18647 on Trade Agreements: Negotiations, how many and which countries her Department has held preliminary trade talks with.

Conor Burns:

We have been talking with a range of partners to develop our trading arrangements.

Through the trade working groups established with the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, we have laid much of the groundwork to start negotiations for free trade agreements.

We are also continuing our programme to replicate the effects of existing EU trade agreements – by the time we left the EU, we had signed trade continuity agreements with 48 countries.

In addition, we engage with trading partners through our overseas network, discussions with embassies in London, ministerial discussions and visits, the Prime Minister's Trade Envoys, and HM Trade Commissioners. This includes with partners such as China, India and Brazil.

JUSTICE

■ Alternatives to Prosecution: Shoplifting

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[21247\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of offenders convicted of retail theft who are dealt with via an out-of-court disposal have gone on to re-offend in the last five years.

Lucy Frazer:

The latest statistics showing the proportion of adult offenders who reoffend following police cautions for retail theft is set out in the table below.

Note that reoffending rates are not available on the full range of Out of Court Disposals (OOCs).

COHORT	NUMBER OF REOFFENDERS	NUMBER OF OFFENDERS	PROPORTION OF OFFENDERS WHO REOFFEND (%)
Apr - Jun 2013	1,078	3,663	29.4
Jul - Sep 2013	1,037	3,438	30.2
Oct - Dec 2013	1,064	3,791	28.1

COHORT	NUMBER OF REOFFENDERS	NUMBER OF OFFENDERS	PROPORTION OF OFFENDERS WHO REOFFEND (%)
Jan - Mar 2014	1,081	3,629	29.8
Apr - Jun 2014	944	3,289	28.7
Jul - Sep 2014	879	3,037	28.9
Oct - Dec 2014	901	3,176	28.4
Jan - Mar 2015	784	2,880	27.2
Apr - Jun 2015	722	2,624	27.5
Jul - Sep 2015	639	2,263	28.2
Oct - Dec 2015	740	2,511	29.5
Jan - Mar 2016	693	2,432	28.5
Apr - Jun 2016	606	2,249	26.9
Jul - Sep 2016	502	1,900	26.4
Oct - Dec 2016	560	2,085	26.9
Jan - Mar 2017	486	1,930	25.2
Apr - Jun 2017	432	1,546	27.9
Jul - Sep 2017	381	1,406	27.1
Oct - Dec 2017	391	1,486	26.3
Jan - Mar 2018	389	1,403	27.7

■ Prison Service: Labour Turnover

Dr Jamie Wallis:

[22053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent steps he has taken to improve staff retention in the prison service.

Lucy Frazer:

We want prison officers to have a long and successful career within HM Prison and Probation Service. We have recruited some 4,200 more prison officers over the past three years and we are working hard to retain our staff, investing in additional pay, training and the tools staff need to do their jobs safely.

There has been a specific focus on improving the induction processes that aim to ease the transition into the prison officer job whilst also providing care and support for new recruits and the offer of additional training. These interventions are intended to reduce staff turnover in the early stages of employment.

The Prison Officer Entry Level Training has recently been redeveloped into an apprenticeship that will launch in Summer 2020. The apprenticeship aims to improve retention and build a portfolio of experience through on-site training and reflective learning over a longer period.

All staff have access to services including 24/7 counselling, trauma support and occupational health assessments. In addition, there is work being undertaken directly with Governors to address local issues that will support experienced staff and new recruits to remain in the service.

Staff are provided with the appropriate equipment and training to enable them to maintain a safe and secure work place and to create an environment which is rewarding to work in and which promotes the values needed to rehabilitate offenders. This includes the introduction of introduce body-worn cameras, police-style restraints and *PAVA* incapacitant spray.

For sites where the local labour/employment market make it hard to recruit and retain staff, market supplements (regional adjustments and weightings) are used together with a tailored approach to recruitment advertising to ensure that we are competitive in the local labour market.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Brexit: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[21390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment his Department has made of the possible effect on (a) consumers and (b) the price of goods in Northern Ireland as a result of (i) Governments Brexit deal and (ii) a potential border in the Irish Sea.

Brandon Lewis:

There will be no border down the Irish Sea. The Withdrawal Agreement means Northern Ireland and Great Britain remain part of one UK customs territory while Northern Ireland will continue to benefit from tariff free access to the UK Single Market.

The UK will ensure unfettered market access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain and the Prime Minister has been clear that, beyond the limited changes introduced by the Protocol, there will be no changes to trade from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. The Government will be considering the best way to implement the Protocol in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland and will

be discussing this with the EU in the Joint Committee and Specialised Committee created under the Withdrawal Agreement.

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood: [22064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what support the Government plans to provide to manufacturers in Northern Ireland whose supply chain is affected by a reduction in imports from China as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Brandon Lewis:

The UK Government is closely monitoring developments in relation to the potential impacts on the UK, including the Northern Ireland, economy.

The Government is advising businesses to build their resilience by reviewing their business continuity plans, developing an understanding on the potential impacts to their supply chains or other factors critical to their operations, and following the advice for employers available which is available on GOV.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

■ **Northern Ireland Office: Flags**

Philip Davies: [21202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many (a) Union Jack, (b) St George, (c) Scottish Saltire and (d) Flag of Wales flags his Department owns.

Brandon Lewis:

My Department owns one flag which is the Union Flag.

Philip Davies: [21945]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many times the (a) Union Jack, (b) St George's flag, (c) Scottish Saltire and (d) flag of Wales has been flown from the headquarters of his Department in London in each year since 2015.

Brandon Lewis:

In my Department's office in London responsibility for flag flying lies with the landlord, Her Majesty's Treasury.

TRANSPORT

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Caroline Lucas: [21955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason he has not replied to the 24 September 2019 correspondence of the Chair of the Committee on Climate Change on net-zero and the approach to international aviation and shipping emissions; when he plans to reply; whether he plans to publish that reply; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

We remain grateful to the Committee on Climate Change for their scrutiny, analysis and expert advice, which will be more vital than ever as we accelerate the low carbon transition and set the UK on a firm path to net zero.

The Department is carefully considering their advice on international aviation and shipping emissions.

In respect of aviation and climate change, a response in the form of a consultation will be published shortly.

The advice on international shipping emissions is being considered as part of the Government's work to publish a Call for Evidence on zero emission shipping later in the year.

Additionally, later this year we will be publishing an ambitious Transport Decarbonisation Plan. This will set out how we intend to deliver transport's contributions to carbon budgets and net zero.

■ Northern: Rolling Stock**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[21324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department plans to take to replace Pacer trains when Northern Rail is renationalised.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The ongoing rollout of new trains, which are enabling the retirement of Pacers, will continue.

Northern is introducing 101 new trains as part of a £500 million investment across its network. The programme of introduction started in the summer last year on a phased basis, with the remaining trains introduced by summer 2020.

■ Oxford-Hereford Railway Line**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[21252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeframe is for the Network Rail to report its study of the North Cotswold Line Transformation Taskforce Option Five.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have asked Network Rail to carry out an assessment of the Task Force's Strategic Outline Business Case, and to work with Great Western Railway to assess the operational aspects of the scheme. I am expecting Network Rail to provide me with the first draft of their assessment by early Summer. This will enable the Department to take an informed decision on the Task Force's funding request to take the proposal forward. I have also written to Lord Faulkner setting out the way forward.

■ Railway Stations: Leeds

Hilary Benn:

[\[21148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the capacity of Leeds train stations to cope with the predicted increase in passenger demand over the next 20 years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has consulted widely with Network Rail, Train Operators, and stakeholders in Leeds and West Yorkshire on options to relieve the shortage of capacity and plan for expected growth in rail traffic. We are now developing a programme of possible improvements which will benefit passengers in the area in the medium to long term. Next steps include developing and authorising a number of short & medium-term infrastructure improvements to increase capacity and performance in the Leeds Station area.

With regards to Leeds station specifically, the Government is committed to making improvements to the station to increase its capacity, including work already under way to add a new platform and tracks and upgrade the signalling.

■ Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield: Railways

Nick Fletcher:

[\[21340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a rail link from Doncaster Sheffield Airport to the East Coast Mainline.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department has been in dialogue with local stakeholders regarding proposals to construct a new station, and rail link, from Doncaster Sheffield Airport to the East Coast Mainline (ECML). An updated Strategic Outline Business Case for the proposal was submitted at the end of February 2020, and officials from the Department are currently reviewing this to allow for an assessment of its merits to be made.

■ Thameslink Railway Line

Tom Tugendhat:

[\[22006\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what contractual obligations his Department has with Govia Thameslink Railway to deliver the Thameslink programme, including the service to Maidstone East.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Franchise Agreement between Govia Thameslink Railway and the Department specifies two trains per hour between Maidstone East and Cambridge (via the Thameslink core). As with any service introduction, this is subject to obtaining the necessary track access rights from Network Rail.

Following the introduction of the May 2018 timetable, which caused serious disruption to passengers, it was decided any new introduction of service would need to go

through more rigorous scrutiny. Thus all future timetable changes need to guarantee the stability and reliability of services.

Unfortunately, introducing the Maidstone East Thameslink services onto an already busy and complex railway network is not yet possible without seriously compromising reliability of existing train services that thousands of passengers rely on every day. Several issues are currently preventing the introduction of the service: on top of timetabling constraints, rolling stock availability and stabling facilities are issues that need to be solved. I can assure my Rt Hon Friend the industry is working hard to resolve these and provide passengers in Maidstone with more frequent services to the City of London as soon as possible. I have had various meetings on this matter with all involved and understand how frustrating this delay is for residents of Maidstone, and other areas which will be served by this route. I will keep my Hon Friend up to date as solutions are found.

■ **Transport: Leeds City Region**

Hilary Benn:

[21149]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to make a decision on the Leeds City Region Transforming Cities Fund bid.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department for Transport received the Leeds City Region Transforming Cities Fund business case on 28 November 2019. The Department is currently carefully assessing all 12 business cases from eligible city regions and will announce the outcome of this process within the next few months.

■ **Waterloo Station: Overcrowding**

Paul Maynard:

[21220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of levels of overcrowding at Waterloo station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department publishes statistics showing overall passenger numbers and crowding levels on trains at selected major cities in England and Wales and central London stations in an annual publication titled '*Rail passenger numbers and crowding on weekdays in major cities in England and Wales*'.

The most recent statistical release, covering statistics for autumn 2018 is available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rail-passenger-numbers-and-crowding-on-weekdays-in-major-cities-in-england-and-wales-2018>

TREASURY**■ Business: Conditions of Employment****Alec Shelbrooke:****[21973]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to inform businesses of the rules on employing contractors after 6 April 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to working with organisations to ensure changes to the off-payroll working rules are implemented correctly. HMRC are undertaking an extensive programme of education and support to help organisations prepare for the reform. This includes:

- Offering one-to-one support to more than 2,000 of the UK's biggest employers, and writing directly to 43,000 medium sized businesses and other organisations.
- Providing large and medium sized businesses, public bodies, and charities with factsheets to share with their contractors, and publishing this factsheet on gov.uk.
- Holding workshops with small tax agents, recruitment agencies, charities, and public bodies.
- Holding webinars at least weekly, with small tax agents, recruitment agencies, charities, public bodies and contractors.
- Publishing an enhanced version of the Check Employment Status for Tax online tool in November 2019, to help individuals and organisations make the right status determinations and apply the off-payroll rules correctly.

■ Employment: Taxation**Mark Tami:****[21890]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential (a) short-term and (b) long-term effect on seasonal workers in the offshore wind industry of the changes to IR35.

Jesse Norman:

The Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) published in July 2019 sets out HMRC's assessment that the reform to the off-payroll working rules is expected to affect 170,000 individuals. The TIIN can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rules-for-off-payroll-working-from-april-2020/rules-for-off-payroll-working-from-april-2020>.

HMRC are undertaking an extensive programme of education and support to help organisations and contractors prepare for the reform.

Mark Tami:**[21891]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the maximum appropriate rate of (a) income tax and (b) national insurance for workers when calculated together in each income tax band affected by the changes to IR35.

Jesse Norman:

The off-payroll working rules have been in place for nearly 20 years. They are designed to ensure that someone working like an employee, but through a company, pays similar levels of tax to other employees. It is fair that individuals who work in a similar way should pay broadly the same amount of tax.

The rules apply to individuals who are working like employees under the current employment status tests; they do not apply to the self-employed or stop anyone working through their own company.

The reform shifts responsibility for operating the off-payroll rules from the worker's company to the engager. It does not introduce a new tax liability, or change applicable income tax or National Insurance rates or thresholds.

Thangam Debbonaire:[\[21999\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his Department's news story entitled, Off-payroll review launched, published on 7 January 2020, what the timeframe is for the publication of the findings of that review.

Jesse Norman:

The Government launched a review of reform to the off-payroll working rules on 7 January 2020 to determine if there were further steps that could be taken to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of the reform, which will come into force in April 2020.

The review of the off-payroll working reform has now concluded and the outcome of the review was published on 27 February 2020.

Thangam Debbonaire:[\[22000\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) sole traders and (b) people working in the gig economy are not adversely affected by changes to IR35 legislation.

Jesse Norman:

The IR35 rules were introduced in 2000. They only apply to individuals who are working like employees under the current employment status tests, and do not apply to the self-employed or sole traders.

The Government will introduce a legal requirement for clients to implement a status disagreement process to allow individuals to challenge their status determination directly and in real time. This right is an additional statutory layer of protection for off-payroll workers.

■ Plastics: Packaging**John McNally:**[\[21997\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what comparative assessment he has made of the equity of the application of the plastic packaging tax to businesses that use (a) recyclable and (b) single use packaging.

Jesse Norman:

In the February 2019 consultation on the plastic packaging tax, the Government proposed that the tax would apply to plastic packaging in the same way as in the Packaging Producer Responsibility scheme, in order to ensure that the tax is clear and simple. This would mean that the tax would include both recyclable and single use packaging. The vast majority of respondents to the consultation agreed with this approach. The Government is considering the most appropriate definitions for plastic packaging and will set out next steps in due course.

The Government is also developing a reformed Packaging Producer Responsibility scheme to encourage businesses to design and use plastic packaging that is easier to recycle.

■ Social Enterprises: Tax Allowances

Alex Sobel: [\[21376\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of Social Investment Tax Relief.

Alex Sobel: [\[21377\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the loss of the Social Investment Tax Relief to social enterprises after the sunset clause is reached in 2021.

Alex Sobel: [\[21378\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the availability of social investment tax reliefs to investors in the UK.

Alex Sobel: [\[21379\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of Big Society Capital's 2019 data on the (a) size and (b) quantity of deals made using the Social Investment Tax Relief.

Alex Sobel: [\[21382\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of Social Investment Tax Relief in increasing investment in (a) SMEs and (b) start-ups.

Alex Sobel: [\[21383\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations his Department has received on extending the Social Investment Tax Relief consultation.

Alex Sobel: [\[21384\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what information his Department holds on the effect the Social Investment Tax Relief has made on community businesses.

Alex Sobel: [21385]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to make a comparative assessment of the support available to social businesses compared with for-profit businesses.

Alex Sobel: [21386]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of Social Investment Tax Relief on bringing new investors and capital into social enterprises and charities.

Alex Sobel: [21387]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of Social Investment Tax Relief on the affordability of capital for eligible social enterprises and charities.

Jesse Norman:

The Government keeps all taxes and reliefs under review to ensure that they continue to meet policy objectives and represent value for money for taxpayers.

In 2019, the Government comprehensively reviewed the Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR), in line with commitments made when SITR was enlarged in 2017.

As part of this review, the Government published a Call for Evidence in April 2019, which ran for 12 weeks.

The Call for Evidence examined SITR's effectiveness at incentivising individuals to invest in social enterprises, and its impact on the social investment and enterprise markets. A list of questions asked in the consultation can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/social-investment-tax-relief-call-for-evidence/social-investment-tax-relief-call-for-evidence>.

The Call for Evidence received responses and evidence from a range of interested parties, including social enterprises, charities, community businesses, investors, and intermediaries.

A Summary of Responses to the Call for Evidence will be published in due course.

Alex Sobel: [21380]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of voluntary organisations that have benefited from Social Investment Tax Relief.

Alex Sobel: [21381]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate his Department has made of the number of social enterprises that have benefited from Social Investment Tax Relief.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC publish annual statistics of the use of the Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) scheme. The most recent release is on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/enterprise-investment-scheme-seed-enterprise-investment-scheme-and-social-investment-tax-relief-statistics-may-2019>.

From the introduction of SITR in the tax year 2014-15 up to 2017-18, 80 social enterprises received investment through the scheme, including community benefit societies, charities and community interest companies. Data for the tax year 2018/19 will be published in May 2020.

'Voluntary organisations' is not a category used by HMRC to record information in respect of social enterprises using SITR.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Pensions: Digital Technology

Hilary Benn: [\[21889\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department holds digital pension records for all pensioners.

Guy Opperman:

The number of people claiming State Pension was 12.6 million at August 2019 with an estimated spend on State Pensions for 2018/19, at around £97 billion.

References: *DWP benefits expenditure and caseload tables* publication, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2019> and the *August 2019 Statistical Enquiry*, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2020/dwp-benefits-statistical-summary-february-2020#pensions>

The DWP holds the digital information necessary to support the payment and administration of State Pensions.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Marion Fellows: [\[22003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) challenges have providers of personal independence payment health assessments made to auditors' rework requests and (b) of those challenges were successful in each of the last five years.

Justin Tomlinson:

Independent audit data is available from July 2016. The table below shows the number of challenges, and challenges overturned made by providers to auditors for each calendar year since then.

Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10 and have been provided by the Independent Audit team.

YEAR	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Challenges	70	400	420	360
Audit results overturned	30	230	250	190

The total number of audit results overturned equates to 1.1% of all audits from 2016 to present.

Independent audit began in 2016; prior to that the audit process was performed by the providers and so we do not hold information earlier than that year.

We have omitted stats for 2020 as there is only one month's information.

■ Social Security Benefits: Self-employed

Dehenna Davison:

[\[23671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to support self-employment.

Mims Davies:

The Department supports people to be self-employed when it is the right thing for them to do to be financially self-sufficient. Key to this is continuing to help claimants in, or considering, self-employment to progress to a level of sustained financial self-sufficiency that does not exclude the possibility of better paid work elsewhere. This ensures fairness to claimants, but also taxpayers who fund the welfare system.

Work coaches offer tailored support to our claimants who are in self-employment through to help them to increase their productivity and earnings. Work coaches can refer low-earning claimants to mentoring support from New Enterprise Allowance providers and sign-post claimants to the other extensive business support which is already funded by the Government.

We recognise that it takes time for new businesses to grow and that even established businesses can experience difficulties. From September 2020, all self-employed Universal Credit claimants will be given the same 12 months' exemption period to provide them with time and support needed to grow their businesses.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

HOME OFFICE

■ Immigration Controls

Alyn Smith:

[\[19890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her policy on checks at UK borders has changed since the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 5 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Chris Philp:

~~There will be no change to checks at the UK border for the duration of the transition period.~~

~~After the end of the transition period, free movement will end. The Government set out further details of the future immigration system in its policy statement published on 19 February.~~

There will be no change to checks at the UK border for the duration of the transition period.

■ Police: Ethnic Groups

Carla Lockhart:

[\[20575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of police officers in England and Wales are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 4 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kit Malthouse:

~~The Home Office collects and publishes information on the ethnicity of police officers, in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin.~~

~~As at 31 March 2019, 7% of police officers in England and Wales were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.~~

The Home Office collects and publishes information on the ethnicity of police officers, in the 'Police Workforce, England and Wales' statistical bulletin.

As at 31 March 2019, 7% of police officers in England and Wales were from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Up from 4% a decade earlier.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Means-tested Benefits: Coronavirus****Mark Tami:**[\[23556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether people self-isolating due to possible covid-19 infection will be exempted from conditionality requirements for means-tested benefits.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 5 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Mims Davies:

~~Claimants who are self-isolating as a result of Covid-19 will have their mandatory work search and work availability requirements removed to account for a period of sickness.~~

~~Other work-related requirements outside of this will be tailored to take into consideration the claimant's capability and circumstances and can be conducted over the phone or through digital formats, making them realistic and achievable.~~

~~The decision to apply a sanction will continue to be considered on a case by case basis. However, conditionality requirements will be relaxed to ensure we do not punish those who take reasonable steps to protect themselves and others, including self-isolation, in the event of Covid-19 outbreak.~~

Claimants who are self-isolating as a result of Covid-19 will have their mandatory work search and work availability requirements switched off during that period.

Any work-related requirements outside of this will be tailored to take into consideration the claimant's capability and circumstances, can be conducted over the phone or through digital formats and ensure they are realistic and achievable.