



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 18 March 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:52 P.M., 18 March 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	5	■ Visits Abroad: Uganda	14
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	5	DEFENCE	14
■ Biofuels: Wind Power	5	■ Armed Forces: Death	14
■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Staff	5	■ Armed Forces: Domestic Violence	15
■ Diesel Fuel and Petrol: Emergencies	7	■ Armed Forces: Large Goods Vehicles	16
■ Engineering: Females	8	■ Armed Forces: Suicide	17
■ Flexible Working: Females	8	■ Armed Forces: Trauma	17
■ Heating: Carbon Emissions	9	■ Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Reserve Forces and Cadets Association: Cost Effectiveness	18
■ Research: Finance	9	■ Defence: National Security	18
■ Small Businesses: Administration	9	■ Ministry of Defence: Infrastructure and Projects Authority	19
■ WH Smith: Post Offices	10	■ Reserve Forces and Cadets Association	19
CHURCH COMMISSIONERS	10	■ Reserve Forces and Cadets Association: Membership	19
■ Church of England: Carbon Emissions	10	■ Type 26 Frigates	20
■ Church of England: Charitable Donations	11	■ Veterans: Entry Clearances	20
■ Church of England: Investment	11	■ Veterans: Immigration	20
■ Church of England: Marriage	12	■ Vulcan Aircraft: Anniversaries	22
■ Church of England: Personal Records	13		
■ Churches: Theft	13		
■ Visits Abroad: South Sudan	14		

EDUCATION	22	■ Nicaragua: Indigenous Peoples	37
■ Apprentices: Digital Technology	22	■ Oil: Prices	37
■ Asylum: Children	23	■ Sudan: Homicide	38
■ Breakfast Clubs: Finance	25	■ Venezuela: Economic Situation	38
■ Educational Visits: Coronavirus	25	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	38
■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus	26	■ Armed Forces: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	38
■ National Retraining Scheme	26	■ Burnley Hospital: Admissions	39
■ Obesity: Health Education	27	■ Cancer: Research	39
■ Pupils: Attendance	27	■ Care Homes: Dementia	39
■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus	28	■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services	40
■ T-levels	28	■ Coronavirus	40
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	29	■ Coronavirus: Birmingham	41
■ Animal Welfare	29	■ Coronavirus: Medical Equipment	42
■ Birds: Conservation	30	■ Coronavirus: Remote Working	42
■ Coal Merchants Federation	30	■ Coronavirus: Urdu	43
■ Fish Farming: Whitstable	31	■ Health Professions	43
■ Fishing Catches: Computer Software	31	■ Health Services and Social Services: Reform	44
■ Food: Standards	33	■ Medical Equipment	44
■ Solid Fuels: Manufacturing Industries	34	■ Medicine: Education	45
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	34	■ NHS 111: Hearing Impairment	45
■ British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries	34	■ NHS Walk-in Centres	46
■ Cyprus: NATO	35	■ NHS: Accountability	46
■ Cyprus: Politics and Government	35	■ Northwick Park Hospital	46
■ Iran: Children	35	■ Northwick Park Hospital: Asbestos	46
■ Iran: Health Services	36	■ Northwick Park Hospital: Land	47
■ Latin America: Human Rights	36	■ Northwick Park Hospital: Medical Records	47
		■ Northwick Park Hospital: Vacancies	48

■ Obesity	48	■ Trade Agreements: Cote d'Ivoire	59
■ Postnatal Care: Mental Health Services	48	JUSTICE	60
■ Public Health England: Harlow	49	■ British Nationality: Children	60
■ Public Health: Finance	49	■ Divorce	60
■ Social Services: Standards	50	■ Marriage: Humanism	61
■ Social Services: White Papers	50	■ Tribunals: Coronavirus	61
■ Veterans: Medical Treatments	50	■ Veterans: Crimes of Violence	61
■ Veterans: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	51	LEADER OF THE HOUSE	62
HOME OFFICE	51	■ Divisions: Coronavirus	62
■ Biometric Residence Permits	51	■ Divisions: Electronic Voting	62
■ British Nationality	52	NORTHERN IRELAND	63
■ Calais: Refugees	52	■ IRA	63
■ Immigration: India	52	■ Security: Northern Ireland	63
■ Intelligence Services	53	TRANSPORT	63
■ Prosecutions: Fraud	53	■ Carshalton Beeches Station: Access	63
■ Trespass	54	■ Diesel Fuel and Petrol: Emergencies	64
■ Visas: EU Nationals	54	■ Dover Port and Felixstowe Port: Infrastructure	64
■ Visas: Foreign Nationals	54	■ International Transport: Coronavirus	64
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	55	■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	65
■ Grenfell Tower: Fires	55	■ Public Transport: Noise	65
■ Housing: Coronavirus	55	■ Railways: Disability	65
■ Retail Trade: Sheffield	55	■ Southern: Standards	66
■ Towns Fund	56	TREASURY	67
■ Urban Areas	56	■ Corporation Tax: Digital Technology	67
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	57	■ Mortgages: Northern Ireland	67
■ Palestinians: Textbooks	57	■ Stamp Duty Land Tax	68
■ UNRWA: Finance	58	■ Tax Avoidance	68
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	58	■ Tax Avoidance: Romford	68
■ Overseas Trade: Caribbean	58		
■ South Asian Network: Finance	59		

WORK AND PENSIONS	69	MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS	73
■ Employment and Support Allowance	69	FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	73
■ Local Housing Allowance	70	■ Cambodia and Vietnam: British Nationals Abroad	73
■ Occupational Health	70	HOME OFFICE	74
■ Personal Independence Payment	71	■ Slavery	74
■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus	71	WRITTEN STATEMENTS	75
■ State Retirement Pensions: Females	71	NORTHERN IRELAND	75
		■ Addressing Northern Ireland Legacy Issues	75
		TREASURY	76
		■ Notification of a Contingent Liability	76

Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Biofuels: Wind Power**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[27586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the potential for on-farm generation of biogas.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Biogas is produced through anaerobic digestion (AD) using biomass feedstocks such as food and on-farm waste (e.g. manure and slurries). Biogas can be used to generate electricity or heat (or both outputs in a CHP system). The Government supports AD as an effective treatment for organic waste that produces renewable fuel, heat or energy and a nutrient rich by-product, digestate, which can be used as a fertiliser.

The Government regularly engages with the Welsh Government, at both ministerial and official level, on a range of issues including biogas.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Staff**

Olivia Blake:

[\[27682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many staff in his Department are employed in the (a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (b) Energy Security Group.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The staff FTE figure in (a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (b) Energy Security Group are:

(a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group is 804.5 FTE

(b) Energy Security Group is 619.1 FTE

Olivia Blake:

[\[27683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many (a) Senior Executive Officers and (b) Higher Executive Officers of his Department are employed in the (i) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (ii) Energy Security Group.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The FTE for (a) SEO's and (b) HEO's in (i) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (ii) Energy Security Group are:

	HEO	SEO
(i) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group	128.7	174.5
(ii) Energy Security Group	124.4	129.3

Olivia Blake:

[27684]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many employees of his Department are employed in each of the 12 Directorates which make up the (a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (b) Energy Security Group.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The number of staff in the directorates in (a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (b) Energy Security Group are:

(a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group

DIRECTORATE	ACTIVE	OTHER(S)	TOTAL
Clean Growth	96.5		96.5
Clean Heat	91		91
Climate and Energy – Trade and Europe	32		32
Energy efficiency and Local	86	1	87
ETCG DG Office	3.8		3.8
Heat and Emissions Trading	3		3
Industrial Energy	101	3	104
International (inc Climate Change & Energy and Climate Finance)	212.2	15.5	227.7
Magnox Enquiry	0.8	1	1.8
Science and Innovation	76.8	1	77.8

Smart Metering Implementation Programme	68.9	11	79.9
-----------------------------------------	------	----	-------------

(b) Energy Security Group

DIRECTORATE	ACTIVE	OTHER(S)	TOTAL
DG Office	3	0	3
Clean Power Strategy & Development	90	1	91
Energy Development and Resilience	180	3	183
Energy Security, Networks and Markets	144.1	1	145.1
Nuclear	175	22	197

Active refers to the numbers of BEIS employees. Other(s) refers to non-BEIS employees engaged by the Department: for example secondees in, contractors, temporary agency staff, etc.

Olivia Blake:

[\[27685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many staff of his Department he estimates will be working in the (a) Energy Transformation and Clean Growth Group and (b) Energy Security Group when the UK hosts COP26 in November 2020.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Although a rise is expected, numbers of staff for November 2020 is currently subject to ongoing business and resourcing planning so until this exercise is completed, a number is not available.

■ **Diesel Fuel and Petrol: Emergencies**

Gavin Newlands:

[\[28666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans his Department has to maintain continuity of (a) petroleum and (b) diesel supply in the event of a public health emergency.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department continues to work closely with the fuel sector to ensure that plans are in place to maintain the supply of petroleum and diesel in the event of a public health emergency.

The sector is used to varying levels of demand, and disruptions to supply, for example during inclement weather, and is adept at directing resource to where it is most needed. In addition, the Government has a long-standing fuel supply contingency programme that can be deployed in support of industry to maintain fuel supplies as close to normal levels as possible.

■ Engineering: Females

Alexander Stafford:

[\[27647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to encourage energy companies to promote women into engineering positions.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Her Majesty's Government (HMG) is a signatory to the "Equal by 30 Campaign", a joint Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) and International Energy Agency (IEA) initiative, which works towards equal pay, equal leadership, and equal opportunities for women in the clean energy sector by 2030.

HMG has additionally set a target of having 40% women working in the nuclear sector by 2030 from a baseline of 22% in 2018 as part of the Nuclear Sector Deal. Since then the Nuclear Skills Strategy Group (NSSG), the leading forum for nuclear skills, of which HMG is a member, together with Women in Nuclear (WiN) has published a Gender Roadmap that sets out the actions needed for the industry to hit that target. Ministers and HMG officials have also signed the Nuclear Sector Gender Commitment, which supports companies in their efforts to reach 40%.

BEIS also continues to support POWERful Women, which was launched by HMG in 2014 and seeks to promote gender diversity in the energy sector, through membership of their Board and provision of grant funding to support their POWERful Connections mentoring programme.

■ Flexible Working: Females

Alexander Stafford:

[\[27648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent representations he has made to energy companies on increasing flexible working to encourage uptake of jobs in that sector by women.

Paul Scully:

The Government supports flexible working and is clear about the benefits for employers and their employees, including in the energy sector.

We consulted last year on proposals to require large employers to publish flexible working policies and to advertise jobs as suitable for flexible working. We will respond to that consultation in due course. Since then, we committed in our Manifesto to make flexible working the default. Subject to consultation, we will bring forward these new measures in our Employment Bill.

■ Heating: Carbon Emissions

Alex Sobel:

[\[27621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the potential contribution of waste heat capture to the decarbonisation of heat supply.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Waste heat capture can play an important part in the decarbonisation of heat, specifically when used in heat networks. In its 2015 assessment the Committee on Climate Change suggested that waste-heat recovery should be contributing a third of heat supply to heat networks by 2050 in order to meet our net-zero target.

The Government recognises that waste-heat is a cost-effective form of low-carbon heat. In the Budget on 11th March the Chancellor announced a new £270m Green Heat Network Fund. This will fund large-heat pumps, solar thermal installations and waste-heat recovery in heat networks between 2022 and 2025; and we will be consulting later this year on scheme design.

■ Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[29218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Budget 2020, whether £22 billion of funding allocated to R&D includes funding to replace EU funding.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is firmly committed to becoming a global science superpower and continuing to collaborate internationally on scientific research.

The Chancellor announced that government investment in R&D will increase to £22bn per annum by 2024/25, putting the UK on track to reach 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D across the economy by 2027. This increase will include funding for continued participation in EU science programmes or EU replacement schemes.

Funding for EU programmes, or for alternatives would be subject to allocations at the Spending Review.

■ Small Businesses: Administration

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[27512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to reduce the level of administrative demands placed by the Government on small businesses.

Paul Scully:

The Government announced the introduction of the Small and Micro Business Assessment (SaMBA) in June 2013. It requires that Impact Assessments provide clear evidence of the potential impact of regulations on small and micro businesses. The default assumption under SaMBA is that there will be a legislative exemption for

small and micro businesses where a large part of the intended benefits of the measure can be achieved without including them. As a result of this policy, small firms can have confidence that future regulation will be more manageable for them and that they will not face disproportionate regulatory burdens.

The Department will shortly launch a call for evidence into the impact of regulation on business, which, taken alongside the Reducing Regulation Initiative announced as part of Budget 2020, will inform future policies to further reduce administrative demands on business, with particular attention on small businesses.

■ WH Smith: Post Offices

Marion Fellows:

[\[28684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of potential effect of WH Smith's profit warning on the sustainability of Post Office branches in WH Smith's premises.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 17 March 2020]: The Government recognises the critical role that Post Offices play in communities and for small businesses across the UK. This is why the Government committed to safeguard the post office network and protect existing rural services. The overall number of post offices across the UK remains at its most stable in decades with over 11,500 branches thanks to significant Government investment of over £2 billion since 2010.

WHSmith have issued a profit warning in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak. The Chancellor announced at the Budget a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support businesses through this period of disruption caused by Covid-19. Post Office Limited is in conversation with WHSmith and all other retail partners on a regular basis including discussions around contingency planning and cost control.

This government will continue to monitor and communicate with Post Office Limited as the situation with Covid-19 develops.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Church of England: Carbon Emissions

Jim Shannon:

[\[29874\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how the Church of England plans to deliver on the General Synod's decision to make the Church carbon zero by 2030.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England is committed to reducing its own carbon footprint and is developing several strategies to deliver this, including across its 44,000 properties and schools.

The General Synod at its meeting in February 2020 committed the Church to report back in three years time on whether it could meet the ambitious target set by the Synod of decarbonising the Church by 2030.

One of the first steps has already started and many listed buildings have started exploring installing new renewable technology to improve their energy use. A good example is Gloucester Cathedral, a grade 1 listed building, which has managed to install solar panels on its roof.

The Church is working with A Rocha to recognise achievement by church buildings and dioceses with Eco-Church awards at either bronze, silver or gold standard.

A new initiative the Church has developed is an energy rating tool for church buildings, which calculates the energy consumption of the parish church. It takes into account factors including the type of power the parish uses, whether they are on 'green' tariffs, the size of the building and usage.

■ Church of England: Charitable Donations

Jim Shannon:

[29875]

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, with reference to the declining use of cash throughout the UK, what steps the Church of England is taking to change the way it collects donations in parishes.

Andrew Selous:

The Church recognised in 2017 the need to adapt to the major move away from cash towards contactless payments. Today a much larger, fast-evolving range of contactless solutions is available through the Church's own Parish Buying service, with over 1,900 churches now having the means to accept payments or donations by card or mobile phone. The Church aims to have over half of its 16,000 churches able to take contactless payments and donations in the next three years. The Church of England in partnership with the Church in Wales is working through its 'Parish Buying' programme to negotiate competitive prices for churches. More information on that can be found at the 'Parish Buying' website:

<https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/giving-and-payments>

■ Church of England: Investment

Jim Shannon:

[29873]

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to use its investments to support business transitioning to a low carbon economy.

Andrew Selous:

As responsible investors and members of the UN-convened Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance, the Church Commissioners regard climate change as a vital issue and have pledged to transition their investment to a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions portfolio by 2050. They will set their first interim emissions reduction target as

members of the Net Zero Asset Owner Alliance in 2020 and will work with their public equities managers to achieve it.

The Church of England National Investing Bodies (NIBs), are guided by the commitments made by the NIBs in July 2018 General Synod debate on climate change and investment. Starting in 2020 the NIBs are committed to disinvest from companies that are not taking seriously their responsibilities to assist with the transition to a low carbon economy. In a new commitment, the NIBs indicated that by 2023 they would disinvest from fossil fuel companies that are not prepared to align with the goal of the Paris Agreement.

The Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) is a global initiative, co-founded by the Church of England National Investing Bodies in 2017, to assess companies' preparedness for the transition to a low carbon economy. It ended 2019 supported by investors with over \$16 trillion of assets.

The Church of England Pension Board launched the FTSE TPI Climate Transition Index in January at the London Stock Exchange. The Index rewards those companies with public targets aligned to the Paris Agreement whilst significantly underweighting or excluding those that do not.

The new index embeds forward-looking climate data from TPI - namely the TPI *carbon performance metric that* assesses a company on its plans for alignment with the transition to a low carbon economy. Companies currently excluded from the index would be included if they set public emissions targets (covering all their emissions) aligned to the goals of the Paris Agreement. We believe it to be the first global index of its kind that will allow passive funds to play an active role in supporting the Paris Climate Agreement.

The Church is also part of Climate Action 100+ ('CA100+'), which is an investor initiative seeking to ensure the world's largest corporate greenhouse gas emitters take necessary action on climate change, consistent with goal of the Paris Agreement to restrict warming to well below two degrees Celsius. CA100+ is supported by more than 370 investors with over \$41 trillion of assets. The Commissioners were founding supporters, the Transition Pathway Initiative is one of the Climate Action100+ official data partners, and its assessments are used to benchmark companies.

■ Church of England: Marriage

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[28560]

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, in what circumstances a Church of Scotland minister is able to conduct a wedding in the Church of England.

Andrew Selous:

The clergy of other denominations cannot conduct Church of England marriages, though they may be able to participate to a limited extent in Church of England weddings by, for example, reading lessons, or leading prayers by agreement with the local incumbent or priest who is officiating.

■ Church of England: Personal Records

Jim Shannon:

[29879]

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to use new technology to make its graveyard records available.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England is starting to map its thousands of graveyards over the next five years, with the first trials taking place in the Huddersfield area. This will enable for the first time a comprehensive database of British burial sites.

The Church of England project hopes to immortalise the tombs of millions of people buried, as well as those interred on unconsecrated land. Maps and photographs will be uploaded alongside burial records in a searchable database

The Church is grateful to Historic England for backing the project, which it has match-funded, and hopes that this will make its 35 million burial records, and the even larger number of memorials, available to the public through an integrated searchable map.

■ Churches: Theft

Jim Shannon:

[29878]

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, with reference to recent thefts of lead roofs and bells from churches in Yorkshire and Wiltshire, what steps the Church of England is taking to protect churches from thefts of lead and bells.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England has witnessed a steady increase in metal theft recently. Between 2018 and 2019, reports of thefts were up 25%. The rise is attributed to an increase in international metal prices. Additionally, significant thefts are being co-ordinated by organised criminals working in teams. The Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 had great success initially, but further work is necessary to update the law to reflect the organised nature of this crime.

Recent cases of theft have included the 291-year-old bell from Bremilham Church in Wiltshire, recognised as the smallest church in England. In North Yorkshire 60% of the lead roof was stolen from St Peter's Church, Brafferton. This church had only just completed an extensive refurbishment and has now been left with a £80,000-£100,000 repair bill. Thefts are generally moving north and west along the major transport routes and while the additional funding from the Government to assist all religious buildings increase their security is welcome, it does not address the underlying causes of this sort of organised crime.

Church buildings are a community resource and are not just used by worshipers. All Parochial Church Councils are encouraged to take all measure they feel appropriate to deter potential thieves, such as using smart water and installing roof alarms. Many

churches have found that by being open more frequently and welcoming people in, rather than only opening for services, this has helped reduce the risk of thefts.

■ **Visits Abroad: South Sudan**

Jim Shannon:

[\[29876\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress is being made on the Archbishop's plans to make a joint visit to South Sudan with His Holiness the Pope.

Andrew Selous:

The Archbishop of Canterbury remains committed to making a visit to South Sudan following the formation of the Transitional Government. Discussions are underway to assess opportunities for a joint visit together with His Holiness the Pope and a senior representative of the Church of Scotland.

Peace and security in South Sudan are of vital importance, and the Archbishop has been meeting with key regional figures such as President Museveni of Uganda and Special Envoy Kalonzo of Kenya to discuss this.

The Archbishop keeps in regular contact with Archbishop Justin Badi and the South Sudan Council of Churches leaders to discuss their priorities for the local church and how they can be best supported.

■ **Visits Abroad: Uganda**

Jim Shannon:

[\[29877\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what the outcome was of the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent visit to Uganda to discuss the peace and security challenges facing the region.

Andrew Selous:

During his recent visit to Uganda for the enthronement of the 9th Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, the Archbishop of Canterbury was invited to meet with President Museveni.

The Archbishop of Canterbury paid tribute to President Museveni for hosting large numbers of refugees from South Sudan in Uganda and discussed regional politics, peace and security. The Archbishop also discussed the intention for the global Anglican Communion to plant 100 million trees globally over the next five years as part of its contribution to environmental protection.

DEFENCE

■ **Armed Forces: Death**

Dave Doogan:

[\[27672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel have died in combat since 2000.

Johnny Mercer:

In the period 1 January 2000 to 11 March 2020, 545 UK Armed Forces personnel have died as a result of hostile action.

■ Armed Forces: Domestic Violence**Dave Doogan:**[\[27670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many cases of domestic abuse within armed forces families were reported in each year since 2000; and how many of those cases resulted in criminal proceedings.

Johnny Mercer:

Domestic abuse is a very important issue and we treat allegations of domestic abuse very seriously. In July 2018, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) launched its first strategy to tackle domestic abuse within the Armed Forces and defence civilian communities. The strategy builds on existing work by the Armed Forces in this area, such as providing specialist training to welfare staff, and included the launch of a campaign to raise awareness of the issue. The MOD is a member of the cross-Government Violence against Women and Girls working group.

In the UK, the Service Justice System does not normally have jurisdiction for investigating, or prosecuting cases of domestic abuse, as that is normally the responsibility of the domestic Criminal Justice System, and as such the data held by the MOD is limited. Additionally, the MOD does not hold centralised records of reported cases of domestic abuse which did not result in a prosecution or which may involve minor violence in a domestic setting which were dealt with at a Summary Hearing.

The following table provides details of the number of Service personnel prosecuted for domestic abuse by the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) at a Court Martial:

YEAR	CASES DIRECTED FOR COURT MARTIAL
2005	7
2006	3
2007	5
2008	4
2009	5
2010	9
2011	22
2012	11
2013	22

YEAR	CASES DIRECTED FOR COURT MARTIAL
2014	36
2015	20
2016	19
2017	16
2018	11
2019	9

Notes:

Information before 2005 is not held.

2005 to 2008 – these years were prior to the creation of the SPA and the data held on the SPA's case database was derived from the unique case management systems of the Army, Navy and RAF Prosecuting Authorities. These systems held varying levels of data and detail on the individual cases. Therefore, these figures should be regarded as estimated.

2007 – one case has yet to go to Court Martial – accused Absent Without Official Leave.

2009 – This was the year that the SPA came into being and was also the year that a new cases management system entitled “AXXIA DNA” was trialled in SPA. This new system wasn't compatible with the UK “AXXIA” system and data has been lost as a result. Figures should, therefore, be regarded as an estimate.

2018 – one case has yet to go to Court Martial.

2019 – five cases have yet to go to Court Martial.

■ Armed Forces: Large Goods Vehicles

Gavin Newlands:

[28669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many service personnel hold a Large Goods Vehicle licence permitting the transport of hazardous materials on public roads and highways.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department maintains sufficient trained drivers to meet its routine operational outputs.

The precise information sought goes beyond current operational requirements and will require further time to respond. I will write to him shortly.

■ Armed Forces: Suicide

Dave Doogan:

[27673]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many armed forces personnel have died from suicide (i) in service and (ii) after leaving the armed forces.

Johnny Mercer:

The Government takes the welfare of Service personnel and veterans very seriously. As in society as a whole, the Armed Forces will never be able to eradicate the incidence of suicide, however we are not complacent; any suicide is one too many and a tragedy for the individual.

Defence Statistics (Health) produce an annual National Statistic on suicide in the UK Armed Forces which is released at the end of March every year and is available at the following website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-armed-forces-suicide-and-open-verdict-deaths-index>. Between 1999 and 2018 there have been 310 suicides among UK Regular Armed Forces personnel: 292 among males, and 18 among females. There were five coroner-confirmed suicides in 2018 with an additional 16 awaiting verdicts that may result in a suicide verdict once coroner inquests are held.

Suicide data for all veterans of the UK Armed Forces is not captured by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). However, the MOD has commissioned a new study to investigate causes of death, including suicide, among all those who served in the UK Armed Forces from 2001, including those that deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. The study will include personnel who are still in service and veterans, including recent Service leavers, and will be updated on an ongoing basis and will compare findings with the general population during the same period:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-study-into-iraq-and-afghanistan-veterans-launched>

The MOD also publishes studies on the causes of death, including suicide, of veterans from the 1982 Falklands Campaign (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/causes-of-deaths-among-the-uk-armed-forces-veterans-of-the-1982-falklands-campaign>) and from the 1990/91 Gulf Conflict (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/causes-of-deaths-that-occurred-among-the-uk-veterans-of-the-199091-gulf-conflict>). To date, both studies show that the suicide rates among veterans were lower than comparative rates in the general population when matched for age and gender.

■ Armed Forces: Trauma

Dave Doogan:

[27669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what (a) screening, (b) support and (c) treatment services are provided to armed forces personnel in relation to the effects of trauma.

Johnny Mercer:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) worked closely with King's College London on a study (funded by the US Department of Defense) into the use of a screening tool for mental health issues. The results of the study were published in 'The Lancet' in 2017[1] and found that screening was not effective in reducing symptoms of mental health disorders or encouraging personnel to seek help, compared to the general mental health advice which is the standard of care in the UK military.

The single Services have long standing welfare structures in place for supporting personnel. Personnel can use, and Commanders can call on, this wide range of resources as and when required. These resources are diverse and for example include welfare officers, padres and support provided by charities such as SSAFA. Both SSAFA and MOD's Veterans UK have general helplines, however, when required they will signpost individuals to the Combat Stress 24hour mental health helpline.

For those personnel requiring medical intervention, MOD has its own well-established mental health service. Our mental health services are configured to provide community-based mental health care in line with national best practice. We do this primarily through our 11 military Departments of Community Mental Health across the UK, which provide out-patient mental healthcare. A wide range of psychiatric and psychological treatments are available, including medication, evidence-based talking therapies, and environmental adjustment where appropriate.

[1] Rona, R et al (2017) Post-deployment screening for mental health disorders and tailored advice about help-seeking in the UK military: a cluster randomised controlled trial

■ **Defence Infrastructure Organisation and Reserve Forces and Cadets Association: Cost Effectiveness**

Adam Holloway: [\[27975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what comparative assessment he has made of the cost efficiency of the (a) Reserve Forces and Cadets Association and (b) Defence Infrastructure Organisation working on small projects.

Jeremy Quin:

At this time, no comparison of the cost efficiency of these organisations working on small projects has been undertaken.

■ **Defence: National Security**

Jack Lopresti: [\[28057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives of the defence industry as part of its review of the UK's Defence and Security Industrial Strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department is engaging with industry throughout the review in order to seek views and inform the analysis. The Department is using its strong relationship with relevant trade associations and already established Government-Industry fora as much as possible to discuss the review. These include the Defence Suppliers Forum and the Defence Growth Partnership. We are also working alongside colleagues from other Government Departments to engage with industry through broader security focussed groups such as the Security & Resilience Growth Partnership and the Cyber Growth Partnership.

■ Ministry of Defence: Infrastructure and Projects Authority**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[28772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 to Question 26982, how many times the scope of an ongoing project listed in his Department's Major Projects Portfolio changed.

Jeremy Quin:

Information regarding individual Programmes is owned and held within the relevant Top Level Budget (TLB) areas by the Programmes Senior Responsible Owners. There are currently 38 Programmes on the Defence Major Programmes Portfolio and many of these programmes contain numerous projects which date back to the 1990's and early 2000's. Therefore, the information to answer this question could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ Reserve Forces and Cadets Association**Adam Holloway:**[\[27978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will place in the Library copies of correspondence between Baroness Goldie and Lord De Mauley that followed the debate on Reserve Forces and Cadets' Associations of 27 January 2020, Official Report, column 1304.

James Heappey:

I will write to hon. Member shortly.

■ Reserve Forces and Cadets Association: Membership**Adam Holloway:**[\[27976\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the skills available free of charge to the Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association through its active volunteer membership.

James Heappey:

We greatly value the contribution of the Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association's volunteer membership in support of the Reserve Forces and the Cadet organisations. Their continued contribution of their own free time to support our Armed Forces and affiliated youth organisations is laudable, and we hold them in the highest regard.

We do not currently hold any information on the skills, qualifications or experience of volunteer members outside of the Armed Forces. We recognise that our volunteers bring a wealth of experience and different ways of working, whilst concurrently being a fully integrated and integral part of our tri-service community and youth organisations.

Adam Holloway: [\[27977\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that membership of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association continues to serve (a) reserves and cadets and (b) wider defence policy.

James Heappey:

We greatly value the contribution of the Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations (RFCA) to Defence and we continue to engage with their volunteer membership. This is achieved through Ministerial and senior military attendance at events such as the Council of RFCAs' annual briefing, and the Annual General Meetings held by Associations. Such engagement ensures that we maintain links at the appropriate level of seniority, and I am confident that the Ministry of Defence will maintain its current excellent relationship with the RFCAs long into the future.

■ Type 26 Frigates

Luke Pollard: [\[28096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether shipyards other than those based in the UK will be able to bid for the deep maintenance contract for the new Type 26 frigates.

Jeremy Quin:

No decisions have yet been made regarding Type 26 Frigate deep maintenance periods.

■ Veterans: Entry Clearances

Dan Jarvis: [\[28088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what recent discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on former members of the armed forces being refused entry to the UK.

Johnny Mercer:

I will be meeting with the Minister for Immigration as soon as possible to discuss immigration issues which impact on both Serving and former members of the Armed Forces.

■ Veterans: Immigration

Gareth Thomas: [\[27949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of UK veterans who have served for more than four years and are originally from commonwealth countries and who no longer have the right to remain in the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Johnny Mercer:

The table below shows the total number of Commonwealth Service Personnel who have left the Regular Armed Forces with at least four years' service in each of the last 10 calendar years.

CALENDAR											
YEAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	*	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	330	340	660	850		710	460	350	380	320	190

Source: Defence Statistics

Notes/Caveats

1. Regular Armed Forces comprise Full Time service personnel, including Nursing Services, but excluding Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) personnel, Gurkhas, mobilised Reservists, Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS), Locally Engaged Personnel (LEP), Non-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS), High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Expeditionary Forces Institute (EFI) personnel. This data contains both trained and untrained personnel.
2. Nationality is recorded by the individual service person on the Joint Personnel Administration system at the time of exit. This does not capture personnel with dual nationalities, or personnel whose nationality has changed during the course of their service, or after their departure. Some people leave without making such a declaration which may include some Commonwealth personnel.
3. Length of service has been calculated using entry date on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. This may include previous periods of service, either in the Regular or Reserve forces, and some personnel may have left the Armed Forces and re-joined since, so they may not currently be a veteran.
4. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 in line with standard statistical policy. Figures ending in 5 are rounded to the nearest 20 to avoid bias.
5. * A break in the series has been included as a different method for calculating outflow from the Armed Forces was used prior to 2013.

Under the Home Office's Appendix Armed Forces immigration rules, four years is the minimum length of Service upon discharge for Commonwealth citizens to be eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK (more commonly known as settled status). Individuals who choose to return to their country of origin upon discharge and have served for a minimum of four years can submit an application for Indefinite Leave to Enter (ILE) the UK within two years of discharge if they meet the Home Office criteria. Separate arrangements exist for those who are medically discharged as a result of their Service and have served less than four years.

Commonwealth citizens can also choose to apply for naturalisation as a British citizen while still serving and can count their Service (including overseas service) towards

the Home Office's five-year UK residency criteria. Naturalisation negates the need to apply for ILR or ILE upon discharge.

UK immigration is a matter for the Home Office, and the Ministry of Defence does not hold information about which former Armed Forces personnel from the Commonwealth have made applications for naturalisation, for ILR or for ILE. Nor does the Ministry of Defence hold information on whether any such application has been successful.

■ **Vulcan Aircraft: Anniversaries**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[29196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps he plans to take to ensure that there is a public celebration on 25 May 2020 for the diamond anniversary of the first test-flight of XH558 vulcan aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence has no plans to mark the anniversary of the first test flight of Vulcan XH558.

EDUCATION

■ **Apprentices: Digital Technology**

Robert Halfon:

[\[27622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment the Government has been made of the role of Digital and Technology Solutions degree apprenticeships in filling (a) current and (b) future skills gaps in the digital industries.

Gillian Keegan:

An estimated additional 1.2 million people with specialist digital skills will be required by the UK economy by 2022. Now, more than ever, high-level skills in computing are essential to supporting a successful economy.

Apprenticeships can help employers in the digital sector address their current and emerging skills needs and build a diverse pipeline of talent for the future.

We have put employers at the heart of our apprenticeship system, empowering them to design the standards that they need. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) supports employers to develop standards and acts as the guarantor of their quality. There are currently 22 standards available in the digital sector with a further 6 in development, ranging from level 3 to level 7.

IfATE conducts statutory route reviews to give employers the confidence that apprenticeship standards remain relevant and continue to deliver value for money for employers and government. The digital route review was the first of these reviews to be carried out. It reported in May 2019 and found that the level 6 Digital and Technology Solutions professional standard would be retained and revised, ensuring

that the content was appropriate and up to date. The level 7 standard was introduced in August 2018 and therefore not in scope of the review.

Starts on both apprenticeship standards have grown, with 1,500 starts on the level 6 Digital and Technology Solutions Professional standard in 2018/19 and 180 starts on the level 7 Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist standard.

■ Asylum: Children

Mr Stephen Morgan: [27596]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many unaccompanied asylum seeking children there are (a) in the care of Portsmouth City Council and (b) in the UK.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [27597]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many unaccompanied asylum seeking children are being housed in unregulated care homes.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [27600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people under the age of 18 under the care of Portsmouth City Council are being housed in unregulated care homes.

Vicky Ford:

The latest figures relate to the 31 March 2019. The department holds information for England, but information for Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland is a matter for the devolved administrations.

There were 5,070 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children looked after by local authorities in England, of which 101 were looked after by Portsmouth local authority. 990 of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children looked after by local authorities in England were placed in semi-independent living accommodation, a further 1,460 were living independently.

24 children (aged under 18 years) were looked after by Portsmouth local authority and were accommodated in semi-independent living accommodation, a further 37 were living independently.

Information on the numbers of children looked after in England, including information on the numbers who are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and placements, is available in the annual statistical release 'Children looked after in England (including adoption)' which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>.

While most children in care are placed in children's homes or foster care, independent and semi-independent settings can be the right choice for some older children, acting as a stepping stone towards independence and adult life. Given that the majority of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) are aged 16 and over, UASC are more likely to benefit from high quality placements in these settings than the wider cohort of looked-after-children. We have launched a consultation on

new measures to improve the quality of this provision, including introducing new national standards.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[27598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent trends in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children under the care of Portsmouth City Council being housed in unregulated care homes on the (a) well-being, (b) integration and (c) safety of those children.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[27601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of recent trends in the number of people under the age of 18 under Portsmouth City Council's care being housed in unregulated care homes on the safety of those people.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[27602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to reduce the use of unregulated care homes for the care of unaccompanied asylum seeking minors.

Vicky Ford:

Every child growing up in care should have a safe and secure environment where they feel supported. Local authorities are required by the law to ensure that they meet the needs of their looked-after children, and they must ensure that care placements facilitate this.

Independent and semi-independent (unregulated) settings can play an important role in the care system in meeting the needs of older children, acting as a stepping stone towards independence and adult life.

Such placements have benefited young people in Portsmouth, where one of the 8 Staying Close pilots is in place. The department has issued £1.6 million in the last two years to the 8 existing pilots, and has agreed a further £6 million for the next year to begin a national rollout. The Staying Close pilot in Portsmouth is supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) care leavers to move towards independence by providing additional support in semi-independent living arrangements.

Through the safeguarding strategy for UASC, we are also committed to developing resources to support the recruitment of supported lodging hosts as a form of semi-independent accommodation. This will ensure that we continue to support local authorities to find the most appropriate placements to meet the needs of UASC.

While independent and semi-independent settings do form an important part of the care landscape, in meeting the needs of older children who are ready for this, we have made clear that we are concerned that the quality is not always good enough. We are particularly concerned about the number of children under the age of 16 being placed in this provision. It is unacceptable for any child to be placed in a setting that does not meet their needs for any amount of time.

We are moving quickly to take action on these issues, and have launched a consultation on reforms to the use of independent and semi-independent provision. The consultation covers proposals including banning the placement of children under 16 in this provision and introducing new mandatory quality standards.

■ **Breakfast Clubs: Finance**

Paul Maynard:

[27572]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which schools in (a) Blackpool and (b) Lancashire local authority areas have received funding through the National School Breakfast Programme.

Vicky Ford:

The department is investing up to £35 million in the National Schools Breakfast Programme (NSBP) to kick-start or improve sustainable breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas. This includes the recently announced extension to the NSBP which will support up to an additional 650 schools with up to £11.8 million being invested in 2020-21. Please find the list of participating schools from Blackpool and Lancashire attached.

Prior to the launch of the National Schools Breakfast Programme there was already a successful local authority scheme operating within Blackpool. The scheme, run through Blackpool Council, entitles all primary school children to a free breakfast.

Attachments:

1. List of Participating Schools [Breakfast Clubs PQ 27572.xlsx]

■ **Educational Visits: Coronavirus**

Steve McCabe:

[29198]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to make financial support available to schools that have cancelled international school trips and not been able to issue a refund due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Government advises against any overseas trips for children under 18 organised by educational settings. Affected schools should check with their travel providers and credit card companies regarding securing refunds in the first instance. If unable to recoup their full costs, academies signed up to the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for schools should then submit their claims as per the RPA membership pack and other affected schools should contact their individual insurance providers. The Government's COVID-19 travel guidance for the education sector is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/covid-19-travel-guidance-for-the-education-sector>.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:** [\[29261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to continue to provide children eligible for free school meals with meals in the event that schools are closed due to the outbreak of covid-19.

Vicky Ford:

The guidance from Public Health England remains that childcare facilities and schools should stay open, unless advised otherwise. However, the department is aware that pupils eligible for free school meals will miss out if their school is closed, or they are asked to self-isolate. We are reviewing this issue as a matter of urgency, working closely with other government departments to consider what action can be taken. We recognise the challenge this could place on families, schools and other education providers.

The department has launched a dedicated telephone and email service to allow quick access to the latest help and support for schools and parents. The purpose of the helpline is to ensure consistent and accurate information reaches education providers and should help ensure providers feel well supported.

Details of the helpline:

Phone: 0800 046 8687 (8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and weekends 10am to 4pm.)

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

■ National Retraining Scheme**Emma Hardy:** [\[27618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on the roll-out of the national retraining scheme in 2020; and on what date that scheme will commence.

Gillian Keegan:

The government has started to roll out Get Help to Retrain, the first part of the National Retraining Scheme. This service helps users to understand their current skills, explore alternative occupations that they could work in and find and sign up to the training that they need to access opportunities for a broad range of good jobs.

Since the start of the roll-out of Get Help to Retrain in the Liverpool City Region in July, more features have been added to the service and it has been rolled out to users in a further 5 areas. The service will be further tested and improved in 2020, using user research and feedback to inform future development.

Over the course of this Parliament, the government are also providing £2.5 billion (£3 billion including indicative Barnett consequential), for a new National Skills Fund to help people learn new skills and prepare for the economy of the future. We are planning to consult widely on the overall design and we will provide updates on the National Skills Fund and planned consultation.

■ Obesity: Health Education

Andrew Rosindell:

[27514]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to raise awareness of the health risks of obesity among schoolchildren.

Nick Gibb:

Childhood obesity is a significant health challenge for this generation, and tackling it is an important priority for the Government. Our cross-Government childhood obesity plan, launched in 2016, represents the start of a long journey and focuses on the actions that are likely to have the biggest impact.

Many policies of the Department for Education, which complement those of other Departments, are expected to make a direct contribution to reducing the incidence of childhood obesity. These include free school meals, the school food standards, the addition of food education in the national curriculum, and the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium. The healthy schools rating scheme celebrates the positive actions that schools are delivering in terms of healthy living, healthy eating and physical activity, and supports schools in identifying further actions that they can take in this area.

In addition, the new subject of health education which will be taught to all pupils in state-funded schools from September 2020, alongside relationships education (for primary aged pupils) and relationships and sex education (secondary aged pupils) covers the issue of healthy eating. Pupils will learn about the characteristics of a poor diet and risks associated with unhealthy eating (including, for example, obesity and tooth decay) and other behaviours (e.g. the impact of alcohol on diet or health).

The Department will publish an updated school and sport activity plan following the Comprehensive Spending Review and will consider what more can be done to promote physical activity. Ahead of that, the Budget has confirmed that £90 million will be provided over the next four years to support primary school PE teaching and help schools make best use of their sports facilities.

■ Pupils: Attendance

Sir Christopher Chope:

[29195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to define exceptional circumstances for the purpose of grant of leave of absence from schools so that greater consistency can be established.

Nick Gibb:

Head teachers have the discretion to grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Our guidance is clear that they should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

In relation to the current pandemic, the Department for Education has updated our guidance on this issue to ensure that schools will not be penalised for the impacts of

COVID-19 on their attendance figures. Parents and head teachers should act in accordance with latest information and advice from Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England. This advice is being updated regularly as the situation develops, and more information can be obtained from the dedicated Department for Education helpline, open seven days a week.

Where a pupil is in self-isolation, in accordance with the latest advice, the Department for Education has made it clear to all schools that the pupil should be recorded in the attendance register as 'unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances'. Code Y – unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances – should be used in this instance.

Schools have also been advised that where a pupil does not attend school and is not self-isolating, the pupil will be recorded as absent but we expect headteachers will authorise absence where a pupil is not able to attend because of an underlying health condition that means they, or a family member in their household, are particularly vulnerable to the virus.

Recording a pupil as unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances and authorising absence will not lead to enforcement action being taken.

■ **Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus**

Mohammad Yasin: [29264]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to protect children that have underlying health conditions that attend special educational needs provision from covid-19.

Vicky Ford:

Supporting education settings to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 is the department's highest priority.

We are working closely with colleagues across the government to ensure that all appropriate arrangements and support are in place for all of the department's sectors, from early years and childcare to schools and children's social care and also for vulnerable groups including children with long-term medical conditions.

Schools should continue to support their pupils' health needs as normal and should follow Public Health England advice at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>.

■ **T-levels**

Emma Hardy: [27563]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students are enrolled on T Level courses due to commence in September 2020.

Gillian Keegan:

We estimate that there will be between 1500 and 2000 places available for students across the first 3 T levels being taught from September 2020. Providers are currently recruiting students and we will be working with them to understand more about

enrolment patterns over the coming months. We have taken a phased approach to T level delivery, working closely with providers to ensure a smooth and high-quality roll-out. The first 3 T levels will be delivered by around 50 providers across the country.

We are encouraging providers to make decisions about their curriculum offer based on a range of factors, including the availability and needs of local employers, demand from students and the availability and expertise of staff within their institutions. T levels are part of a 10-year change programme to transform the technical education system. The funding that has been invested to support their roll out will also support this wider change for the long term.

Emma Hardy:

[27564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has allocated for the introduction of T Levels.

Gillian Keegan:

In March 2017, the government announced that extra funding would be made available for the additional costs of T levels, rising to an additional £500 million per year when T levels are fully rolled out.

Programme funding has now been allocated to educational institutions to prepare for the introduction of T levels through the capacity and delivery fund for industry placements and through the early adopter development fund for initial T level providers. Funding allocations totalled £57 million in academic year 2018/19 and £57 million in 2019/20. Allocations for 2020/21 will include funding for a further year of these preparation funding streams as well as funding for the initial delivery of T levels from September 2020. However, the total allocation amounts for 2020/21 are not yet available.

The government is also investing in continuing professional development for the workforce in providers of T levels and making available capital funding for the providers of T levels to invest in their facilities and equipment. This includes £38 million in capital funding for providers delivering T levels in 2020 and £95 million for providers delivering T levels in 2021.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Welfare

Dr Luke Evans:

[28003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on the development of the legal recognition of animal sentience.

Victoria Prentis:

I refer my Hon. Friend to the reply given to the Hon. Member for City of Chester, Christian Matheson, on 20 January 2020, PQ [3774](#).

Any necessary changes required to domestic law will be made in a rigorous and comprehensive way after the transition period.

■ Birds: Conservation

Mrs Flick Drummond:

[\[28063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the size of the populations of (a) nightingales, (b) turtle doves and (c) corn buntings; what steps he plans to take to protect those bird populations.

Victoria Prentis:

The Avian Population Estimates Panel (made-up of representatives from the main bird conservation organisations and Government conservation agencies) estimates that the breeding populations for the three species are as follows:

Species	GB
(a) Nightingale	5,550
(b) Turtle dove	3,600
(c) Corn bunting	11,000

Population estimate (*Number of breeding territories*)

Agri-environmental schemes, such as the current Countryside Stewardship scheme, are the principal mechanism for supporting farm land birds, including these three species. The schemes deliver significant areas of habitat in England by providing suitable nesting and foraging conditions.

In addition, nightingales are an interest feature of a number of woodland Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in England, most notably the Chattenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI which supports a nationally significant breeding population.

The turtle dove is the focus of a joint Natural England-RSPB Species Recovery Programme project for over ten years which has involved developing novel land management solutions for the species.

■ Coal Merchants Federation

Philip Davies:

[\[27982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many meetings in his Department (a) Ministers and (b) officials have held with the Coal Merchants' Federation in the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Over the course of the consultation on cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood, the Government has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including a number of trade organisations representing the coal industry. One meeting was held at official level with the Coal Merchants' Federation. There have been no Ministerial meetings with this organisation.

■ Fish Farming: Whitstable**Rosie Duffield:****[29269]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2020 to Question 21293, for what reasons the most recent navigational risk assessment in relation to oyster farm activity in the Whitstable area has not been published to the same timescale as the previous risk assessment of the site which took place in 2017.

Rebecca Pow:

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is currently undertaking enquiries into ongoing oyster farm activity in Whitstable. The latest navigational risk assessment is considered material evidence which is informing part of these ongoing enquiries and at this stage it would not be appropriate to release the report into the public domain.

■ Fishing Catches: Computer Software**Luke Pollard:****[27650]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 3 March 2020 to Question 21400 on fishing catches, whether the catch recording app was assessed by the Government Digital Service on the basis of the technical functionality of the app only and without regard to other related data systems.

Victoria Prentis:

The assessment undertaken by the Government Digital Service (GDS) focused on ensuring that during the development of the catch recording application the Service Standard had been considered and met. The GDS Service Standard covers a wide range of specific elements including understanding users and their needs, making services simple to use and choosing the right tools and technology. It is available to view on the GOV.UK website at: www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard. Other data related systems were not reviewed or assessed by GDS.

Luke Pollard:**[27651]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2020 to Question 18901 on fishing catches, which Minister was responsible for the live assessment stage of the catch reporting app; and when the live assessment by the Government Digital Service was conducted.

Victoria Prentis:

The then Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food, the Rt Hon Robert Goodwill MP, approved the live assessment stage of the catch recording app in May

2019. The live assessment was conducted by the Government Digital Service (GDS) in July 2019.

The assessment undertaken by the GDS and subject to the beta assessment report published on 6 August 2019 did not assess live testing of the application.

Luke Pollard: [\[27652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the findings were of the independent user research, which formed the basis of the beta assessment of the catch recording app for fishing vessels of under 10m in length, on the matter of fishermen being required to record their catch before it was landed.

Victoria Prentis:

The user research that was undertaken for the catch recording project involved extensive engagement covering many points, including the compliance risks, sustainability benefits, harbour landing processes, frequency of landings, tidal considerations and catch recording completion times. This insight was used to inform the digital solution of a simple mobile application that could be used to record catches prior to landing even when no internet signal is available.

Luke Pollard: [\[27653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what risks determined that all quota species should be recorded on the catch recording app for under 10m fishing vessels before the fish were landed.

Victoria Prentis:

It is important that we have a good understanding of the state of fish stocks especially those subject to quota restrictions and also when quotas are close to being exhausted. Catch recording prior to landing commits the master/owner of a vessel to an amount and allows this information to be subsequently cross checked with data reported by merchants. This will result in a more accurate assessment of the amount of fish being landed.

The Marine Management Organisation did consider introducing an additional requirement for the exact weight of landings to be provided through landing declarations to be submitted by fishers within 24 hours of landing. However, this requirement was removed following feedback received during consultation with industry which implied this would be too burdensome on industry.

Luke Pollard: [\[27654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which company was awarded the contract for the development of the catch recording app for fishing vessels of under 10m in length; when that contract was awarded; and what the value of that contract was.

Victoria Prentis:

The catch recording application formed part of a wider procurement programme for digital transformation services and was procured through the GOV.UK Digital

Marketplace. The contract was awarded to Engine Partners UK LLP (The Engine Group) on 1 August 2018. Full details of the contract awarded and value are available online at: www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/digital-outcomes-and-specialists/opportunities/6866.

Luke Pollard:

[27655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which company prepared and submitted the information that appeared in the presentation to the Government Digital Service as part of the beta stage assessment of the catch recording app for under 10m fishing vessels; when the contract was awarded for that work; and what the value of that contract was.

Victoria Prentis:

The Marine Management Organisation and Engine Partners UK LLP (The Engine Group) jointly prepared the assessment submitted to the Government Digital Service for the beta stage assessment. The contract formed part of a wider procurement programme for digital transformation services and was procured through the GOV.UK Digital Marketplace. The contract was awarded to Engine Partners UK LLP (The Engine Group) on 1 August 2018. Full details of the contract awarded and value are available online at: www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/digital-outcomes-and-specialists/opportunities/6866.

Luke Pollard:

[27656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2020 to Question 13561 on fishing catches: computer software, if he will publish a breakdown (a) of the £1.8 million spent on the development and build costs associated with the catch recording app as of 31 October 2019 and (b) of any further costs incurred in connection with the app before or after 31st October 2019 including hosting and managing the data.

Victoria Prentis:

The £1.8 million figure relates to costs associated with the contract for the development and build for the catch recording project. Publication of a detailed breakdown would not be appropriate due to commercial sensitivities. Further costs totalling £590,000 have also been incurred to date in connection with development of the application that fall outside of the main developer costs including staff resource, establishment of call centre and other management costs.

■ Food: Standards

Dr Luke Evans:

[28002]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he is making to ensure that the UK will maintain food standards in trade policy after the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has worked closely with the Food Standards Agency and Department of Health and Social Care to ensure that the regulatory regime for food safety remains robust now the UK has left the European Union, in order to protect public health and retain the confidence of consumers and international trading partners. We will continue to ensure that without exception all imports of food meet the stringent food safety standards required of our domestic producers and we will not compromise on this in trade negotiations. Our Food Standards Agency's independent advice will ensure this will remain the case.

We will keep our existing UK legislation, and the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 will carry over EU law into UK law. Now that we have left the EU the UK will take its own sovereign decisions on standards and regulations in line with the principles of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and other relevant internationally recognised guidance. The Government remains committed to promoting robust food standards nationally and internationally, to protect consumer interests and ensure that consumers can have confidence in the food they buy.

■ Solid Fuels: Manufacturing Industries**Philip Davies:**[\[27981\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions her Department has had with smokeless fuel manufacturers in the last two years; and if she will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

During the Government's consultation on cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood, Defra officials engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including smokeless fuel manufacturers.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**■ British Nationals Abroad: EU Countries****Hilary Benn:**[\[27498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, which EU member states will be served by each of the seven organisations that have been awarded the £3 million in funding to provide practical support to UK nationals living in the EU.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Nationals Support Fund (UKNSF) aims to provide practical support to UK nationals living in EU/EFTA states who may struggle to complete their residency applications. Seven organisations have been awarded grants to deliver the project. These are: Age in Spain, operating in Spain; AIRE Centre, operating in Bulgaria, Greece, Iceland and Norway; Asociación Babelia, operating in Spain; CIFSA, operating in Cyprus; Franco-British Network, operating in France; International

Organisation for Migration, operating in France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain; and SSAFA, operating in Cyprus, France and Germany. In some countries, organisations will focus on specific regions, particularly those with high numbers of UK nationals. Bids were assessed and selected through a transparent and open competition, based on a set of clear evaluation criteria. We did not receive bids for every EU/EFTA state. The extra assistance through the UKNSF builds on the information and support that British embassies are already providing in all EU/EFTA states.

■ Cyprus: NATO

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[28579\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to support the Cypriot Government in its request for Cyprus to join the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

Wendy Morton:

We are not aware of a recent request from Cyprus to join NATO. Should such an application be received we would of course give it due consideration, taking into account NATO policies and practices. NATO's current Open Door policy states that membership is available to any European country in a position to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership.

■ Cyprus: Politics and Government

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[27568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to his UN counterparts to resume efforts to establish a summit between opposing parties in Cyprus to seek a reunification of that island.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is a strong supporter of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Cyprus issue, based on the internationally accepted model of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. We endorse the UN Secretary-General's view that prospects for a settlement remain alive. We welcome his continued willingness to work with the parties, such as his meeting of 25 November with the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders, and the engagement of UN Secretary General's Representative on the Cyprus Dispute, Ms Jane Holl Lute, and hope this will lead to a return to comprehensive negotiations.

■ Iran: Children

Sammy Wilson:

[\[27561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will request that the UN Secretary General and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights dispatch a fact-finding mission to Iran to investigate the killing of children during the November 2019 protests in that country.

James Cleverly:

We are appalled by Amnesty International reports that at least 23 children were killed by Iranian security forces during the nationwide protests in November last year. We unreservedly support the right to peaceful protest and call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to protect freedom of assembly and speech. The UK regularly raises human rights with the Iranian authorities at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues, including at the UN Human Rights Council in March this year. We agree with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' call for a transparent investigation into the killings of protesters, including these children, in the November protests. We continue to urge Iran to allow the independent UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran access to the country, so that he can carry out his mandate, which includes monitoring and investigating any human rights violations.

■ **Iran: Health Services****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the medical situation in Iran.

James Cleverly:

There have been a number of confirmed cases of coronavirus (Covid 19), including fatalities, in Iran. Due to the ongoing outbreak of the virus the Iranian authorities have introduced a number of measures in parts of the country, including temporary closures of schools, universities and public events, to limit the spread of the virus. Medical facilities are reasonable in the major cities but poor in remote areas.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all travel to some parts of Iran and all but essential travel to the rest of Iran. For British-Iranian dual nationals the FCO continue to advise against all travel to Iran. Travel advice is kept under constant review; our travel advice for Iran was last updated on 14 March and is still current at 18 March. We advise any travellers to consult with the FCO travel advice on Iran, and to make their own decisions on whether to travel.

■ **Latin America: Human Rights****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27966\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent progress his Department has made on engagement on human rights with countries in Latin America.

Wendy Morton:

The United Kingdom is committed to protecting and promoting human rights in Latin America, particularly in our two human rights priority countries in the region, Colombia and Venezuela. Our programming across the region has included projects to strengthen democracy, protect civil society space by fostering freedom of

expression and building capacity for local human rights defenders, and promote gender equality by tackling violence against women. We also have groundbreaking projects tackling regional modern slavery issues across eight countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We remain committed to delivering a broad human rights agenda across Latin America. We regularly raise human rights issues in Latin America, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, including at the UN Human Rights Council, and will continue to do so.

■ **Nicaragua: Indigenous Peoples**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[27526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with his Nicaraguan counterparts on the effect of alleged illegal land grabs by settlers on the human rights of indigenous tribespeople in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains concerned by reports of illegal land grabs by settlers and its effects on the human rights of indigenous tribespeople in Nicaragua. Our Ambassador to Nicaragua has met with representatives of the Miskito people to discuss the issue. We are working bilaterally, with international partners, and with local stakeholders, to encourage the Nicaraguan Government to fulfil its international obligations by respecting the human rights of all of its citizens, righting wrongs that have been done, and taking steps to end all repression in the country.

■ **Oil: Prices**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[27073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in OPEC member states on ensuring the stabilisation of the oil price.

Nigel Adams:

Her Majesty's Government closely monitors the oil market, and assesses its implications for the economy, businesses, and wider geopolitics. This includes the impact of the reduction in oil demand as a result of Coronavirus; the failure of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) + meeting on 5-6 March to reach an agreement on supply cuts; and Saudi Arabia's subsequent decision to increase oil production and reduce prices. No ministerial level discussions have taken place with OPEC members on the oil market since the OPEC+ meeting.

■ Sudan: Homicide**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Sudanese counterpart on the reported massacre of pro-democracy protesters on 3 June 2020.

James Duddridge:

The violent attacks against peaceful protestors on 3 June 2019 by members of the Sudanese security forces was publically condemned by the former Foreign Secretary. British Embassy officials in Khartoum also made representations directly and at senior levels with the Sudanese authorities. On 6 June 2019, the former Minister for Africa summoned the Sudanese Ambassador to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to register the depth of the United Kingdom's concern. The UK has since welcomed the August 2019 signing of the Constitutional Declaration, which sets Sudan on a path to a democratic future, and includes the intention to establish an independent inquiry into the 3 June violence. We support the establishment of this inquiry and continue to urge all parties to ensure the investigation is independent, transparent, and delivered swiftly. We continue to make clear to the Government of Sudan that there must be justice and accountability for atrocities committed by the former regime and for recent violence. On 9 March, I tweeted reaffirming the UK's full support for the civilian government in its pursuit of democracy, peace and justice.

■ Venezuela: Economic Situation**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the health of Venezuela's economy.

Wendy Morton:

The United Kingdom remains alarmed at the deteriorating economic situation in Venezuela. The actions of the Maduro regime including years of economic mismanagement, hyperinflation, and shortages of food and medicine, have led to social and economic collapse. This has led to millions of misplaced people, including many refugees, who fled to neighbouring countries, threatening regional stability and security.

The UK is committed to supporting international efforts to bring an end to the state of economic crisis.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Armed Forces: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder****Dave Doogan:**[\[27671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department provides to children of armed forces personnel that have experienced PTSD.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In England, children of armed forces personnel are supported by mainstream National Health Service mental health services.

They also have access to support via the veterans mental health Transition Intervention and Liaison Service and Complex Treatment Services, who offer health assessments and signposting to local services.

To improve this offer, NHS England and NHS Improvement are currently preparing an England wide engagement to seek the views of armed forces families to help inform care and support for this group.

■ Burnley Hospital: Admissions**Antony Higginbotham:**[\[28111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients were treated in Burnley General Hospital's Urgent Care Unit between January and December (a) 2018 and (b) 2019.

Edward Argar:

The information is not available in the format requested.

■ Cancer: Research**Grahame Morris:**[\[27539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the recommendations of Boston Scientific's Introducing an Innovative Cancer Care Fund report published in February 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Cancer Drugs Fund will be extended to create a new Innovative Medicines Fund so that doctors can use the most advanced, life-saving treatments for conditions such as autoimmune disease or cancer, or for children with other rare diseases.

Detailed proposals for the new Innovative Medicines Fund are in development and will be consulted on in due course. This will extend the successes of the reformed Cancer Drugs Fund into other areas.

■ Care Homes: Dementia**Caroline Lucas:**[\[27589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2020 to Question 18517, how many Deferred Payment Agreements have been agreed between local authorities and people aged over 65 in each year since 2014.

Helen Whately:

The following table shows the number of new Deferred Payment Agreements (DPAs) for people aged 65 and over:

FINANCIAL YEAR	NEW DPAs AGREED DURING THE YEAR	NUMBER OF COUNCILS WITH ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES SUBMITTING DATA
2018-19	3,275	152
2017-18	3,080	151
2016-17	2,845	152

This data on DPAs was first collected in 2015-16, and so we are unable to provide data from before this date. Data from 2015-16 has not been included as the collection was not mandatory at this time, and so data was only provided by 55 CASSRs (Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities).

All DPA figures quoted have been rounded to the nearest five as per the NHS Digital publications. The counts of DPAs are based on CASSRs in England only.

■ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Health Services

Caroline Lucas:

[27580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to expand NHS specialist chronic fatigue syndrome services in (a) Sussex (b) Kent and (c) other areas across the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Services for people with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) are commissioned by local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). It is the responsibility of the local National Health Service commissioners to ensure NHS services are commissioned to meet local need, including for specialist CFS care, taking into account best practice guidance, such as that produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

The NICE clinical guideline, 'Chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis (or encephalopathy): Diagnosis and management of CFS/ME in adults and children' sets out best practice in the referral of people with condition to specialist services. The guidance makes specific recommendations on the circumstances in which clinicians should consider referring a patient for specialist care. The guideline can be found at the following link:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg53

■ Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[27529]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to minimise the risk to clinical professionals of contracting covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England have published guidance for clinical professions and includes specific guidance on infection prevention and control at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance#guidance-for-health-professionals>

All guidance is published on gov.uk and standard operating procedures are published on NHS England and NHS Improvement's website. There is also guidance for National Health Service staff in primary care, secondary care, community based health and social care and ambulance services at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/>

Robert Halfon:**[27556]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking with Public Health England (PHE) to prepare for outbreaks of (a) covid-19 and (b) other viruses that may occur in the future; and what plans PHE has to use the facilities at the future site at Harlow for those preparations.

Jo Churchill:

We are currently responding across all sectors to the COVID-19 virus and we will incorporate any lessons learnt from this outbreak, into future planning.

Public Health England has recently published guidance for COVID-19 and regularly updates guidance on a range of topics. For example, guidance for staying at home and educational settings were published on 12 March and can be found at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

In 2015 the Government confirmed £400 million of capital funding to proceed with development of the planned Public Health England science campus and headquarters in Harlow. Enabling work is underway on site, and the programme will progress to Full Programme Business Case approval later this year.

■ Coronavirus: Birmingham**Preet Kaur Gill:****[29283]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure hospitals in Birmingham will have enough rooms to isolate covid-19 patients.

Jo Churchill:

Most of those who get the virus will only experience mild symptoms similar to a cold or flu. There will of course be those who will need hospital care, and how that need will be distributed is hard to predict. However, NHS England has an operating Framework for Managing the Response to Pandemic Influenza, it sets out the roles, responsibilities and functions of NHS England in preparing for and responding to an influenza pandemic. It is intended to complement and support existing plans, policies

and arrangements. More information on the Government's and NHS England's response can be found at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/nhs-england-pandemic-influenza-operating-framework-v2.pdf>

■ Coronavirus: Medical Equipment

Hilary Benn:

[29202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ECMO machines the NHS has in England; and what plans he has to procure additional machines in response to covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Extra Corporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) is used for patients with severe respiratory failure with a potentially reversible cause. There are five adult ECMO centres in the United Kingdom, two of which are in London and the others are based in Leicester, Manchester and Cambridge. The Department does not hold data on the number of ECMO devices available for use at any one time but is working with National Health Service colleagues to secure additional capacity.

The Government will be working alongside NHS England to tailor its response to the nature, scale and location of the threat of COVID - 19 in the UK, as our understanding develops.

■ Coronavirus: Remote Working

Preet Kaur Gill:

[29301]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the merits of working from home in limiting the spread of the covid-19 virus.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has advised that now is the time for everyone to stop non-essential contact with others and to stop all unnecessary travel; or people to start working from home where they possibly can and to avoid pubs, clubs, theatres and other such social venues; to avoid all unnecessary social contact (this is particularly important for people over 70, for pregnant women and for those with some health conditions); and to use the National Health Service only when necessary, preferably online rather than ringing NHS 111.

■ Coronavirus: Urdu

Afzal Khan: [27658]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make health and safety information on covid-19 available in Urdu; and where that information can be accessed.

Afzal Khan: [27659]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make health and safety information on covid-19 available in Bengali; and where that information can be accessed.

Afzal Khan: [27660]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to make health and safety information on covid-19 available in Polish; and where that information can be accessed.

Afzal Khan: [27661]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to make health and safety information on covid-19 available in Romanian; and where that information can be accessed.

Afzal Khan: [27662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to make health and safety information on covid-19 available in other languages.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England's health and safety information on COVID-19 is currently not available in Roma, Urdu, Polish or Bengali. However, resources are available in nine languages from affected areas to ensure this support and advice can be given to non-English speakers at airports. These languages are Mandarin, Cantonese, Thai, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Farsi, modern Arabic and Italian. These materials are available at international airports, ports and international train stations. The Department for Transport is responsible for ensuring the visibility of these materials.

General PHE advice on COVID-19 is updated regularly and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

■ Health Professions

Andrew Rosindell: [27509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to enable clinical professionals to have autonomy in determining which services they provide to patients.

Helen Whately:

Patient safety is paramount in relation to the services clinical professionals provide to patients. Decisions on how services are provided are taken by clinical commissioning groups who develop strategic clinical plans covering a wide range of health care services. In doing so they use their clinical expertise to assess and prioritise those treatments that provide the safest and most effective outcomes for the population.

Healthcare professionals will have different levels of autonomy depending upon their role and experience. All professionals are expected to exercise professional judgement and be accountable for their work in the context of their scope of practice. Regulated professionals must also abide by their regulatory body's Code of Conduct. Decisions about treatment should always be based on patients' clinical needs.

Health Services and Social Services: Reform**Antony Higginbotham:**[\[28110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the potential annual savings of fully integrating health and social care provision.

Helen Whately:

The Government continues to support the integrated provision of health and social care because of the improvements it brings to the quality of care people receive. Integrated provision has been found to improve health, quality of care and patient satisfaction.

Integration across health and social care commissioning also enables improved co-operation and joint decision-making between health and social care partners in delivering shared outcomes. A number of local areas have reported improved outcomes through the adoption of integrated approaches.

At the national level, evidence of savings due to integrated provision is limited, therefore, the Department does not have an estimate of the annual savings of integration.

Medical Equipment**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[27571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ventilator machines there are in each NHS trust in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Ventilator machines are used to support patient care in Intensive Care Units, operating theatres and High Dependency Units, although they are also used in other parts of a hospital, for example, in respiratory care. Other technologies are also used

to support some individuals who need assistance with breathing in community care and at home.

During the COVID-19 outbreak the National Health Service has been purchasing additional ventilators, and other oxygen support devices, at pace to further enhance capacity and the precise numbers by trust are increasing daily.

■ **Medicine: Education**

Afzal Khan:

[\[27646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate the Government has made of the number of additional medical school places required to meet future demand for doctors.

Helen Whately:

The Government has committed to funding an extra 1,500 undergraduate medical school places per year at English Universities by 2020/21 - a 25% increase. Five new medical schools will open to help deliver the expansion by September 2020, one of which is Edge Hill situated in the North West.

In developing the final NHS People Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with Health Education England to assess what further expansion in undergraduate medical places will be needed. The final NHS People Plan will be released in 2020 and will set out how the National Health Service will grow and sustain a well-skilled workforce across the whole NHS.

■ **NHS 111: Hearing Impairment**

Liz Twist:

[\[28035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to promote alternative methods for contacting 111 for people with hearing loss through (a) GPs and (b) other healthcare professionals.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service produces a range of materials to promote the NHS 111 service (including ways for deaf people to access the service), which are available to all healthcare professionals. NHS England also engages with a wide number of charities and third-party organisations to promote NHS 111 to the deaf and hard of hearing community.

A deaf or hard of hearing person can speak to NHS 111 through a British Sign Language interpreting service. Relay UK is also available for people who have difficulty communicating or hearing whilst the online NHS 111 service can also be accessed if medical advice is required.

■ **NHS Walk-in Centres**

Caroline Ansell: [\[27538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the number of GPs per head of population in each NHS trust with a GP walk-in centre; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The data requested is not collected or held centrally.

■ **NHS: Accountability**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[27508\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve the accountability of the NHS to patients.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The NHS Constitution sets out the rights that patients have, and the further standards that they should expect the National Health Service to meet, empowering them to exercise their rights and have constructive conversations with health professionals about their care. It also includes information on how to complain if things go wrong. The 'How to complain' webpage also details support available if a patient chooses to complain and the escalation process.

Healthwatch England is a statutory consultee on the annual mandate to the NHS and provides views that reflect the insights gathered by the Healthwatch network on what matters to patients. Healthwatch England's views are also sought when performance against the mandate is assessed. The assessment is laid in Parliament and published on GOV.UK.

■ **Northwick Park Hospital**

Gareth Thomas: [\[27945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost of (a) three new theatres, (b) a new recovery area and (c) the refurbishment of the (i) Intensive Treatment Unit and (ii) High Dependency Unit at Northwick Park Hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust will be developing appropriate business cases to gain support and funding for these essential improvements at Northwick Park Hospital.

■ **Northwick Park Hospital: Asbestos**

Gareth Thomas: [\[27483\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost of making safe the asbestos on the Northwick Park Hospital site; and if he will make a statement.

Gareth Thomas:

[27486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to improve services at Northwick Park Hospital since June 2017; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

All asbestos on the Northwick Park Hospital site is safely and appropriately managed in compliance with National Regulations and Legislation. Its presence means there are the costs of undertaking works associated with its management and removal and this is reflected in the reported total Backlog liability for the Northwick Park Hospital site of £141 million, of which £51 million is High and Significant Risk.

Prior to June 2017, London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust had been supported with investment in a new emergency department, additional theatres, additional inpatient beds and high-risk essential estate infrastructure. Since then, the Trust has invested in a new vascular and interventional centre, expanded critical care capacity and is currently undertaking a replacement programme of diagnostic equipment as well as continuing with its fire safety and site engineering infrastructure works programme.

■ Northwick Park Hospital: Land

Gareth Thomas:

[27485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to sell off land on the Northwick Park Hospital site; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

The latest published data on National Health Service trust surplus land disposals is available online, and reflects the position at 31 March 2019:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-surplus-land/2018-19-england-pas>

Within this dataset, the surplus land identified at Northwick Park Hospital is officially recorded as being disposed of in March 2019.

The London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust have confirmed that there are no further plans to sell off land at the Northwick Park Hospital site.'

■ Northwick Park Hospital: Medical Records

Gareth Thomas:

[27482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) digital and (b) paper care records at Northwick Hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are committed to the digitisation of paper records to enable effective patient care and enhanced patient safety.

Northwick has progressive plans to move all paper records to digital systems over the next three years.

■ **Northwick Park Hospital: Vacancies**

Gareth Thomas: [\[27484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of full-time equivalent vacancies there are for (a) nurses, (b) doctors and (c) other clinical professionals at Northwick Park Hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ **Obesity**

Andrew Rosindell: [\[27515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle obesity.

Jo Churchill:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Slough (Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP) on 3 February 2020 to Question [9135](#).

■ **Postnatal Care: Mental Health Services**

Caroline Lucas: [\[27576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to new mothers of the peer support mental health model.

Caroline Lucas: [\[27578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the cost effectiveness of peer-led mental health support for new mothers compared with other models of support; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have not made a formal assessment of the potential benefits to new mothers of the peer-support model in mental health, and we have no plans at present to carry out a comparative cost assessment.

The National Institute for Health Research has commissioned an evidence review on the effectiveness of different models of peer support in perinatal mental health, to support future development and quality improvement. This work is ongoing.

Caroline Lucas:

[\[27577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have commissioned peer-led mental health support for new mothers in the last five years; and if he will make it his policy to encourage CCGs to commission that support.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not collect the requested information. Information available from the Mental Health Services Dataset only includes activity related to specialist secondary mental health care, and therefore excludes lower levels of intervention such as peer support.

The National Institute for Health Research has commissioned an evidence review on the effectiveness of different models of peer support in perinatal mental health, to support future development and quality improvement. This work is ongoing.

Through the NHS Long Term Plan we will expand the peer-support worker role as a key area of workforce development across mental health, including perinatal mental health.

■ **Public Health England: Harlow**

Robert Halfon:

[\[27554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to the support the delivery of public health solutions at Public Health England's campus in Harlow.

Jo Churchill:

In 2015 the Government confirmed an initial £400 million of funding to proceed with development of the planned Public Health England science campus and headquarters in Harlow. Enabling work is underway on site, and the programme will progress to Full Programme Business Case approval later this year.

■ **Public Health: Finance**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[27574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the publication of the public health grant allocations to local authorities for 2020-21 has been delayed; what assessment he has made of the effect of that delay on the planning of services for (a) the event of a covid-19 outbreak and (b) other public health issues; if he will make it his policy to raise those grant allocations to 2010 levels in line with population growth and inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Public health grant allocations for local authorities for 2020-21 were published on 17 March 2020. We have not made a specific assessment of the timing of publication on the COVID-19 outbreak or other public health issues. At the time of the Spending Round 2019, the Government announced that the public health grant would rise in real terms, enabling local government to continue to invest in the services it funds. As

part of the response to COVID-19, the Government has announced a new £500 million hardship fund so local authorities can support economically vulnerable people and households.

■ Social Services: Standards

Sarah Olney: [\[27565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ensure that high standards of practice are enforced for social care services subcontracted to independent social care agencies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. All providers of regulated activities, including National Health Service and independent providers, have to register with the CQC and follow a set of fundamental standards of safety and quality below which care should never fall.

In a commissioning/contracting/sub-contracting arrangement, there are some scenarios in which the CQC does not have visibility or powers due to how it registers providers.

The CQC's approach is currently to seek to identify one party for registration, where it can, rather than seek to regulate multiple parties for the same activity – this is usually the party closest to care delivery rather than parties higher up contractual or corporate structures.

The CQC has plans to address registration of multiple parties through its Registration Transformation work.

■ Social Services: White Papers

Dan Jarvis: [\[29222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to publish a White Paper on social care.

Helen Whately:

Putting social care on a sustainable footing, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, is one of the biggest challenges we face as a society. As the Prime Minister has said, the Government will bring forward a plan for social care this year.

We have begun the first phase of commencing cross-party talks, by inviting hon. Members and Peers to voice their views, proposed solutions and concerns about reforming the way that people pay for their care.

■ Veterans: Medical Treatments

Dave Doogan: [\[27676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what processes his Department uses to monitor the adequacy of the provision of (a) support and (b) treatment for veterans.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In England the National Health Service continuously reviews the services it provides. Veterans are able to access all mainstream NHS services as well as the dedicated veteran specific services NHS England and NHS Improvement have set up. The assurance and quality of all NHS services is undertaken by the Care Quality Commission.

As a result of this ongoing review and feedback from veterans, their families and Service Charities, NHS England and NHS Improvement established two dedicated veteran's mental health services, Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service and the Complex Treatment Service. NHS England and NHS Improvement are also in the process of developing a High Intense Service to help those individuals nearing crisis.

■ Veterans: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**Dave Doogan:**[\[27675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) support and (b) treatment is available to veterans for service-related PTSD in (i) prisons and (ii) the criminal justice system.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

All patients in custody in England, including veterans, receive a range of services, including healthcare screening within 24 hours of reception and a follow up seven days later, as well as primary care, mental health, substance use, public health and secondary care services and support during the sentence or remand period.

In conjunction with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and armed forces charities, NHS England and NHS Improvement also commissions services for veterans in prisons, which includes the Veterans Regroup pathfinder service for veterans in the criminal justice system in the Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire areas.

HOME OFFICE**■ Biometric Residence Permits****Jo Stevens:**[\[29266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many biometric residence permits have been returned to her Department within 10 days of issue as a result of (a) a mistake and (b) a defect with the permit.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office do not capture data relating to how many biometric residence permits have been returned to the department within 10 days of issue. The department is therefore, unable to answer this question.

■ British Nationality

Caroline Lucas: [\[27632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) adults and (b) children who are born in the UK have different citizenship status to their siblings owing to legislative changes through the (i) British Nationality Act 1981 and (ii) Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2006.

Caroline Lucas: [\[27633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government has taken to (a) inform people who have a different citizenship status to their British siblings owing to the British Nationality Act 1981 of their status and (b) support them in applying for British citizenship.

Chris Philp:

There is no available data on the number of people born in the UK who have a different citizenship status to their siblings.

The Government website contains detailed information about who may be eligible to apply for British citizenship, how they can make an application, and how applications are considered.

■ Calais: Refugees

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan: [\[27630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has made to his European counterparts on finding suitable homes for displaced refugee (a) children and (b) families living in Calais; and what steps she is taking to support efforts to find those homes.

Chris Philp:

The living conditions and reception arrangements of migrants in France are a matter for the French government.

However, UK Government ministers and officials regularly meet their French counterparts to discuss our close cooperation on tackling illegal migration under the Sandhurst Treaty framework, which includes UK support to the French asylum system to improve access by vulnerable migrants.

■ Immigration: India

Gareth Thomas: [\[27490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 4 March 2020 to Question 22351 on Immigration: India, what meetings took place as part of the UK-India Migration Dialogue; who attended those meetings as representatives of (a) India and (b) the UK; and if she will make a statement.

Kevin Foster:

Further to my response on 02/03/2020, the January 2019 UK-India Migration Dialogue that took place in January 2019 was headed by the Director of Returns for the Home Office on the UK side.

The Indian delegation was led by the Joint Secretary Europe West from the Ministry of External Affairs. Both were accompanied by a number of supporting officials.

Intelligence Services**Mr David Davis:**[\[27493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office's ability to effectively oversee the Intelligence Services.

James Brokenshire:

The Investigatory Powers Commissioner (IPC) recently published its annual report for 2018. The report includes comprehensive data on the IPC office's structures and processes for overseeing the Intelligence Services.

It also includes specific chapters on each of the main UK intelligence agencies. The Prime Minister commended this report to both Houses on 5 March.

The report demonstrates the high quality of oversight of our intelligence and security agencies. The Home Office maintains regular contact with the IPC and his office at Ministerial and official level to ensure that they are resourced and equipped to carry out its statutory duties.

Prosecutions: Fraud**Rehman Chishti:**[\[27624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to increase prosecution rates for fraud cases.

James Brokenshire:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. The CPS is independent, and they make their decisions independently of the police and government.

The Government recognises that to increase prosecution rates, there needs to be an increased pipeline of cases under investigation. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) carried out an inspection of the police response to fraud last year. The review, published in April 2019, found that significant improvements are required to ensure the model works more effectively and efficiently, including the need for a much more co-ordinated national approach with clear roles and responsibilities.

The Home Office is working closely with law enforcement to ensure the recommendations set out in the HMICFRS report are implemented effectively in order to improve the response to fraud at the local, regional and national levels.

■ Trespass

Kate Green: [27546]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her Department's plans on the criminalisation of trespass of the judgment in *Mayor and Burgesses of the London Borough of Bromley v Persons Unknown and Others* [2020] EWCA Civ 12.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office is aware of the judgment in *Mayor and Burgesses of the London Borough of Bromley v Persons Unknown and Others* [2020] EWCA Civ 12.

Implications of this on the proposals to criminalise trespass or extend police powers will be taken into consideration throughout the development of the policy on unauthorised encampments.

■ Visas: EU Nationals

Pete Wishart: [27506]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what visa requirements will apply after the transition period for individuals from other European countries wishing to volunteer for a period of one to two years in the UK.

Kevin Foster:

Under the current Immigration Rules, there are a range of routes for specialist activities, including temporary charity workers.

There are no current plans to change these routes, though from January 2021, these routes will be opened to EEA and Swiss citizens.

■ Visas: Foreign Nationals

Dave Doogan: [28761]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many foreign national's visa applications have taken longer than one year to complete since 2015.

Kevin Foster:

Information on our immigration routes with service standards and whether they have been processed against these standards is available as part of our transparency data, at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Grenfell Tower: Fires****Jo Stevens:**[\[29260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many and what proportion of displaced Grenfell Tower residents are now in permanent accommodation.

Christopher Pincher:

According to the latest data from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council (RBKC), as of 12 March 2020, of the 201 households from Grenfell Tower and Walk that require rehousing, 194 households have moved into permanent accommodation. This equates to over 95 per cent of Grenfell households that require rehousing now living in permanent accommodation.

■ Housing: Coronavirus**John Healey:**[\[29200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has issued guidance for housing sector professionals who regularly interact with other people following the declaration of the covid-19 pandemic.

Christopher Pincher:

MHCLG continues to work closely with local authorities to ensure they are prepared to deliver their statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The Secretary of State has instructed officials to work with councils to support and maintain their public services, including housing provision via the COVID-19 Response fund, which has initially been set at £5 billion and provides funding so public services are prepared and protected.

Guidance has been issued to assist staff and employers in addressing COVID-19, in a hostel or day centre environment.

■ Retail Trade: Sheffield**Dan Jarvis:**[\[R\] \[27612\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to publish information on the remaining six pilot areas to receive financial support from the High Streets Task Force; and whether one of the pilot areas will be located in the Sheffield City Region.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The High Streets Task Force will support local leaders in their work revitalising their high streets and town centres. Rather than providing funding, it will provide places with access to expert advice, training, a repository of data and best practice and will also help to coordinate a range of groups with an interest in the evolution of our high streets and town centres.

The first 14 locations to pilot the products and services of the Task Force were announced on 30 December and were chosen due to their status as “near misses” in their Future High Street Fund bids. The remaining pilot locations will test individual products and services and will be announced in due course. They will include a range of other Task Force users, including Business Improvement Districts, community groups and a Local Enterprise Partnership.

Following the pilot, the Task Force will roll out the products and services tested in the pilot phase to benefit localities across England, including the Sheffield City Region, this summer.

With regards to funding, Sheffield City Region is already benefitting from our focus on towns and local high streets, with four places across South Yorkshire currently developing business cases as part of the Future High Streets Fund and five towns invited to develop Town Investment Plans to agree Town Deals for each place.

We will open a second round of the Future High Streets Fund in due course and will welcome proposals from local authorities and communities to bring about change for their high streets. We have also committed to a competitive round of the Towns Fund to ensure more towns are able to benefit from Town Deals.

■ Towns Fund

Justin Madders:

[\[29230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Answer of 2 October 2019 to Question 291442 on Towns Fund, whether the EU exit data referred to in that answer exists.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Yes. EU Exit data was used in the criteria for selecting towns. The formula used to determine which towns are eligible for funding is key to the development of the future competitive round of the Towns Fund, and as such cannot be disclosed at this stage.

■ Urban Areas

Christian Wakeford:

[\[27645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to support local authorities to provide (a) free parking, (b) exemptions from local congestion charges and (c) other incentives to increase the number of people visiting (i) high streets and (ii) town centres.

Mr Simon Clarke:

In line with the Government's position on localism, parking is the responsibility of local authorities and it is for them to determine what is appropriate in their own area. However, central government does have an interest in how car parks are managed and recognises the important link between parking provision and the vitality of our high streets and town centres.

More broadly, this Government is delivering an accelerated £1 billion Future High Streets Fund to support local areas in England to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability. The Government is also providing support to local areas with a High Streets Task Force, giving high streets and town centres expert advice to adapt and thrive by providing hands-on support to local areas to develop data-driven innovative strategies and connect local areas to relevant experts. In addition, we have introduced permitted development rights for the change of use to enable businesses to adapt and diversify to respond to emerging consumer demands with a wider range of retail, leisure, residential and other uses.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ **Palestinians: Textbooks**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[27997\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will publish the (a) outcomes and (b) recommendations of the planned EU review of Palestinian textbooks.

James Cleverly:

The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks; and secured an independent EU-funded review of the textbooks which is underway. We expect interim findings to be due by June 2020 and full findings later in the year. We continue to encourage the EU to publish the report.

The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[27999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she has made an assessment of the implications for her policies of the September 2019 report by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education on the content of school textbooks published by the Palestinian Authority; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK government is deeply concerned about the allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks in the report published by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education in September 2019.

At the UK's insistence, the EU agreed to fund an independent review of the textbooks which is underway. We expect interim findings to be due in Spring 2020 and full findings later in the year. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[28000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, when it is planned to publish the findings of the review established by her Department, the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research and other international partners of the books included in the Palestinian Authority's school curriculum.

James Cleverly:

The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The UK secured EU agreement to commission the Georg Eckert Institute to conduct an independent review of the textbooks, which is underway. We expect interim findings by June 2020 and full findings later in the year.

We continue to encourage the EU to publish the findings. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

■ UNRWA: Finance

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[27998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will make representations to UNRWA on ensuring that it allocates resources on the basis of need.

James Cleverly:

The UK recognises the United Nations Relief Works and Agency's (UNRWA) unique mandate from the UN General Assembly, to support Palestinian refugees until a lasting political settlement is reached, which determines their final status. The UK is committed to funding UNRWA to meet humanitarian need and promote regional security. Officials are in regular contact with UNRWA to ensure high quality aid delivery and judge that UNRWA is effective in allocating resources on the basis of need.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Overseas Trade: Caribbean

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[29855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to increase the level of trade with Caribbean countries.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[29862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to encourage trade between the UK and Caribbean countries.

Conor Burns:

The UK and thirteen CARIFORUM States have signed the CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), a development-focused trade agreement

that will come into effect at the end of the transition period agreed between the EU and UK.

Through future dialogue under the EPA we will seek to encourage the creation of stable business environments that promote trade and investment between the UK and Caribbean, whilst being mindful of the specific needs and challenges faced by the Caribbean region.

Our recent Latin America and Caribbean Roadshow took place across five UK regions including Cardiff, Manchester and London to promote trade opportunities to UK companies, including opportunities in the Caribbean. Over 200 companies attended.

■ **South Asian Network: Finance**

Gareth Thomas:

[\[27488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2020 to Question 21133 on Overseas Companies: India, how much funding was allocated to the South Asia Network for staff and non-pay expenditure in (a) 2017-18 and (b) 2018-19; and if she will make a statement.

Graham Stuart:

The final budget delegated to the South Asia region for the financial year 2018-19 was £4.30m, comprising £3.25m for local staff and non-pay expenditure and £1.05m relating to salary costs for civil servants based in the region.

The final budget delegated to the South Asia region for the financial year 2017-18 was £2.85m for local staff and non-pay expenditure. In 2017-18 budgets for salary costs relating to civil servants based in overseas regions were not delegated but held centrally.

These figures do not include elements of wider Department for International Trade budgets, which are not set at an overseas regional level but do support the delivery of trade in overseas regions, including in South Asia.

We regularly change departmental budgets to align with progress against delivery plans.

■ **Trade Agreements: Cote d'Ivoire**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[29856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with her Ivory Coast counterpart on a bilateral trade deal.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[29864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions her Department has had with the Ivory Coast on a bilateral trade deal.

Conor Burns:

We are continuing our programme to replicate the effects of existing EU trade agreements with trading partners to ensure continuity for UK businesses following the transition period. This includes the existing EU-Côte d'Ivoire Stepping Stone Economic Partnership Agreement and engagement is ongoing to replicate this agreement.

JUSTICE■ **British Nationality: Children****Caroline Lucas:**[\[27634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make it his policy to reintroduce legal aid for children's citizenship cases.

Alex Chalk:

The government has recently changed the law to ensure that separated migrant children needing legal advice on citizenship and non-asylum immigration matters now receive legal aid for these cases, subject to means and merits testing.

For other immigration and asylum matters legal aid may be available via the Exceptional Case Funding scheme (ECF) in any matter where failure to provide it would breach, or risk breaching, the European Convention on Human Rights or enforceable EU law, subject to the statutory means and merits tests.

■ **Divorce****Sir Edward Leigh:**[\[27491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the oral contribution of 3 March 2020 of the Advocate General for Scotland in Committee on the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill, HL Deb column 579, if he will publish the evidence base for the assertion that rather more than 80% of divorces take place sooner than the timescale set out in the Bill.

Alex Chalk:

The Government published an Impact Assessment for the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill when first introduced to Parliament in June 2019. This document can be found at

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/divorcedissolutionandseparation/documents.html>

The Bill seeks to introduce a new minimum 20-week period between the start of divorce proceedings and when the court can be asked to make the conditional order of divorce (currently known as Decree Nisi). Together with the existing 6-week minimum period between Decree Nisi and Decree Absolute a divorce under the Bill would take a minimum of 26-weeks overall. The Impact Assessment estimates that

78% of cases with no linked financial remedy application and 82% of cases with such a linked application would take longer under the Bill.

■ **Marriage: Humanism**

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[27537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the judgment in *Smyth*, Re Judicial Review [2017] NIQB 55, for what reasons the remit of the Law Commission's review of weddings law includes the legal recognition of humanist marriages.

Alex Chalk:

The Government announced in June 2019 that the Law Commission will conduct a fundamental review of the law on how and where people can legally marry in England and Wales. As part of that review, the Government invited the Law Commission to make recommendations about how marriage by humanist and other non-religious belief organisations could be incorporated into a revised or new scheme for all marriages that is simple, fair and consistent.

■ **Tribunals: Coronavirus**

Jess Phillips:

[29223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Government's response to covid-19, what his policy is on the potential postponement of tribunals for cases appealing decisions by the (a) the Department of Work and Pensions and (b) Home Office; and what steps he is taking to reduce the risk of vulnerable claimants involved in those cases from contracting covid-19 through attending tribunals.

Chris Philp:

MOJ and HMCTS are working closely with the Tribunals judiciary during the present COVID-19 outbreak. HMCTS has set out its priorities for managing the response to the coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

■ **Veterans: Crimes of Violence**

Dave Doogan:

[27674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many veterans are (a) in prison and (b) in the criminal justice system, as a result of violent crimes.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice publishes a yearly snapshot which estimates the number of former service personnel in the prison population. The second of these was published in October 2019, with the next estimate due in October 2020. Further details can be found at the following link -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/842613/Ex-service_personnel_in_the_prison_population_Q2_2019.pdf

Our analysis of the prison population showed that as at 30 June 2019, 2,105 prisoners had declared as 'ex-service personnel' when they were first received into custody between January 2015 and June 2019. Of these, 448 have an offence of violence against a person. We do not hold the information requested in the criminal justice system for former service personnel.

We remain committed to ensuring that those who have served in the Armed Forces and who find themselves in the criminal justice system are able to access support, whether they are serving their sentence in custody or in the community. Through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund, we have committed to support programmes worth £4.6 million targeted at former service personnel in the criminal justice system, and recently awarded an additional £1.1 million to continue supporting this cohort.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Divisions: Coronavirus

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[29207\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what recent assessment he has made of the potential health implications relating to covid-19 of hon. Members voting in the division lobbies.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

In view of the current circumstances, members have themselves taken steps to limit the frequency of divisions. As I said during the Business Questions on Thursday 12 March, voting in the Division Lobby is not considered a high risk (Hansard col. 434). The Government's approach relating to covid-19 is guided by the best scientific evidence and medical advice, and we will take all necessary measures to deal with this outbreak. I am engaging with the parliamentary authorities and any decisions will be taken in line with the advice of the Chief Medical Officer.

■ Divisions: Electronic Voting

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[29206\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, what plans he has to introduce electronic voting in divisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

The government supports the current voting arrangements and believes that they provide the necessary checks and balances to produce definitive and accurate results. Changes to voting procedures should only ever be taken forward once potential consequences have been fully thought through, where there is substantial support for change from across the House and where change is in the interests of enabling MPs to do a more effective job. The Government is of the view that votes should require Members to attend the division lobbies and is not persuaded that there is a need to introduce electronic voting.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ IRA

Carla Lockhart: [\[27642\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the statement of 13 February 2020 made by Chief Constable of the PSNI at the NI Assembly Justice Committee, whether the role of determining the status of the Provisional IRA resides with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Carla Lockhart: [\[27643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent assessment he has made of the status of the Provisional IRA.

Mr Robin Walker:

In 2015, the UK Government commissioned the Assessment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland in order to provide a factual assessment from the UK security agencies and the PSNI on the structure, role and purpose of paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland.

As the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers, made clear at the time, this assessment was specifically intended to inform then ongoing cross-party talks. The IRA, including the Provisional IRA, remains a proscribed organisation under the Terrorism Act 2000.

■ Security: Northern Ireland

Mr Ranil Jayawardena: [\[901566\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The threat from dissident republican terrorism continues to be SEVERE in Northern Ireland. This Government's first priority is to keep people safe and secure right across the United Kingdom. Vigilance against this continuing threat is essential and we remain determined to ensure that terrorism never succeeds.

TRANSPORT

■ Carshalton Beeches Station: Access

Elliot Colburn: [\[27691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to improve accessibility at Carshalton Beeches railway station.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Access for All programme provides accessibility improvements over and above those required by the rail industry. Carshalton Beeches was nominated for the

programme but not selected as it was difficult to justify its inclusion ahead of other busier stations with a higher industry priority.

However, I am committed to improving access at all stations, and will continue to seek further opportunities, and funding, to make more improvements.

■ Diesel Fuel and Petrol: Emergencies

Gavin Newlands: [\[28667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with the (a) Freight Transport Association, (b) Road Haulage Association and (c) British Pipeline Agency on maintaining continuity of (i) petroleum and (ii) diesel supplies in the event of a public health emergency.

Kelly Tolhurst:

I refer the hon Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth on 18th March 2020 to Question 28666.

■ Dover Port and Felixstowe Port: Infrastructure

Gareth Thomas: [\[27489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 2 March 2020 to Question 18496 on Ports: Finance, how much funding was allocated to (a) Dover and (b) Felixstowe; and what that funding was spent on.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Through the Ports and Infrastructure Resilience and Connectivity Fund, grants were awarded to 16 ports, including the Ports of Dover and Felixstowe. £1m was allocated to the Port of Dover, for a project to increase the number of freight vehicle spaces on assembly lanes. £0.8m was allocated to Felixstowe, for a project to deliver additional trailer storage bays.

■ International Transport: Coronavirus

Kirsten Oswald: [\[27639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of 3 March 2020, Official Report, column 760, what steps he is taking to ensure that international travel operators serving the UK adopt the enhanced biosecurity measures required to minimise the transference of covid-19 into the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The department is working closely with the transport sector and Public Health England to ensure that transport operations reflect the latest public health advice.

PHE and their counterparts in the devolved administrations, are responsible for determining and publishing health advice in relation to Covid-19. PHE has published guidance for staff in the transport sector which was made available on the GOV.UK website and DfT will continue to work with PHE to ensure this remains up to date.

■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

Elliot Colburn:

[\[27690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce emissions from vehicle idling.

Rachel Maclean:

Powers to tackle vehicle idling are available to Local Authorities, including the ability to issue Fixed Penalty Notices where necessary. However, this issue will not be solved simply through fining motorists. Local Authorities should utilise a range of methods to encourage motorists to change their behaviour, including public information campaigns. Better technology can play a part in addressing idling, such as stop-start technology and low- or -zero-emission vehicles. In particular the growth in Electric Vehicle sales is expected to assist in lowering emissions.

■ Public Transport: Noise

Rosie Duffield:

[\[29253\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure safe noise levels on public transport.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is committed to reducing pollution from public transport, including noise pollution. Buses with zero exhaust emissions like those using electric powertrains (including hydrogen fuel cells) are much quieter on-board than their diesel equivalents. Government support includes £150 million invested since 2010 towards new cleaner buses, and a further announcement of £50 million for Britain's first all-electric bus town. The Prime Minister has also announced funding for 4,000 new zero emission buses across England and Wales.

The Government provides significant funds to Network Rail, the rail infrastructure manager, to enable it to carry out upgrades and renewals, which includes noise mitigation work where appropriate. This includes a programme of rail grinding as part of the general maintenance of the track, which reduces the noise from trains. In addition, all new rail vehicles are required to meet strict noise limits (the Noise Technical Standard for Interoperability) before they are permitted to enter into service.

Noise on the London Underground is a matter for the Mayor.

■ Railways: Disability

Greg Smith:

[\[27687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of inaccessible rail infrastructure on (a) employment, (b) education and (c) community inclusion for disabled people.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The cross-government Disability Unit in the Cabinet Office has been established to reduce the barriers that disabled people face in their lives.

The National Strategy for Disabled People due to be published later this year will focus on the issues that most affect disabled people: housing, education, transport and jobs. As part of this, departments across Whitehall are considering how they can make the greatest contribution to the lives of disabled people in our nation.

More widely, the Department continues to deliver the Access for All programme which provides accessibility improvements over and above those being delivered as part of other major projects or whenever the industry installs, replaces or renews station infrastructure. We have recently allocated £350 million to add another 209 stations to this programme during Control Period 6.

Neil Coyle:[\[28689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the effect of improving the accessibility of rail infrastructure on employment opportunities for disabled people.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Departments are working together through the Disability Unit in the Cabinet Office which has been established in recognition of the barriers faced by disabled people in their lives.

The National Strategy for Disabled People due to be published later this year will focus on the issues that most affect disabled people: housing, education, transport and jobs. As part of this, Departments across Whitehall are considering how they can make the greatest contribution to the lives of disabled people in our nation.

■ Southern: Standards**Elliot Colburn:**[\[27689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the number of delayed and cancelled Southern rail services scheduled to depart Wallington station at (a) 07.32am and (b) 08.02am for London Bridge station since January 2019.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have not made an assessment of Southern rail services departing Wallington at this time. However, please note that, on the whole, since January 2019, we have recorded On Time figures of 71%, with cancellations recording 4.1%

The Department monitors each train operator's overall performance against its performance benchmarks regularly and there are clear actions set out in the franchise agreement should performance drop below what is expected.

From February 2019 to February 2020 for Govia Thameslink Railway, the Moving Annual Average (MAA) Passenger Performance Measure (PPM), was 85.2%. This is a 3.1% improvement on the previous year.

TREASURY**■ Corporation Tax: Digital Technology****Anneliese Dodds:**[\[29282\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 to Question 27067 on Corporation Tax: Digital Technology, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect on UK tax revenues of the changes proposed in the OECD's Two-pillar approach to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy.

Jesse Norman:

The impact on UK tax revenues remains highly sensitive to the detailed design and implementation of the OECD proposals, which remain the subject of discussion.

It is therefore too early to provide a detailed assessment.

The UK will continue to work constructively with international counterparts on these proposals as they progress.

■ Mortgages: Northern Ireland**Carla Lockhart:**[\[28106\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the mortgage lending sector on tackling the situation affecting mortgage prisoners in Northern Ireland.

John Glen:

Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with many organisations in the public and private sectors on a variety of issues, including mortgage prisoners.

A mortgage prisoner is defined by the FCA as an existing customer that may be experiencing harm because they are unable to switch to a better deal. The Government is aware that these borrowers have been in a difficult and stressful situation. That is why we have worked closely with the FCA to implement their rule change to remove the regulatory barrier that has prevented some customers from switching.

Lenders are currently making the necessary adjustments and system changes to enable them to use the modified affordability assessment for borrowers looking to re-mortgage. We expect lenders to start offering these borrowers products using the new rules in Q2 2020.

I have written to Stephen Jones, Chief Executive Officer of UK Finance to outline my expectation that as many of its members as possible should move quickly to offer new deals to borrowers that are eligible to switch under the new FCA rules.

■ Stamp Duty Land Tax

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[27511\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing the stamp duty threshold to help increase levels of home ownership.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor confirmed in his Budget that housing and homeownership are a key priority for the Government.

The Chancellor announced a series of measures to boost homeownership including £9.5bn additional funding for the Affordable Homes Programme, increasing funding to £12.2bn to build affordable homes across the country. This will be the largest cash investment in affordable housing for a decade. It will build homes to help people into homeownership and help households most at risk of homelessness.

At Autumn Budget 2017 the Government introduced an SDLT relief for first time buyers. So far, the relief has helped over 464,000 people onto the housing ladder.

SDLT continues to be an important source of Government revenue, raising several billion pounds each year to help pay for the services that the Government provides. Any substantial reform would be likely to have a significant cost to the Exchequer.

■ Tax Avoidance

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[27531\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has met people that continue to be affected by the 2019 Loan Charge following the publication of Sir Amyas Morse's review to discuss the Government's response to that loan charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor confirmed at the Budget that the Government will legislate to accept all but one of the Independent Loan Charge Review's recommendations.

As the minister with strategic oversight of the tax system, the Financial Secretary has met and will continue to meet MPs about the impacts of policy on their constituents.

■ Tax Avoidance: Romford

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[27532\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people that will be made bankrupt in Romford constituency as a result of accelerated payment notices in respect of the 2019 Loan Charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Accelerated Payment (AP) regime changes the underlying economics of tax avoidance by requiring disputed tax to be paid upfront while an avoidance scheme is investigated. HMRC can only issue Accelerated Payment Notices (APNs) in tightly defined circumstances, set out in legislation.

The 2019 Loan Charge is a tax charge which applies to disguised remuneration (DR) loan balances which remained outstanding at 5 April 2019. APNs and the 2019 Loan Charge are two separate, distinct regimes. HMRC cannot issue APNs in relation to the Loan Charge.

There is no estimate of how many people will be made bankrupt as a result of APNs issued in connection with avoidance schemes that seek to disguise remuneration, in total or in specific constituencies. HMRC do not want to make anybody bankrupt, and insolvency is only ever considered as a last resort. HMRC will work with individuals to reach sustainable and manageable payment plans wherever possible.

Anyone who is worried about being able to pay what they owe is encouraged to get in touch with HMRC as soon as possible on 03000 599110.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[27533\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people in Romford constituency that will be affected by the 2019 Loan Charge after the Government has implemented recommendations of Sir Amyas Morse's review.

Jesse Norman:

Of the estimated 50,000 individuals affected by the Loan Charge, the Government currently estimates that about 11,000 will be taken out of the Loan Charge altogether as a result of the changes announced by the Government in December 2019. In addition, individuals who have settled or are settling their tax liability with HMRC will also be out of scope of the charge. There is not yet a firm estimate of the number who will choose to settle and so be out of scope of the Loan Charge. Information is also not currently available at constituency, borough or regional level.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Employment and Support Allowance

Apsana Begum:

[\[28729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Minister for Disabled People's letter of 3 May 2019 to the former hon. Member for Kensington apologising for his predecessor's incorrect answers on who authorised the revision to the original wording of the ESA65B letters to employment and support allowance claimants' GPs, when her Department first sought the advice of the Cabinet Office on proposed revised wording.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department first consulted with the Cabinet Office on revising the ESA65B letter in November 2014.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Helen Hayes:

[\[29252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2020 to Question 901399, what her policy is on the proportion of housing rents that Local Housing Allowance rates should cover in (a) Lambeth and Southwark, (b) London and (c) the rest of England outside London.

Will Quince:

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) policy is designed to ensure a fair balance between public spending and supporting vulnerable people to meet their housing costs. LHA rates are not intended to meet all rents in all areas.

From April 2020 LHA rates will be increased by CPI, up to a maximum of the 30th percentile of local rents. The national maximum caps have also been increased by CPI which means those rates in London that are currently capped will also receive a CPI increase.

For people in particular circumstances who may require more support, discretionary housing payments are available.

■ Occupational Health

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[29227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when the Government plans to publish its response to its consultation entitled Health is everyone's business, published July 2019.

Justin Tomlinson:

A response to the consultation will be published later this year.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[29228\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government consultation entitled Health is everyone's business, published by the Government on 15 July 2019, whether it is her policy that (a) the Lower Earnings Limit for eligibility for Statutory Sick Pay may result in people working when unwell and (b) eligibility for Statutory Sick Pay should be extended to workers earning less than the Lower Earnings Limit.

Justin Tomlinson:

One of the ideas in last year's consultation, "Health is everyone's business", was to extend Statutory Sick Pay eligibility to those earning below the Lower Earnings Limit. The rationale was that this would provide a stronger link between the employer and employee, make a return to work more likely, and therefore reduce ill-health related job loss.

We received a good response from a range of stakeholders and we are currently reviewing the detailed responses to inform decisions on next steps. A response to the consultation will be published later this year.

■ Personal Independence Payment

Jo Stevens:

[29267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many personal independence payment claimants have had their claim reassessed in the last six months.

Justin Tomlinson:

The latest available data on Personal Independence Payment (PIP) award review and change of circumstances clearances can be found in Table 2A within the “Data tables: PIP experimental statistics on planned award review and change of circumstance registrations and clearances to October 2019” published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-independence-payment-april-2013-to-october-2019>

The latest available data (from the introduction of PIP in April 2013 to October 2019) on reassessments of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants to PIP at initial decision can be found on Stat-Xplore: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>. The “PIP Clearances” table can be filtered on “Reassessment Indicator” to only include data for DLA to PIP reassessments.

Guidance on how to use Stat-Xplore can be found here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/index.html>

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Jess Phillips:

[29224]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what contingency plans she has to ensure that people unable to attend tribunal hearings for benefit allocations as a result of self-isolating have adequate living funds.

Mims Davies:

HMCTS has set out its priorities for managing the response to the coronavirus:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>. This includes advice to those self-isolating to contact the tribunal in which the hearing is to take place. Judges can consider an audio or video hearing.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

Peter Aldous:

[27535]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of reinstating the state pension for 1950s women; and if she will make a statement.

Guy Opperman:

Changes to State Pension age were made over a series of Acts by successive governments from 1995 onwards; including the Coalition 2010-2015, Labour 1997-2010 and the Conservatives 1995-1997, following public consultations and extensive

debates in both Houses of Parliament. Through the welfare system, the Government is committed to providing financial support for people at every stage of their life, including when they near or reach retirement.

Women born between 6 April 1950 and 5 April 1953 were affected by State Pension age equalisation under the Pensions Act 1995. The Pensions Act 2011 accelerated the equalisation of State Pension age, and included transitional arrangements limiting State Pension age delays, affecting women born between 6 April 1953 and 5 December 1953. It also brought forward the increase in State Pension age from 65 to 66 which affected women born between 6 December 1953 and 5 April 1960.

The Department published estimates on the cost of reversing the women's State Pension age to 60 and men's State Pension age to 65 on the 7th June 2019.

The publication shows the estimated cost of reversing women's State Pension age back to 60 and men's State Pension age back to 65 over the period 2010/11 to 2025/26, to be £181.4bn for women and £33.8bn for men with an overall cost estimate of £215.2bn.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-relating-to-state-pension-age-changes-from-the-1995-and-2011-pensions-acts/analysis-relating-to-state-pension-age-changes-from-the-1995-and-2011-pensions-acts>

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Cambodia and Vietnam: British Nationals Abroad

Kate Green:

[\[25663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many cases in which a UK citizen was a victim of a serious crime in (a) Cambodia and (b) Vietnam did the UK (i) embassy and (i) local consular offices support in each of the last three years.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 16 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Nigel Adams:

For the last three years the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has provided consular assistance to victims of crime in Cambodia and Vietnam as shown below.

The FCO does not distinguish between victims of crimes and victims of serious crimes when recording consular cases.

	2017	2018	2019			
Victim of Crime	Cambodia	Vietnam	Cambodia	Vietnam	Cambodia	Vietnam
Assault	0	3	4	2	2	5
Domestic Abuse	0	4	4	0	0	0
Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking	0	0	0	0	4	0
Rape & Sexual Assault	6	5	4	5	2	3
Murder/Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theft	6	10	29	9	6	3

Data regarding consular cases is published monthly on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular Data pages of GOV.UK, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-commonwealth-office-consular-data-2019#history>

HOME OFFICE

■ Slavery

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**[27061]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of recent trends in the number of incidents of modern slavery.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kit Malthouse **Victoria Atkins:**

trends in modern slavery in the UK. The 2019 report was published in October 2019 and can be found on gov.uk here: Modern Slavery Annual Report 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840059/Modern_Slavery_Report_2019.pdf

The Home Office publishes quarterly statistics on potential victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism published on gov.uk here: NRM quarterly statistics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-referral-mechanism-statistics-quarter-3-2019-july-to-september>

The Office for National Statistics will publish a report called 'Modern Slavery in the UK: March 2020' on 26 March 2020. The report will bring together data sources linked to modern slavery and will be available here when published: ONS Modern Slavery in the UK.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/developinganapproachtomeasuremodernslaveryintheuk>

The 2019 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery sets out an assessment of trends in modern slavery in the UK.

The 2019 report was published in October 2019 and can be found on gov.uk here: Modern Slavery Annual Report 2019.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840059/Modern_Slavery_Report_2019.pdf

The Home Office publishes quarterly statistics on potential victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism published on gov.uk here: NRM quarterly statistics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-referral-mechanism-statistics-quarter-3-2019-july-to-september>

The Office for National Statistics will publish a report called 'Modern Slavery in the UK: March 2020' on 26 March 2020. The report will bring together data sources linked to modern slavery and will be available here when published: ONS Modern Slavery in the UK.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/developinganapproachtomeasuremodernslaveryintheuk>

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Addressing Northern Ireland Legacy Issues

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):

[\[HCWS168\]](#)

Today the Government announced the introduction of legislation to provide greater certainty for service personnel and veterans who serve in armed conflicts overseas. Alongside this, we are setting out how we propose to address the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland in a way that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims, and ends the cycle of reinvestigations into the Troubles in Northern Ireland that has failed victims and veterans alike - ensuring equal treatment of Northern Ireland veterans and those who served overseas.

We have heard from many across Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom that the current approach is not working well for anyone, and that it erodes confidence in public institutions that exist to support society as a whole. Discussions about how to change this have been ongoing for many years. The Stormont House Agreement in 2014 was an important milestone, but it did not stop the debate continuing.

Many families have waited too long to find out what happened to their loved ones, while those who defended the rule of law deserve certainty that there will be an end to repeated questions about what happened during their service. A better way to deal with the past is necessary, if we are to help the whole of society to effectively heal the wounds of the Troubles and become better reconciled with our difficult history.

In 2018, the Government carried out a public consultation on 'Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past', inviting views on proposals based on the Stormont House Agreement. The consultation attracted over 17,000 responses - summarised in the Government's 'Analysis of the consultation responses', published in July 2019. We have carefully considered each and every one of these, and sought to identify a way forward that will deliver for all those affected by the legacy of the Troubles and enable all sides of the community to reconcile and prosper. It is clear that, while the principles underpinning the draft Bill as consulted on in 2018 remain, significant changes will be needed to obtain a broad consensus for the implementation of any legislation. We believe that the proposals set out below provide a framework for doing this.

It is the Government's view that to best meet the needs of all victims and of wider society, we need to shift the focus of our approach to the past. While there must always be a route to justice, experience suggests that the likelihood of justice in most cases may now be small, and continues to decrease as time passes. Our view is that we should now therefore centre our attention on providing as much information as possible to families about what happened to their loved ones - while this is still possible.

Our proposals have therefore evolved to remain true to the principles of the Stormont House Agreement but with a greater emphasis on gathering information for families;

moving at a faster pace to retrieve knowledge before it is lost; and doing more to help individuals and society to share and understand the tragic experiences of the past.

It is proposed that these measures should be carried out by one independent body to ensure the most efficient and joined-up approach, putting the needs of the individuals most affected at the heart of the process. This body will oversee and manage both the information recovery and investigative aspects of the legacy system, and provide every family with a report with information concerning the death of their loved one.

The Government wants information recovery and reconciliation to be at the heart of a revised legacy system that puts victims first. The Government is committed to the rule of law but given the considerable time that has elapsed since many of these incidents took place it is vital that we swiftly implement an effective information recovery mechanism before this information is lost forever.

The Government will ensure that the investigations which are necessary are effective and thorough, but quick, so we are able to move beyond the cycle of investigations that has, to date, undermined attempts to come to terms with the past. Only cases in which there is a realistic prospect of a prosecution as a result of new compelling evidence would proceed to a full police investigation and if necessary, prosecution. Cases which do not reach this threshold, or subsequently are not referred for prosecution, would be closed and no further investigations or prosecutions would be possible - though family reports would still be provided to the victims' loved ones. Such an approach would give all participants the confidence and certainty to fully engage with the information recovery process.

The Government believes that this approach would deliver a fair, balanced, and proportionate system that is consistent with the principles of the Stormont House Agreement and deliver for all those who have been affected by the events of the past; striking a balance in enabling criminal investigations to proceed where necessary, while facilitating a swift transition to an effective information recovery mechanism before this information is lost forever.

The Government is committed to introducing legislation in line with our commitments in 'New Decade, New Approach', to move forward and deliver for all communities in Northern Ireland and beyond.

TREASURY

■ Notification of a Contingent Liability

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):

[[HCWS169](#)]

In my oral statement yesterday I announced a new credit easing scheme called the Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF), which is expected to become operational in the week commencing 23 March 2020. This scheme will be run by the Bank of England (The Bank) on behalf of HM Treasury. HM Treasury are extending a full indemnity for the CCFF, which will create a new contingent liability for the Government equal to the potential losses of the Facility.

The CCFF will be a credit easing scheme targeted at easing the disruption to cash flows of companies following Covid-19. The scheme will focus on purchasing newly issued Commercial Paper from eligible companies, which are non-financial companies that make a material contribution to the UK economy and are rated investment grade. The CCFF is unlimited in size.

HM Treasury will monitor risks to public funds from the Facility through regular meetings with the Bank. The Bank will manage the Facility in accordance with a stringent risk control framework agreement between HM Treasury and the Bank, which will be similar to existing frameworks such as that of the Asset Purchase Facility (APF).

A departmental Minute has been laid in the House of Commons providing more detail on this contingent liability.