



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 March 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (04:01 P.M., 20 March 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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**Notes:**

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

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

## ANSWERS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### ■ **Post Offices: Retail Trade**

**Marion Fellows:**

[\[28683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many post offices each retailer operates.

**Paul Scully:**

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.

While the Government sets the strategic direction for the Post Office, it allows the company the commercial freedom to deliver this strategy as an independent business. As such, number of post office operated by specific retailers is operational to Post Office Limited. I have asked Nick Read, the Group Chief Executive of Post Office Limited, to write to the Hon Member about this matter. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

#### ■ **Postal Services: Cumbria**

**Tim Farron:**

[\[28604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for the provision of postal services in Oxenholme and Allithwaite in response to the closure of their Post Offices.

**Paul Scully:**

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.

While the Government sets the strategic direction for the Post Office, it allows the company the commercial freedom to deliver this strategy as an independent business. As such, provision of postal services in Oxenholme and Allithwaite is operational to Post Office Limited. I have asked Nick Read, the Group Chief Executive of Post Office Limited, to write to the Hon Member about this matter. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

**■ Self-employed: Coronavirus****Catherine West:**[\[39251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps are being taken to support self-employed professionals to compensate for lost business during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 18 March 2020]:* The Government is closely monitoring developments in relation to potential economic impacts on the UK economy, including on individuals, individual businesses, supply chains and for consumers.

We want to make sure our welfare system works quickly and effectively to provide security for people.

Self-employed individuals who are not eligible to receive sick pay may be able to claim Universal Credit and/or new style Employment and Support Allowance. For the duration of the outbreak, the requirements of the Universal Credit Minimum Income Floor will be temporarily relaxed for those who have COVID-19 or are self-isolating according to government advice. The Government have announced additional financial support which includes £330bn in loans and £20bn in other aid, business rates holiday and grants for retailers and pubs.

A dedicated helpline has been set up to help self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Time To Pay service. These arrangements are agreed on a case-by-case basis and are tailored to individual circumstances and liabilities. HMRC's new dedicated COVID-19 helpline can be contacted from 11 March 2020 for advice and support. To ensure ongoing support, HMRC have made a further 2,000 experienced call handlers available to support firms and individuals when needed.

**CABINET OFFICE****■ Employment: West Midlands****Marco Longhi:**[\[30216\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the change in employment rate has been in the West Midlands over the last 10 years.

**Chloe Smith:**

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

**Attachments:**

1. UKSA Response [PQ30216.pdf]

## ■ Medals

### **Sir John Hayes:**

[\[29823\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many and which historic claims for a medal the Advisory Military Sub Committee (a) has assessed since its establishment in 2019 and (b) is currently assessing.

### **Chloe Smith:**

The assessment of historic medals claims is a matter for the independent Advisory Military Sub-Committee (AMSC). Details of cases will be published in due course but for now must remain confidential until the decision-making process is final. Campaigners should be assured their case is under review.

## EDUCATION

## ■ Breakfast Clubs

### **Christian Wakeford:**

[\[28768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the National School Breakfast Programme on the educational attainment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Vicky Ford:**

The department is investing up to £35 million in the National Schools Breakfast Programme 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 programme which will support up to an additional 650 schools with up to £11.8 million being invested in 2020-21.

An Education Endowment Foundation evaluation between 2014 and 2017 found that supporting schools to run a free of charge, universal breakfast club before school delivered an average of 2 months of additional progress for pupils in Key Stage 1. Breakfast club schools also saw an improvement in pupil behaviour and attendance.

We monitor management information from the programme on an ongoing basis and will review the effectiveness of the programme fully once it concludes.

## ■ Children: Health

### **Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[28621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the reasons why the UK ranked 40th for children's well-being out of the 44 countries that took part in the OECD's PISA 2018 rankings; and what steps the Government is taking to improve its position in those rankings.

### **Nick Gibb:**

Good mental wellbeing is a priority for this Government. The Department is looking carefully at the evidence about children and young people's mental wellbeing and

how to support it. In October 2019, we published the first 'State of the Nation' report on children and young people's wellbeing to bring together the evidence for England, which has shown a slight fall in recent years. The full report is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-nation-2019-children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing>.

The Department is taking forward a wide range of work to ensure that wellbeing is at the forefront of our approach to supporting children and young people in schools. This includes teaching pupils about looking after their mental health and wellbeing through the introduction of the new subjects of relationships, sex and health education. This will include the importance of sleep, understanding the benefits of rationing time online and the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices, including how the content can affect their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.

The Department is also improving collaboration with external agencies, to ensure those pupils that need specialist support and treatment get it quickly. In particular, we have a major joint programme of work with NHS England to introduce new mental health support teams linked to schools and colleges, and to support schools and colleges to put in place senior mental health leads.

The Department has several further initiatives in place to support schools to develop and implement whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing. These include trialling approaches to promoting positive mental wellbeing to ensure pupils have access to evidence based early support and interventions – the largest trial in the world of its kind, piloting different approaches to peer-to-peer support, and rolling out Mental Health Awareness Training to all state-funded secondary schools, to improve capability to identify potential issues.

The Public Health England Rise Above programme in schools and online provides advice for children and young people on coping strategies for modern life. These strategies include dealing with difficult emotions and situations that can lead to problems such as stress, bullying and self-harm. Details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-launches-rise-above-for-schools-programme>.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Sex and Relationship Education

**Liz Twist:**

**[28654]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether content on domestic abuse will be included in the new Relationships education, relationships and sex curriculum.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department wants to support all children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe. Through the new subjects of relationships, sex and health education, we want to equip them for adult life and to make a positive contribution to society.

These subjects will help in ensuring all young people, at age appropriate points, know the signs of unhealthy or abusive relationships, and that violence in relationships and

domestic abuse is unlawful and never acceptable. Throughout these subjects there is a focus on ensuring pupils know how to get further support.

The guidance can be accessed via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/relationships-and-sex-education-and-health-education>.

## ■ Ministerial Responsibility: Children

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[28620]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of having a Minister responsible for the effect of all Government policies on children; and which Department is responsible for Government policies that relate to children not connected to health, education or social care.

**Vicky Ford:**

This Government is committed to levelling up opportunity for all children. Responsibility for this rightly falls across a number of government departments – to ensure that all policies affecting children receive the focus and dedication they deserve. The provision of high quality education and care services is one part of the work this government is doing to unlock the potential of all children and there is a dedicated Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families. The Cabinet Office plays a critical role in supporting this collective and coordinated effort and ensuring that government policy delivers for society as a whole, including children. In addition, the government supports a number of arms length bodies – such as the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and the Social Mobility Commission – to consider the effect of policies on children and young people.

## ■ School Meals: Standards

**Paul Maynard:**

**[28605]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance on nutritional standards his Department issues to private contractors providing school meals.

**Vicky Ford:**

The School Food Standards provide the legislative framework to ensure schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day.

Schools are responsible for their school meals service and how and where they choose to buy their produce. Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools. We expect all academies and free schools to comply with the standards, and since 2014 we have made this an explicit requirement in their funding agreements.

Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations. Guidance on the Standards, and further resources for schools, are available on GOV.UK.

## ■ Sex and Relationship Education

**Liz Twist:** [\[28655\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many hours of training each teacher will receive to deliver the new Relationships education, relationships and sex curriculum.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is committed to supporting schools to deliver high-quality teaching of relationships education, relationships and sex education, and health education.

Many schools are already teaching aspects of these subjects as part of their sex and relationships education provision or their personal, social, health and economic education programme. Schools have flexibility to determine how to deliver the new content, in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum.

To support schools in their preparations, the Department is investing in a central package to help all schools to increase the confidence and quality of their teaching practice. We are currently developing a new online service featuring innovative training materials, case studies and support to access resources. This will be available from April 2020 with additional content added through the summer term, covering all of the teaching requirements in the statutory guidance. We will also publish an implementation guide which will be provided to all schools as part of this service, and face-to-face training will be available for schools that need additional support.

The Department is currently working with lead teachers, non-specialist teachers, schools and subject experts to develop this central programme of support to help ensure it meets the needs of schools and teachers. It will complement the wide range of training opportunities that are being provided by local authorities and sector organisations.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Agriculture: Subsidies

**Tim Farron:** [\[28602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the planned timescale is for the Environmental Land Management scheme pilot and what progress has been made on that pilot to date.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Environmental Land Management (ELM) National Pilot will be the means by which Defra will pilot, at scale, the new ELM scheme, in real world situations with a wide range of farmers, foresters and other land managers. The first agreements with those taking part in the Pilot are planned to begin formally in late 2021. The Pilot is planned to run for three years until ELM is launched in late 2024 and will provide an important opportunity for farmers, foresters and other land managers to be involved in shaping the scheme.

The Pilot will be undertaken in close consultation with relevant stakeholders. Detailed proposals on what will be included in the Pilot are currently being developed.

## ■ Fishing Catches

**Luke Pollard:** [\[28720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his Department's methodology was for collecting and collating data on views of small scale fishers in its report on the service standard assessment of the catch recording service.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The development of the catch recording service and the methodology used followed Government Digital Service standards. A broad user research programme, following industry best practice, was conducted and covered eight key locations around the English coast to seek views from fishers. A public consultation on the catch recording system also ran from 19 February 2019 until 2 April 2019 to seek input from industry.

## ■ Fishing Catches: Computer Software

**Luke Pollard:** [\[28721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the evidential basis for the Marine Management Organisation's proposal to introduce a catch recording app.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Scientific surveys conducted by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science have highlighted that data derived from sales notes and other historic documentation does not accurately reflect the volumes of fish being landed and sold by the under-10m fleet as a whole. These are consistent with the findings of European Commission audits carried out in 2011-12.

The requirement for the digital solution for catch recording, including an app, formed part of the beta assessment conducted by the Government Digital Service. As outlined in the published assessment report, the service passed the beta assessment stage.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[28722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the length of time set aside for beta testing of the catch recording app; and what information his Department holds on the use of that app during the beta testing by (a) fishers and (b) service support personnel.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The length of time used for the beta phase of the catch recording service development followed Government Digital Service standards. This involved two phases: a 'private' beta phase of service development which involved inviting a limited number of individuals; and a 'public' beta phase which involved opening the service up to all users in a phased roll-out.

Feedback obtained from fishers and support personnel during the beta phase of development is held and reflected the need for a simple mobile application.

The Marine Management Organisation continues to work on implementing improvements to the catch recording app based on feedback from existing users.

## ■ Tree Planting

**Mr Andrew Mitchell:** [\[28569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to increase the number of trees planted in (a) the West Midlands and (b) England.

**Rebecca Pow:**

To drive an unprecedented step-change in planting and reach net zero, the Government is investing in tree planting in England through the recently announced £640 million Nature for Climate Fund. This supports our commitment to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees per year by 2025.

The Government supports woodland creation through grants and incentives. These include the recently launched Woodland Carbon Guarantee, in addition to the existing Countryside Stewardship, Woodland Carbon Fund, Woodland Creation Planning Grant and the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. These grants are available to local authorities, land managers and community-led organisations across England, including those in the West Midlands.

While we do not set specific targets for individual constituencies, we are working hard to increase the uptake of grant schemes across England, and strongly encourage eligible organisations to take advantage of this support.

The Government continues to consider ways to further incentivise land managers and owners to plant more trees. Later this spring we will be consulting on the English Tree Strategy, to gather information to help us design policy to best increase planting.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### ■ British Nationals Abroad: Prisoners

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[24292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether there are confirmed cases of British prisoners abroad who have contracted covid-19.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[24293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what progress his Department has made in contacting British citizens who are in prison in regions or countries where there has been a covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Adams:**

*We are in contact with the local authorities in countries which have confirmed outbreaks of Covid-19. We are concerned about reports of British nationals detained*

*overseas who have been suspected to have Covid-19. Protecting British citizens at home and abroad is a top priority for this government. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is monitoring coronavirus throughout the world closely through its diplomatic network and consular officials continue to provide consular assistance to British nationals in detention overseas, including in countries which have reported cases of Covid-19.*

## ■ **China: Uighurs**

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[28732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Prime Minister made representations to President Xi of China on the treatment of Uyghur people during their call of 18 February 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

We regularly make representations to the Chinese Government on the treatment of Uyghurs. Most recently, on 9 March the Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi. On 5 March I did the same with the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming. On 24 December, the UK Ambassador to China raised our concerns with Vice Foreign Minister Qin Gang.

## ■ **Commonwealth: Foreign Relations**

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

[\[30063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to promote bilateral relations with the Commonwealth.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK marked Commonwealth Day on 9 March. In his statement, the Prime Minister outlined the enduring bond between the Commonwealth network of 54 countries, who are united in its promotion of peace, democracy and human rights. At Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018 (CHOGM18) in London, the UK announced £500m of projects and programmes to support delivery of the Commonwealth leaders commitments under the headings of security, prosperity, democracy and sustainability. After hosting CHOGM18, the UK took up the role of Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, a position held by the Commonwealth country which has hosted the most recent CHOGM.

The UK has been an active Chair-in-Office, committed to strengthening and renewing the Commonwealth, through its three pillars - the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Member States and Commonwealth organisations and networks. We have driven delivery of Commonwealth leaders commitments, supported the Commonwealth to have a stronger voice as an advocate for multilateral cooperation in the rules-based international system and increased solidarity between members. The UK has also championed reform of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Initiatives have been undertaken in a diverse range of policy areas, from climate change and marine protection, to cyber security, mediation of conflict and promotion of intra-Commonwealth trade. 31 Commonwealth countries are together now tackling marine plastic pollution, whilst over 3,000 women entrepreneurs across the Commonwealth have been supported to internationalise their businesses, and barriers to trade have been reduced.

#### ■ **Grand Princess: Coronavirus**

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[26831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support the Government is providing for the repatriation of British citizens from the Grand Princess Cruise Ship.

**Nigel Adams:**

We worked with the US authorities to arrange a repatriation flight for British nationals who were on the Grand Princess cruise ship, which landed at Birmingham Airport at 17:00 on 11 March. We liaised with the cruise company to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure passenger welfare and to get the passengers home safely. Public Health England advised all involved to self-isolate for 14 days and for COVID-19 tests to be arranged.

#### ■ **Iran: Terrorism**

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[28740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of Iran's use of terrorist proxies in the Middle East region.

**James Cleverly:**

We have made clear our longstanding concerns over Iran's links and support for proxy groups and militias across the Middle East region. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and associated entities including the IRGC Qods Force are known to be involved in multiple regional conflicts, including through the provision of financial and military support to militant and proscribed groups such as Hizballah, Hamas and Palestinian rejectionist groups, and the Houthis in Yemen. Such support is in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions and directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting peace in the region. The Government is clear that Iran should cease disruptive involvement in regional conflicts, and should instead look to play a constructive role in regional stability.

#### ■ **Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps**

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[28741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran's regional activity.

**James Cleverly:**

We remain concerned about the destabilising activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, including its financial and military support to militant and proscribed groups around the region. This support directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting peace in the region. We call on Iran urgently to cease all forms of destabilising activity.

**Italy: Coronavirus****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Italian counterpart on measures to limit the spread of covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Conte on 13 March. The two leaders discussed the importance of taking a transparent and science led approach in response to the virus. They also agreed on the need for international coordination, including through the G7. The UK's priority is to support the WHO and other multilateral actors to contain COVID-19 and mitigate secondary health and socio-economic impacts. Our approach is guided by the Chief Medical Officer, working on the basis of the best possible scientific evidence. Our Embassy in Rome is in regular contact with officials from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Health Ministry and other government departments regarding COVID-19. This includes discussions this week between the Italian Minister with responsibility for the UK, Minister Scalfarotto, and our Ambassador to Rome. The Foreign Office maintains a similar dialogue with the Italian Embassy in London.

**Jordan: Education****Andrea Jenkyns:**[\[29257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Jordanian counterpart on that country's reform of its national curriculum to strengthen anti-extremist education.

**James Cleverly:**

We frequently engage with the Government of Jordan on countering violent extremism, and Jordan has - in recent years - improved the content of its curriculum. We do not assess that the Jordanian curriculum contains materials that promote engagement with Daesh or other extremist groups, or promotes violent extremist behaviour.

**Tom Hunt:**[\[29262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the reforms to the curriculum to strengthen anti-extremist education in Jordan since 2015.

**James Cleverly:**

We frequently engage with the Government of Jordan on countering violent extremism, and Jordan has - in recent years - improved the content of its curriculum. We do not assess that the Jordanian curriculum contains materials that promote engagement with Daesh or other extremist groups, or promotes violent extremist behaviour.

**■ Kashmir: Politics and Government****Andrew Rosindell:**[\[27599\]](#)

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

**Nigel Adams:**

We are monitoring the situation in Kashmir closely and are in regular contact with the Governments of India and Pakistan. We are concerned by levels of firing across the line of control and urge both sides to exercise restraint and improve communication. In India-administered Kashmir, we welcome reports that some of the restrictions have been relaxed. However, we remain concerned at the continued restrictions on some mobile internet services and at ongoing detentions, including those of political leaders. We call for these to be lifted as soon as possible. It is important that individual rights are fully respected and that there is constructive dialogue with the affected communities. We have raised our concerns with the Indian Government.

**■ Middle East: Peace Negotiations****Alexander Stafford:**[\[28742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on the Middle East peace process.

**James Cleverly:**

We continue to work closely with international partners strongly advocating a two state solution and encouraging a return to meaningful negotiations between both parties. We encourage the Palestinian and Israeli leadership to explore whether the US' proposals might prove a first step on the road back to negotiations. I did so most recently during my meetings with the Head of the Palestinian Mission in London on 11 March and the Israeli Ambassador to the UK on 12 March. We consistently call for an immediate end to all actions that undermine the viability of the two-state solution, including terrorism, anti-Semitic incitement, settlement expansion, and the demolition of Palestinian property in the West Bank. Steps to transform the situation in Gaza are also needed. We are encouraging both sides to maintain calm and avoid taking actions which make peace more difficult to achieve.

## ■ NATO: Coronavirus

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[27528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to co-ordinate with NATO allies a response to tackling the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are working closely with the international community, particularly through the World Health Organisation, to ensure that we respond appropriately to COVID-19. The G7 leaders made an important statement on Monday on the need to coordinate on the global response to COVID-19, and an ongoing commitment to support this. The UK's global response strategy is to support the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other multilateral actors to contain Covid-19 and mitigate secondary health and socio-economic impacts. Our approach is guided by the Chief Medical Officer, working on the basis of the best possible scientific evidence.

## ■ Pakistan: Ahmadiyya

**Louise Haigh:**

[\[29298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on the (a) right to vote and (b) other civil rights of the Ahmadi Muslim community in that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

We engage at a senior level with the Pakistani Government on our concerns about the mistreatment of religious and ethnic groups, including Pakistanis from the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. We will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, as laid down in the constitution of Pakistan and in accordance with international standards. It is vital that Pakistan guarantees the rights of all its citizens, regardless of gender, ethnicity or belief. The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, who is also the Minister responsible for human rights, raised our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of the Ahmadiyya community in a letter to Pakistan's Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 27 February.

## ■ Turkey: Kurds

**Andrew Rosindell:**

[\[29849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Turkish counterpart on the recent arrest of Kurdish human rights lawyers.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are concerned by reports of the arrests of Kurdish human rights lawyers. Ministers and our Ambassador to Turkey regularly emphasise to the Turkish Government the need to respect human rights, and to support the rule of law. We will continue to engage the Turkish Government on these issues and be clear in our

expectation that Turkey live up to its human rights obligations, which is essential to the long-term health of Turkish democracy.

We shall continue to monitor the situation closely and maintain our support for legitimate and democratic Kurdish groups in Turkey.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Coronavirus: General Practitioners

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[28775]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, whether annual targets for GPs will be temporarily suspended.

**Jo Churchill:**

We are taking steps to review the broad spectrum of current general practitioner services in England to assess how additional capacity might be released if required. Similar work is also taking place across the other primary care professions. Further information will follow in due course should such steps need to be taken. This information will be published on the NHS England website at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-general-practice/>

### ■ Coronavirus: Public Lavatories

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[29302]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of removing charges for public bathrooms on controlling the spread of the covid-19 virus.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department is working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, local authorities and providers to make sure that all sectors across all communities have plans in place to help the reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum: Contracts

**Anneliese Dodds:**

[28744]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish her Department's review of the provision of Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Assistance.

**Anneliese Dodds:**[\[28745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to ensure that the standards set out in the Statement of Requirements for the Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Assistance contract are being met.

**Chris Philp:**

AIRE is the new Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility service provided by Migrant Help. The AIRE contract contains a number of formal performance measures, including Key Performance Indicators, which provide a mechanism by which the effectiveness of contract delivery can be measured. These are monitored in formal monthly and quarterly contract governance meetings. Measures can be taken where performance falls short of the standards we set.

We will continue to monitor performance and the effectiveness of the contracts through the monthly Contract Management Groups and quarterly Strategic Review Management Boards.

Further information about the performance measures within the contract can be found in the contracts, published here:

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/028be8bb-3c69-494d-bfdd-59c2e1b34379?p=@UFQxUIRRPT0=NjJNT08=>

There are currently no plans to publish a review into the provision of AIRE.

**■ Visas: Sports Competitors****Gavin Newlands:**[\[28701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 to Question 25141, on Sports Competitors: Visas, if she will publish the list of recognised sports governing bodies.

**Kevin Foster:**

The list of Sports Governing Bodies is already available online at Appendix M of the Immigration Rules: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-m-sports-governing-bodies>.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Affordable Housing: Sheffield City Region****Nick Fletcher:**[\[28770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 2.91 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, HC 121, whether the Affordable Homes Programme will allocate funds to the Sheffield City Region.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We announced at Budget 2020 that we are investing £12 billion to build affordable homes between 2021/22 and 2025/26. This will be the biggest cash investment in affordable housing for a decade.

The Affordable Housing Programme is flexible, and providers are able to bid into the programme to deliver a range of affordable homes across the country. The exact location these homes will depend on the bids received. We will announce further details on the new programme in due course

■ **Airbnb: Cumbria**

**Tim Farron:** [\[28603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many Airbnbs in Cumbria are located in properties that were previously socially rented homes.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department does not hold this information.

■ **High Rise Flats: Erith and Thamesmead**

**Abena Oppong-Asare:** [\[28779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will visit Erith and Thamesmead constituency to meet with leaseholders of Sark Tower who have received high bills for the removal of combustible cladding.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Department has regular engagement with residents living in buildings with unsafe cladding. The Secretary of State hosted a roundtable with leaseholder residents of high rise residential buildings affected by building safety issues on 4 March. This provided an opportunity to hear directly from leaseholders about the issues they are facing and their concerns.

We are investing £1.6 billion to support the remediation of unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) and unsafe non-ACM cladding systems on private and social residential buildings above 18 metres.

■ **High Rise Flats: Insulation**

**John Healey:** [\[28564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of whether the decision in Budget 2020 to increase funding for cladding remediation is compliant with the public accounting rules as set out in Managing Public Money.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 17 March 2020]:* On 11 March 2020 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a £1bn Building Safety Fund to support residential building

safety remediation in the private and social sector. The fund will support building owners and landlords who are unable to meet the costs of unsafe non-ACM cladding remediation in buildings over 18 metres.

The scheme has only just been announced and we are currently assessing it in detail, prior to launch, to determine its compliance with the public accounting rules as set out in Managing Public Money.

**John Healey:**

[\[28565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, who was the Accounting Officer for his Department when the decision to include an additional £1 billion for removal of unsafe cladding for residential buildings above 18 metres in the Budget 2020, as set out in paragraph 1.185 of the Budget 2020 Redbook, was approved by his Department.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 17 March 2020]:* Jeremy Pocklington CB was appointed Acting Permanent Secretary on 27 February.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[28624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2020 to Question 12405 on Buildings, if his Department will (a) make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing into public ownership those residential buildings where there has been an abject failure of many building owners to do the right thing and (b) remove unsafe cladding materials from those buildings.

**Christopher Pincher:**

It is the Government's priority to ensure that residents are safe. We are clear that unsafe ACM cladding must be replaced swiftly. Where insufficient progress is being made, building owners can expect further action to be taken, including enforcement. In the Queen's Speech, the Government announced legislation which will put beyond doubt that the Fire Safety Order applies to external walls (including cladding) and individual flat entrance doors in multi-occupied residential buildings. This will affirm Fire and Rescue Services' enforcement role for these buildings.

**Vicky Foxcroft:**

[\[28625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 12 February 2020 to Question 12405 on Buildings, what steps his Department will take to recoup the £200 million provided from the public purse to rectify the abject failure of many building owners to do the right thing and remove unsafe cladding materials from privately owned residential structures.

**Christopher Pincher:**

As a condition of funding, Applicants are expected to take all reasonable steps to recover the cost of replacing unsafe ACM cladding from those responsible. This will be repaid to Government once recouped.

**Abena Opong-Asare:**[\[28778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to bring forward legislation that holds building owners to account on funding the replacement of unsafe ACM cladding on high-rise private residential properties.

**Christopher Pincher:**

It is the Government's priority to ensure that residents are safe. We are clear that unsafe ACM cladding must be replaced swiftly. Where insufficient progress is being made, building owners can expect further action to be taken – including enforcement. In the Queen's Speech, the Government announced legislation which will put beyond doubt that the Fire Safety Order applies to external walls (including cladding) and individual flat entrance doors in multi-occupied residential buildings. This will affirm Fire and Rescue Services' enforcement role for these buildings.

Where the government has funded the removal and replacement of unsafe ACM cladding, a condition of funding is that applicants are expected to take all reasonable steps to recover the cost of replacing unsafe ACM cladding from those responsible. This will be repaid to Government once recouped.

**Local Government: Carbon Emissions****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[28673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what additional resource the Government is providing to local authorities to help meet the Government's air quality and carbon-neutral targets.

**Christopher Pincher:**

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave on 14 February to question UIN 13580.

**Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[29300\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with private landlords on a rent holiday in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 17 March 2020]:* The Department is in close communication with representatives of private landlords and letting agents. On 18 March, we announced a radical package of measures to protect renters and landlords affected by coronavirus. Emergency legislation will be taken forward as an urgent priority so that landlords will not be able to start proceedings to evict tenants for at least a three-month period. As a result of these measures, no renters in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction. As such, the Government does not believe a 'rent holiday' is necessary at this stage. Further details of this announcement are at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/complete-ban-on-evictions-and-additional-protection-for-renters>.

## ■ Regional Planning and Development: South West

**Luke Pollard:**

[\[28723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when the Government plans to announce the seed funding to establish the Great South West initiative.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

Following the announcement of the Western Gateway we have asked local partners to consider options for geography across the South West and South Wales. These discussions are still ongoing and once they report back we will look to make decisions of how to support pan-regional geography options.

## ■ Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus

**John Healey:**

[\[29199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the covid-19 pandemic, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) support and (b) protection for people sleeping rough.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 17 March 2020]:* MHCLG continues to work with local partners, including local authorities and local resilience forums, to assist preparedness to manage the potential impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak. We absolutely recognise the difficulties involved in self-isolation for people who are homeless. That is why Public Health England have now published further guidance for hostels and day centres. We are considering whether further action is required and are working with the sector to develop an appropriate response as a matter of urgency.

£1.6 billion of additional funding will go to local authorities to enable them to respond to other COVID-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including stepping up support for homeless people.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[28731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many appellants against decisions on (a) employment and support allowance, (b) personal independence payments, (c) disability living allowance and (d) universal credit were represented at First-tier Tribunal in London in each year since 2016.

**Chris Philp:**

Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) appeals are listed into the hearing venue nearest to the appellant's home address. The table below contains the requested information for (a) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), (b) Personal Independence Payments (PIP), (c) Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and (d)

Universal Credit (UC) for the hearing venues covering London<sup>1</sup> for the period January 2016 to December 2019 (the latest date for which data are available).

	NO. OF RECEIPTS WITH A REPRESENTATIVE <sup>2</sup>				NO. OF ORAL CASES HEARD WITH A REPRESENTATIVE <sup>3</sup>			
	ESA <sup>4</sup>	PIP <sup>5</sup>	DLA <sup>6</sup>	UC <sup>7</sup>	ESA <sup>4</sup>	PIP <sup>5</sup>	DLA <sup>6</sup>	UC <sup>7</sup>
<b>Year <sup>8</sup></b>								
<b>2016</b>	<b>6,288</b>	<b>4,667</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>2,007</b>	<b>1,829</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>6,911</b>	<b>6,906</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>2,168</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>4,165</b>	<b>6,295</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>1,911</b>	<b>2,557</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>2019 <sup>P</sup></b>	<b>2,553</b>	<b>6,403</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>1,614</b>	<b>2,518</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>212</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) Regional venues Bexleyheath, Fox Court, Enfield, Hatton Cross, London East, Romford and Sutton.

<sup>2</sup> Representative data is correct as at the time the report is run, and is based on whether HMCTS has been notified at some point within the appeal process that the appellant has a representative.

<sup>3</sup> Data based on oral and domiciliary hearings where the parties to the proceedings attending. Representation data are based on whether a representative was recorded as having attended the Tribunal hearing. It does not indicate whether an appellant used a representative at any other time during the appeals process. A representative can be anyone that the appellant has nominated as their representative.

<sup>4</sup> Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit reassessment. Employment and Support Allowance was introduced in October 2008 and Incapacity Benefit reassessment followed in October 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Personal Independence Payment (New Claim Appeals) which replaces Disability Living Allowance was introduced on 8 April 2013, also includes Personal Independence Claims (Reassessments).

<sup>6</sup> Disability Living Allowance was replaced by Personal Independence Payment (New Claims) on 8 April 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Universal Credit was introduced on 29 April 2013 in selected areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire and gradually rolled out to the rest of the UK from October 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Calendar year January – December.

<sup>P</sup> Provisional data and subject to change.

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

An appellant may seek assistance from a representative at any stage in the appeal process. They may attend their SSCS appeal hearing with or without a representative even if they have been supported by a representative at an earlier stage. A representative does not have to be legally qualified and could be a friend, relative or from a welfare rights organisation, advice centre, law centre or a solicitor.

The tribunal process is designed to be as informal and user friendly as possible and the panel will help an appellant to provide it with the relevant evidence. This helps individuals to understand the process and to take part without the need for professional representation.

## TREASURY

### ■ Business: Coronavirus

**Nick Fletcher:**

[\[28771\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 1.99 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, if he will provide details of the process by which businesses will be reimbursed in the event that they are required to provide employees with statutory sick pay as a result of covid-19.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government will bring forward legislation to allow small- and medium-sized businesses and employers to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19.

The Government will work with employers over the coming months to set up the repayment mechanism for employers as soon as possible. Existing systems are not designed for this purpose.

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Time To Pay service.

### ■ Radio: VAT Exemptions

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[28631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what criteria his Department uses to classify a community radio station as a public interest body in relation to VAT exemption.

**Owen Thompson:**

[\[28632\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether a radio station registered as a private limited company by guarantee without the share capital classification of limited is entitled to VAT exemptions.

**Jesse Norman:**

A public interest body is a non-profit making body which has objects that are in the public domain and are of a political, religious, patriotic, philosophical, philanthropic or civic nature. Examples include: trade unions, professional associations and learned societies. Supplies from such bodies to their members are VAT exempt when no payment, other than a subscription fee, are payable for them providing that they are referable to the aims of the organisation.

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and the standard rate of 20 per cent applies to most goods and services. While there are exceptions to the standard rate, these are strictly limited by domestic law as well as by fiscal considerations.

At present, there is no specific VAT exemption for the community radio sector or relief available for radio broadcasting more generally, and there are no plans to review this at this time.

The Government recognises the social and cultural contribution that community radio stations make to the wider community. It therefore committed £430,448 to fund grants to help further the financial stability and future sustainability of community radio stations in 2019/20. Further information on the Community Radio Fund scheme and application process is available on the website of Ofcom.

**■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance****Nick Fletcher:**[\[28776\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 1.101 of the 2020 Budget Red Book, if he will publish details of the process by which small businesses will be able access the £3,000 cash grant.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Chancellor announced on 17 March that this grant will be increased to £10,000 for all businesses in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief, or Rural Rate Relief. In addition, retail businesses with a rateable value of between £15,000 and £51,000 will receive a cash grant of £25,000.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will write to Local Authorities this week to outline these schemes and will provide detailed guidance as soon as possible. Eligible businesses will be contacted by Local Authorities shortly afterwards to provide details on how to claim this money.

**■ Tax Avoidance****Owen Thompson:**[\[28630\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that the provisions of (a) amendment to the promoters of tax avoidance schemes and (b) schedule 16 to the Finance (No.2) Act 2017 are used to secure penalties for promoters of loan charge schemes.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government and HMRC are determined to continue to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes. This includes using the Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes (POTAS) and Enablers penalty regimes to change behaviours of those promoting or enabling the sale and use of avoidance schemes.

At the Budget, the Government announced that it will legislate in Finance Bill 2020-21 to strengthen the Promoters of Tax Avoidance Schemes (POTAS) and the Enablers penalty regimes. This includes measures, which are designed to ensure that: HMRC are better able to issue stop notices to promoters of schemes that do not work; POTAS obligations are fulfilled by promoters including where they have tried to abuse corporate structures; and HMRC can obtain information about the enabling of abusive schemes as soon as they are identified.

On 19 March HMRC published a new strategy for tackling promoters of tax avoidance schemes. This strategy outlines the range of policy, operational and communications interventions that are under way and being developed to drive those who promote tax avoidance schemes out of the market.

**■ Third Sector: VAT Exemptions****Owen Thompson:**[\[28633\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether VAT exemptions apply to funding allocated by charity trusts to community groups.

**Jesse Norman:**

There is no VAT due on the gift or donation of money that is freely given. VAT is due on funding given in return for goods or services received from a community group.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Employment and Support Allowance****Apsana Begum:**[\[28730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Minister for Disabled People's letter of 3 May 2019 apologising for his predecessor's incorrect answers in March and May 2018 on who authorised the revision to the original wording of the ESA65B letters to employment and support allowance claimants' GPs, for what reasons that was not corrected in the Answers of (a) 6 June 2018 to Question 146986, (b) 3 July 2019 to Question 155401 and (c) 22 March 2019 to Question 234145.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

For clarity, and following checks with the Table Office, it appears question UIN 155401 referenced in part (b) of the question was answered on 3 July 2018.

The relevant Parliamentary Questions were corrected with a letter to the Member for Kensington which was issued on 3 May 2019 and a copy placed in the House Library.

It was decided to make the correction this way because of the time that had elapsed since the original answers were given, and to provide a correction to all of the answers at once to avoid potential confusion. They cannot now be amended on the Parliament Q&A System because we are now in a different Parliamentary session.

## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[28774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have died while waiting for their eligibility for personal independence payments to be determined; and what the main disabling condition was of those people.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is claimed by people with a range of health conditions and disabilities, many of which are degenerative or life limiting and the Department treats the death of any claimant sympathetically. Claims made under Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) are fast tracked and are being cleared in 6 working days on average (as at the end of October 2019, the latest available published data).

The cause of death of claimants to PIP is not collated centrally by the Department.

Between the introduction of PIP in April 2013 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019, the latest date for which published data is available, 4,617,990 decisions were made on claims to PIP. Of these, 20,830 (less than 0.5%) claimants died prior to a decision being made on their case.

The Department only records the disabilities of claimants who have reached the assessment stage. Therefore, the disabilities of claimants who passed away prior to the assessment stage appear under "Unknown or missing" in the table below.

Table: Disability of claimants who died prior to a decision being made on their PIP claim (Great Britain only).

	NORMAL RULES (AT REGISTRATION)	SPECIAL RULES (AT REGISTRATION)	TOTAL
Autoimmune disease	40	#	40
Cardiovascular disease	320	30	350
Diseases of the immune system	#	#	#
Diseases of the liver, gallbladder, biliary tract	320	90	410
Endocrine disease	70	#	70

	NORMAL RULES (AT REGISTRATION)	SPECIAL RULES (AT REGISTRATION)	TOTAL
Gastrointestinal disease	30	10	40
Genitourinary disease	120	30	150
Haematological Disease	10	#	10
Hearing disorders	#	#	#
Infectious disease	20	#	20
Malignant disease	1,740	4,510	6,250
Metabolic disease	10	#	10
Multisystem and extremes of age	#	#	#
Musculoskeletal disease (general)	200	#	210
Musculoskeletal disease (regional)	190	#	190
Neurological disease	450	40	490
Psychiatric disorders	820	10	830
Respiratory disease	500	40	540
Skin disease	30	#	30
Unknown or missing	10,460	700	11,160
Visual disease	30	#	30
Total	15,370	5,470	20,830

Please note that the DWP is only responsible for benefits in Great Britain. Social security benefits, including PIP, are a devolved matter in Northern Ireland. Questions about PIP claimants in Northern Ireland should be directed to the Department of Communities in Northern Ireland.

Notes:

- These figures include claims made under Normal Rules or Special Rules for Terminal Illness and include new claims and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to PIP reassessment claims.

- If a claimant dies before a decision is made on an outstanding claim, the Department establishes whether the claimant's representative or next of kin wishes to proceed with the claim. If not, the claim is withdrawn.
- It is possible for claims to transition between Normal and Special Rules during the course of the claimant journey.
- This is unpublished data from the PIP computer system's (PIP CS) management information. It should be used with caution and may be subject to future revision.
- Figures cover claims on which a decision has been made and recorded on the PIP CS on or prior to 31 st October 2019. Claims on which a decision has not been entered are excluded.
- Claimants' dates of death are as recorded on the system at 6 th March 2020 and may be subject to retrospection.
- Figures are rounded to the nearest 10, '#' indicates a figure under 5 and individual numbers may not sum to the total because of rounding.
- GB only.

#### ■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[30147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has in place to protect people working (a) freelance and (b) without a contract whose work is reduced or ended as a result of the effect of covid-19 on the business they work for.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID 19 and we have been clear in our intention that no one should be penalised for doing the right thing. These are rapidly developing circumstances, we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

#### ■ Social Security Benefits: Appeals

**Apsana Begum:**

[\[28728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many (a) disabled and (b) seriously unwell people who requested a Mandatory Reconsideration for (i) employment and support allowance and (ii) personal independence payments had their decision (A) upheld and (B) overturned in 2019.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) do not have a specific definition for seriously unwell or disabled.

The latest available data on Mandatory Reconsideration (MR) clearances for PIP, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Capability Assessments and ESA sanctions by outcome is available on Stat-Xplore at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance for users is available at:

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

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

**Emma Hardy:**

**[30012]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what financial support is available to people who have a compromised immune system and may need to self isolate for extended periods of time.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID 19 and we have been clear in our intention that no one should be penalised for doing the right thing. These are rapidly developing circumstances, we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[28759]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment the Government has made of the effect of a lower universal credit withdrawal rate on (a) the well-being of claimants, (b) the rate of claimants entering employment, (c) the public purse and (d) the economy.

**Will Quince:**

Universal Credit (UC) is a modern, flexible, personalised benefit reflecting the rapidly changing world of work and replaces six outdated and complex benefits with one – it is simplifying the benefits system and making work pay. UC has proven track record of moving people into work, which is reflected by our record employment rate of 76.5 per cent - up 6.2 per cent since 2010.

The Government has made significant investment to improve work incentives including an extra £1.7 billion a year put into work allowances for working parents and disabled claimants to increase them by £1,000 a year from April 2019. This is providing a boost to the incomes of the lowest paid and result in 2.4 million families keeping an extra £630 per year of what they earn.

Our Business Case setting out some of the most compelling aspects of UC are: the £2bn total cost of investment against a social return to the economy of £34bn over ten years; and an increase of people in employment of 200,000 once fully implemented.

**■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus****Chris Law:** [\[29994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what plans she has to allow universal credit advance payments to be made as soon as possible without work coach meetings.

**Mims Davies:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID 19 and we have been clear in our intention that no one should be penalised for doing the right thing. These are rapidly developing circumstances, we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**■ Universal Credit: Housing****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[28628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the ability of the housing element of universal credit to reflect local rental market rates; and when that assessment was made.

**Will Quince:**

For claimants living in the Private Rented Sector, the housing costs calculation is based on either the total amount of rent and service charges they pay, or the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate - whichever is lowest, less any deductions for housing costs contributions for any relevant non-dependents living in the claimant's home.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[28629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how the housing element of universal credit is calculated; and whether those calculations are made by her Department.

**Will Quince:**

For claimants living in the Private Rented Sector, the housing costs calculation is based on either the total amount of rent and service charges they pay, or the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate - whichever is lowest, less any deductions for housing costs contributions for any relevant non-dependents living in the claimant's home.

Single claimants under 35 years of age will usually receive only the Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR), unless they are subject to an exemption.

For claimants living in the Social Rented Sector, the housing costs calculation is based on the actual rent and any eligible service charges, less any deductions for removal of spare room subsidy if the claimant has spare bedrooms, less any deductions for housing costs contributions for any relevant non-dependents living in the claimant's home.

These calculations are made by the Department.