

**Daily Report****Monday, 23 March 2020**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 March 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:01 P.M., 23 March 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

**CONTENTS**

<b>ANSWERS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b>	<b>13</b>
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	■ Broadband: Bosworth	13
■ Clean Steel Fund	6	■ Disinformation: Coronavirus	14
■ Consumer Goods: Prices	6	■ Internet: Coronavirus	15
■ Coronavirus: Research	6	■ Social Enterprises and Sports: Coronavirus	16
■ Energy Supply: Coronavirus	7	■ Video Conferencing: Coronavirus	16
■ Energy: Finance	8	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>17</b>
■ Housing: Energy	8	■ Apprentices: Shipping	17
■ Parental Leave: Coronavirus	9	■ Children: Coronavirus	17
■ Pre-payment: Meters	9	■ Children: Day Care	18
■ Tidal Power: Carbon Emissions	10	■ Colorimetry: Finance	19
CABINET OFFICE	10	■ Disabled Students' Allowances	19
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	10	■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus	20
■ Elections	10	■ Free School Meals: North West	20
DEFENCE	11	■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs	21
■ Air Force: Bombings	11	■ Schools: Community Relations	21
■ Armed Forces: Social Mobility	11	■ Schools: Finance	21
■ Clyde Naval Base	12	■ Schools: Standards	22
■ Ministry of Defence: Off-payroll Working	13	■ Sixth Form Education: Finance	23
■ Veterans: Coronavirus	13	■ Special Educational Needs: Finance	23

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Off- payroll Working	23
■ Food: Labelling	24
■ Litter: Tobacco	24
■ Metaldehyde	25
■ Moorland and Peat Bogs: Conservation	25
■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	26
■ Pesticides	26
■ Pet Travel Scheme	26
■ Seals	27
■ Slaughterhouses	27
■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus	27
■ Tree Planting: Flood Control	28
■ Tree Planting: Peak District National Park	29

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus	29
■ British Nationals Abroad: Prisoners	31
■ Canada: Coronavirus	31
■ China: Press Freedom	31
■ Coronavirus: Travel Information	36
■ Côte d'Ivoire: Foreign Relations	36
■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Homicide	37
■ Hong Kong: Press Freedom	37
■ Israel: Coronavirus	38

■ Kashmir: Detainees	38
■ Peru: Coronavirus	39
■ Sahel and West Africa: Terrorism	39
■ South Sudan: Capital Punishment	39
■ Travel: Insurance	40
■ USA: Coronavirus	40
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	40
■ Acute Beds: North West	40
■ Agency Nurses: Sick Pay	40
■ Autism: Children	41
■ Care Homes: Coronavirus	42
■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges	43
■ Carers	43
■ Coronavirus: Carers	43
■ Coronavirus: Lung Diseases	44
■ Coronavirus: Members	44
■ Coronavirus: Mental Health	45
■ Department of Health and Social Care: Off-payroll Working	46
■ Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group: Finance	46
■ Doctors and Nurses: Derbyshire	47
■ Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust: Finance	48
■ Encephalitis	48
■ General Practitioners: Negligence	49
■ Home Care Services: Charities	49
■ Hospitals: Discharges	50

■ Mental Health Act 1983 Independent Review	51	HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	60
■ Mental Health: Public Consultation	51	■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention	60
■ NHS Trusts: Contracts for Services	52	■ Homes England	60
■ NHS: Coronavirus	52	■ Housing	61
■ NHS: Remote Working	52	■ Landlords	62
■ NHS: Standards	53	■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus	62
■ Pregnancy: Carbon Monoxide	53	■ Local Government: Coronavirus	62
■ Royal Shrewsbury Hospital: Accident and Emergency Departments	54	■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Off-payroll Working	63
■ Surgery: Romford	54	■ Night Shelters: Domestic Abuse	63
HOME OFFICE	54	■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus	63
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	54	INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	64
■ Drugs: Misuse	56	■ Coronavirus: Older People	64
■ Home Office: Written Questions	56	■ Dengue Fever	65
■ Immigration: Coronavirus	56	■ Department for International Trade: Off-payroll Working	65
■ Metropolitan Police Service's Handling of Non-recent Sexual Offence Investigations Alleged against Persons of Public Prominence Independent Review	56	■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus	65
■ Motor Vehicles: Theft	57	■ Developing Countries: Health	67
■ Nottinghamshire Police: Stun Guns	58	■ Palestinians: Textbooks	67
■ Police: Biometrics	58	■ World Health Organisation: Finance	68
■ Shoplifting	58	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	68
■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus	59	■ Department for International Trade: Off-payroll Working	68
■ Visas: Coronavirus	59	JUSTICE	68
■ Visas: Overseas Visitors	60	■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Tribunals	68

■ Ministry of Justice: Off-payroll Working	70	■ Transport: Combined Authorities	80
■ Prison Officers: Safety	70	TREASURY	80
■ Prisoners: Coronavirus	70	■ Business: Coronavirus	80
■ Prisoners: Females	71	■ Business: VAT	81
■ Reoffenders	72	■ Businesses: Insurance	82
■ Sentencing: Gender Recognition	73	■ Excise Duties: Fuels	82
NORTHERN IRELAND	73	■ Hygiene: Products	82
■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland	73	■ Insurance Companies: Coronavirus	83
TRANSPORT	74	■ Insurance: Coronavirus	84
■ Airports: Closures	74	■ Leisure: Businesses	84
■ Aviation: Coronavirus	74	■ Mortgages and Rents: Coronavirus	85
■ Aviation: Job Security	74	■ Mortgages: Coronavirus	86
■ Blue Badge Scheme	74	■ Non-domestic Rates and VAT: Coronavirus	87
■ Bus Services: Coronavirus	75	■ Non-domestic Rates: North West	88
■ Bus Services: Rural Areas	75	■ Revenue and Custom: Telephone Services	88
■ Department for Transport: Off-payroll Working	76	■ Self-employed: Coronavirus	89
■ Department for Transport: Public Consultation	76	■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus	91
■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Coronavirus	76	■ Theatre: Coronavirus	92
■ Large Goods Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	77	■ Travel: Insurance	93
■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties and Testing	77	■ Treasury: Off-payroll Working	94
■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions	77	WORK AND PENSIONS	94
■ Motor Vehicles: Testing	78	■ Employment and Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus	94
■ Public Transport: Coronavirus	78	■ Employment and Support Allowance: Coronavirus	94
■ Shipping: Coronavirus	79	■ Flybe: Isle of Man	94
■ Taxis: Coronavirus	79	■ Low Incomes: Coronavirus	95
■ Transport for London: Coronavirus	80	■ Maternity Pay: Coronavirus	95
		■ Personal Income: Coronavirus	95

■ Personal Independence Payment: Chronic Illnesses	96	■ Statutory Sick Pay	98
■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations	96	■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus	99
■ Pregnancy: Coronavirus	96	■ Universal Credit	99
■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus	97	■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus	99
■ Self-employed: Coronavirus	97	■ Universal Credit: Housing	100
■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus	97	■ Winter Fuel Payments: Pensioners	101
■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations	97	<b>WRITTEN STATEMENTS</b>	<b>102</b>
■ State Retirement Pensions: Coronavirus	98	<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>102</b>
		■ Impact of Covid-19 on Summer Exams	102
		<b>TRANSPORT</b>	<b>103</b>
		■ Rail Update	103

**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

#### ■ **Clean Steel Fund**

**Liz Saville Roberts:**

[\[30846\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress he has made in implementing the Clean Steel Fund.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

In August 2019, the Government announced a £250 million Clean Steel Fund to support the UK steel sector to transition to lower carbon iron and steel production, through investment in new technologies and processes. The Fund will help the sector towards achieving our target of net zero emissions by 2050, by maximising longevity and resilience while harnessing clean growth opportunities.

Steel industry stakeholders provided positive responses to our recent Call for Evidence, which closed in November 2019. The Department is currently analysing responses to inform the scheme's design, and as we develop the scheme, we will continue to engage closely with the sector to ensure that it meets the needs of businesses.

#### ■ **Consumer Goods: Prices**

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[31466\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the powers available to officials to ensure that prices charged by vendors for basic household goods do not rise unreasonably during temporary local shortages.

**Paul Scully:**

The Competition and Markets Authority issued a public statement on 5 March to reassure businesses and consumers that it is monitoring retail practices during the coronavirus outbreak and will take direct enforcement action, or advise the Government to take additional measures, if it is required.

#### ■ **Coronavirus: Research**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[30766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much public funding has been allocated to coronavirus research since the 2002 SARS outbreak; and which organisations received that funding.

**Amanda Solloway:**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), has funded a total of £25,319,783 for activities directly related to coronavirus since the 2002 SARS outbreak. This covers 45 projects

across 25 organisations including the Pirbright Institute, the MRC Human Immunology Unit, and the University of Glasgow.

UKRI, along with other government departments, also funds a large amount of research and innovation across connected areas including the social sciences, vaccine manufacturing, and into fundamental biological sciences that are not directly aimed at coronavirus but have a huge impact on our understanding of and ability to respond to infectious diseases and epidemics.

These areas are also supported, in collaboration with other public funders, through groups such as [The UK Vaccine Network](#) which was established in June 2015 with £120 million from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and UKRI ODA funding, to support the development of vaccines and vaccine technologies for diseases with epidemic potential.

To support research into the current COVID-19 outbreak DHSC and UKRI have run a rapid response initiative, a further £20 million has been made available to support research to understand the disease, prevent, treat and control it, in order to mitigate the severity of the outbreak. The initiative has two calls i) active intervention development including vaccines and therapeutics, and ii) diagnosis and understanding of COVID-19. Funding panels have met and awards will be announced shortly. The UK has also committed £50 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI), which supports MERS-CoV and COVID-19 vaccine development efforts.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[30767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has in place to ensure that coronavirus research patents are available to the NHS.

**Amanda Solloway:**

It is a fundamental principle of the patent system in the UK that inventions are made public. This benefits society as it allows everyone to learn of new technical advances which, critically at this time, includes developments in the area of coronavirus research. The NHS in England and other relevant health bodies across the four nations have established procurement procedures for accessing patented inventions, whether stemming from coronavirus research or not.

The UK's patent system provides a number of checks and balances to the grant of exclusive patent rights, including powers for government departments to use a patented invention in a period of emergency.

## ■ Energy Supply: Coronavirus

**Martyn Day:**

[\[30897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that residential customers of power companies who are (a) in self-isolation and (b) economically inactive as a result of covid-19 are able to afford an adequate level of gas and electricity supply during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government announced on 19 March that we have secured a voluntary agreement with domestic energy supply companies to support customers impacted by Covid-19.

Under the terms of this agreement, energy suppliers will seek to identify and prioritise customers at risk, support customers who are impacted financially, and support prepayment meter customers to stay on supply.

The support offered will be based on the individual circumstances of the customer and the systems, processes and capability of the supply company. It could include extending discretionary or friendly credit, or sending out a pre-loaded top up card for prepay customers who are unable to leave home to top up.

**■ Energy: Finance****Mike Amesbury:**[\[31593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with energy suppliers on providing customers with financial support during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government announced on 19 March that we have secured a voluntary agreement with domestic energy supply companies to support customers impacted by Covid-19.

Under the terms of this agreement, energy suppliers will seek to identify and prioritise customers at risk, support customers who are impacted financially, and support prepayment meter customers to stay on supply.

The support offered will be based on the individual circumstances of the customer and the systems, processes and capability of the supply company. It could include extending discretionary or friendly credit, or sending out a pre-loaded top up card for prepay customers who are unable to leave home to top up.

**■ Housing: Energy****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[28668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to improve the energy efficiency of housing for fuel poor households.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Energy Company Obligation is worth £640m per year and since December 2018 has been focused on upgrading the homes of low income and vulnerable households.

In April 2018, we introduced for the first time a minimum energy efficiency standard of EPC Band E for private rented sector properties, with all private rented properties required to meet, or exceed, this standard by 1 April 2020.



In 2019, we launched Simple Energy Advice, a new digital and phoneline service to provide homeowners with impartial and tailored advice on how to cut their energy bills and make their homes greener, as well as information on any available financial support.

The latest fuel poverty statistics showed that there are 800,000 fewer fuel poor households living in the least efficient homes – Bands E, F and G – compared to 2010.

The Government will detail its future plans to tackle fuel poverty in due course.

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[28671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the cost savings to the NHS of improving all housing to EPC Band C.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Understanding the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of homes to both householder health, and to the NHS is of great value. The benefits to households' health from improving their homes' thermal performance are already included in our impact assessments where relevant, and we are currently undertaking a study to enable us to quantify the cost savings to the health service of improving the energy efficiency of homes.

## ■ **Parental Leave: Coronavirus**

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[31603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing additional paid family leave to help working parents cope with school closures.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to supporting individuals through this difficult time, that is why the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a substantial package of measures to support businesses and individuals as part of the national effort in response to coronavirus.

Employees are entitled to time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependent, This would apply to situations related to coronavirus (COVID-19), including if they have children they need to look after or arrange childcare for because their school has closed. We encourage employers to support parents who choose to take leave, and those who choose to work flexibly. Parents' employment rights are protected whilst taking existing leave entitlements or sick pay.

## ■ **Pre-payment: Meters**

**Tommy Sheppard:**

[\[30816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government will take to ensure people do not lose their energy supply if they cannot purchase a top up card for a pre-payment meter during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government announced on 19 March that we have secured a voluntary agreement with domestic energy supply companies to support customers impacted by Covid-19.

Under the terms of this agreement, energy suppliers will seek to identify and prioritise customers at risk, support customers who are impacted financially, and support prepayment meter customers to stay on supply.

The support offered will be based on the individual circumstances of the customer and the systems, processes and capability of the supply company. It could include extending discretionary or friendly credit, or sending out a pre-loaded top up card for prepay customers who are unable to leave home to top up.

**Tidal Power: Carbon Emissions****Neil Parish:**[\[28695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of potential contribution of domestic tidal lagoon power to reaching the target of net zero by 2050.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government has been clear that tidal range technologies such as tidal lagoons and barrages may have a role to play in the UK's long term energy mix but only if they can deliver value for money in the context of other renewable technologies.

**CABINET OFFICE****[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Conor McGinn:**[\[31538\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many of the working-age population in (a) St Helens, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West do not qualify for Statutory Sick Pay.

**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 [PQ31538.pdf]

**Elections****Beth Winter:**[\[30188\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the Electoral Commission's recommendations that the May 2020 elections be postponed; and if he will make a statement.

**Chloe Smith:**

Further to the Written Ministerial Statement [HCWS174](#) which I laid on 19 March 2020, The Government has confirmed local, mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections that were due to take place in May this year will be postponed until May 2021.

The decision was taken following advice from the Government's medical experts in relation to the response to the Covid-19 virus and the advice of those delivering elections.

**DEFENCE****■ Air Force: Bombings****Jonathan Edwards:****[30737]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has to review the process his Department uses to monitor the effects of Royal Air Force airstrikes.

**James Heappey:**

The Department has robust procedures for assessing the effects of RAF airstrikes. We are not complacent and keep these under review; we understand the challenges posed when UK or other coalition forces are not present on the ground. In addition, we maintain a constructive dialogue with non-governmental organisations on these matters.

**■ Armed Forces: Social Mobility****Jack Lopresti:****[30753]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what proportion of serving commissioned officers in (a) the Royal Navy, (b) the Army, (c) the Royal Air Force went to state schools; and what steps his Department is taking to increase that proportion to enhance social mobility; and if he will make a statement.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) does not hold information on the type of schools attended by Officers of the British Armed Forces and so I am unable to make the assessment.

However, can I assure him that the MOD is working closely with the Armed Forces in line with the Government's priority to build a fairer society, by attracting talent from the widest possible base across the UK, regardless of socio-economic background, educational status or ethnicity. The opportunities, education, and training provided to both officers and enlisted personnel in both the Regular and Reserve Forces enable recruits to progress as far as their aptitude will take them, regardless of their background.

■ **Clyde Naval Base****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[30098]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 to Question 26968, what the (a) overall budget, (b) current spend and (c) percentage of completion is of each of the 14 projects at HM Naval Base Clyde.

**Jeremy Quin:**

The overall budget allocated to HM Naval Base Clyde projects is £1.6billion, the current spend as of the

29 February 2020 is £329million. The percentage of completion of each of the 14 projects is provided in the

table below:

PROJECT NAME	COMPLETE
Single Living Accommodation T2	100%
Submarine Escape Rescue Abandonment and Survival	100%
Neptune Remedial Works	95%
Nuclear Support Hub	70%
Trident Training Facility (Faslane)	70%
Surveillance and Intruder Detection Security Systems	60%
Clyde Programme Requirements	30%
Trident Special Area	25%
Faslane Nuclear Infrastructure Continuous Availability Project	15%
Submarine Training Facility	15%
Coulport Continuous Availability Project	5%
Jetty Facility Security Systems	1%
Single Living Accommodation T3	0% *
Submarine Support Hub	0% *

*\*Projects with no progress are scheduled to begin in later years of the programme*

## ■ Ministry of Defence: Off-payroll Working

**Justin Madders:** [\[29233\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Johnny Mercer:**

The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## ■ Veterans: Coronavirus

**Carol Monaghan:** [\[R\] \[30788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what plans he has for mobilisation of retired Armed Forces personnel to assist with the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Heappey:**

Where retired Armed Forces personnel are members of the ex-Regular Reserve, they have a legal liability for service if so required. Whilst the option to call on them for support exists and may be used to support the UK Government's response to the outbreak, there are currently no plans for any large-scale deployments of ex-Regular Reservists.

**Carol Monaghan:** [\[R\] \[30789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether retired Armed Forces personnel can volunteer to assist with the Government's response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Heappey:**

Where retired Armed Forces personnel are members of the ex-Regular Reserve, they have a legal liability for service if so required. Such personnel may volunteer to assist with the response to the outbreak, in the same way that they may volunteer to assist with any other military activity; however, there are currently no plans for any large-scale deployments of ex-Regular Reservists.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

## ■ Broadband: Bosworth

**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[28001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequate supply of cabinet space for routing superfast broadband to individual properties in Bosworth.

**Matt Warman:**

Openreach has a standard internal process whereby they monitor the capacity available within individual cabinets. Where cabinets are nearing maximum capacity

they will deploy additional capacity. It is in Openreach's commercial interest to do this as additional take-up of broadband services equates to additional revenue.

Building Digital UK (BDUK), the broadband delivery arm within DCMS, has standard arrangements within their Superfast contracts such that if take-up of these services exceeds a certain threshold - where a given postcode is more commercially viable than Openreach predicted - then a proportion of the public subsidy is returned to BDUK via what is termed "Take-up Clawback".

## ■ Disinformation: Coronavirus

**Damian Collins:**

[\[31484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Counter Disinformation Unit on covid-19 became operational; how many full-time equivalent staff work in that unit; from which Departments those staff were recruited; and whether any new staff have been hired to work in that unit.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

Whilst this cross-government counter-disinformation capability was recently stood up to support COVID-19 response efforts, existing structures have been monitoring for disinformation related to the disease as part of their ongoing work.

The capability is resourced full time through existing cross-government teams and there are no additional costs associated with it.

There are a number of organisations that have relevant capabilities and responsibilities which are brought together through this work. This includes existing teams in DCMS, the Home Office, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Cabinet Office and No10.

**Damian Collins:**

[\[31485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many cases of disinformation have been considered by the Counter Disinformation Unit on covid-19 to date; what action was taken in response to cases of disinformation by that unit; and if that unit will publish examples of identified cases of disinformation on covid-19.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

It would not be appropriate to provide a running commentary on instances of misinformation or disinformation. We will address instances of misinformation or disinformation using the most appropriate mechanism. We are grateful for the work civil society and academia are doing to highlight and correct misinformation.

As Government one of the best things we can do is make sure that everyone has access to the correct information about the virus. As such, we are working with industry to support the introduction of systems and processes that promote authoritative sources of information. The Government's public information campaign provides the latest and most accurate information about Covid-19.

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[31504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how her Department's covid-19 misinformation unit will differ from the anti-disinformation unit in the Cabinet Office; and for what reasons that unit is separate from the anti-disinformation unit.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Addressing the challenges of disinformation and misinformation is a whole of government effort. DCMS is coordinating a cross-government capability which brings together existing expertise from within Government to provide the most comprehensive picture possible about the extent, scope and impact of disinformation and misinformation on the Covid-19 crisis.

There are a number of other organisations that have relevant capabilities and responsibilities which are brought together through this work. This includes teams in, DCMS, the Home Office, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Cabinet Office and No10.

■ **Internet: Coronavirus**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[31506\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to support vulnerable people to use the internet during periods of self-isolation as a result of covid-19.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The Government understands that those who are most vulnerable may also lack basic digital skills and will face particular challenges related to the medical advice to self-isolate. We are currently working at pace, in partnership with the tech sector and civil society organisations, to develop solutions to these challenges and to provide support to vulnerable people and those self-isolating.

Government is also addressing the challenges of disinformation and misinformation particularly around COVID-19. We have brought together existing cross-government monitoring and analysis capabilities to provide the most comprehensive picture possible about the extent, scope and impact of disinformation and misinformation linked to COVID-19. We are also working with strategic communications experts to ensure that we are prepared to respond to disinformation campaigns where necessary. As part of this work, we are regularly engaging with social media platforms.

The Government, together with Ofcom and industry, is giving urgent consideration to wider telecoms-related issues that vulnerable consumers might face as a result of COVID-19.

## ■ Social Enterprises and Sports: Coronavirus

**Robert Halfon:**

**[30747]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to provide support for sports clubs and social enterprises that have their activities and income affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Sports clubs and social enterprises form an integral part of this country and it is important they are given as much support as possible.

The government has announced a comprehensive and sizable package of direct fiscal support for business through tax relief and cash grants. This package means that all businesses eligible for small business rates relief and rural rates relief will receive a grant of £10,000 to help with the impact of Covid-19. Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors can receive even more: up to £25,000 per business, if they have a property with a rateable value of between £15,000 and £51,000.

This comes on top of business rates holidays given to several hundred thousand businesses and compensation for statutory sick pay. As the Chancellor said, we plan to go further with regards to employment support and supporting people's jobs and incomes.

Sport England have also issued guidance ( <https://www.sportengland.org/news/coronavirus-information-sector> ) to the sport and leisure sector to introduce, for an initial period of three months, significant flexibility for funding partners to reflect the current circumstances. Relevant funding partners can get in touch with Sport England using [funding@sportengland.org](mailto:funding@sportengland.org) or on 03458 508 508.

We will continue to engage closely with the sector and the Government will do whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19.

## ■ Video Conferencing: Coronavirus

**Chi Onwurah:**

**[31507]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to help meet the demand for video conferencing as a consequence of self-isolation in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Matt Warman:**

My Department, Ofcom and the telecoms sector have undertaken a significant amount of work on pandemic planning over recent years. Overall, the sector has reassured the government that it is well prepared for the impacts of Covid - 19 on broadband capacity.

The Government is reassured that the operators' plans are extensive and that there is currently sufficient network capacity to support the various needs of homeworkers, such as video conferencing. Ofcom has recently issued relevant guidance on



improving your broadband speeds at home and improving indoor coverage. This guidance can be found at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/advice/improve-bb-speeds-at-home> and for mobile customers <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/advice/improving-indoor-coverage>

We remain in regular touch with Ofcom and the relevant companies and will continue to keep the situation under review.

## EDUCATION

### ■ Apprentices: Shipping

**Karl Turner:**

**[29214]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many maritime apprenticeship starts there were in the Yorkshire and Humber region in each year from 2015-16 to 2018-19; and how many such apprenticeships there have been in that region to date in 2019-20.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The attached table shows the number of apprenticeship starts in maritime-related apprenticeships in the Yorkshire and the Humber region from 2015/16 to Quarter 1 of 2019/20.

**Attachments:**

1. 29214\_Table  
[29214\_table\_of\_maritime\_related\_apprenticeship\_starts\_in\_the\_Yorkshire\_and\_the\_Humber\_region.doc]

### ■ Children: Coronavirus

**Catherine McKinnell:**

**[31508]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) parents with and (b) parents of children with underlying health conditions do not receive fines for unauthorised school absences during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

From Friday 20 March, schools, colleges and early years settings are closed to everyone except children of critical workers and vulnerable children, as part of the country's ongoing response to COVID-19.

Guidance has been issued to schools setting out how they should record attendance at this time.

The Government has also introduced emergency legislation to allow a suspension of the requirement on parents to secure regular school attendance for their child of compulsory school age.

The Government has asked local authorities to suspend any penalty notice action or prosecutions for COVID-19 related absence with immediate effect. Local authorities

should update their Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices to make this clear. New cases should not be taken forward and any cases from 16 March should be withdrawn. This approach should also be applied to prosecutions for non-attendance.

## ■ Children: Day Care

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

[29247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will allow the free childcare entitlement to be used to allow parents to utilise fewer hours in a more expensive childcare setting; and what consideration his Department has given to allowing that entitlement to be used more flexibly.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department wants parents to have access to a range of affordable childcare, giving them increased flexibility in their working hours. The government funded early years entitlements is intended to deliver 15-30 hours a week (for 38 weeks of the year) of free, high quality, flexible childcare for eligible two-, three- and four-year olds. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables (such as nappies and sun cream), additional hours or additional services (such as trips) and providers may charge parents for these.

While many providers will offer 15-30 hours of free childcare per week during term time (38 weeks of the year), this offer can be delivered flexibly. All of the free entitlements can be stretched by taking fewer hours per week over up to 52 weeks of the year to cover term-time and the school holidays.

Some providers will only offer free hours during school term times or only offer free hours stretched over the year whilst others provide a mixture of the two. As set out in the department's statutory guidance for local authorities, to ensure that parents can make informed decisions on their choice of childcare, providers should publish a statement of how they deliver the free entitlements and any additional charges for optional activities.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[30809]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of childcare providers provided the Government's free childcare entitlements in each of the last 10 years, by (a) area, (b) type of childcare provider and (c) type of entitlement.

**Tulip Siddiq:**

[30810]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of families that are eligible for (a) free childcare entitlements, (b) tax-free childcare and (c) maintained nursery school places and that do not take up that entitlement.

**Vicky Ford:**

A time series of the number and type of provider delivering the different funded childcare entitlements can be found within tables 12, 13 and 14 of the following statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision->

[children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2019](#). We do not publish what proportion of the childcare market this represents.

The attached table shows the recent estimate the Department for Education has made on the number of children benefiting from funded early education and the number eligible.

Figures for previous years on the number of children benefiting and the percentage of the eligible population this represents, can be found within Tables 1 to 8LA of the following statistical release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-provision-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2019>.

The Department for Education does not hold data on the number of families who are eligible for Tax Free Childcare as HM Revenue & Customs are responsible for the administration of the Tax Free Childcare Scheme.

We recognise that maintained nursery schools are an important part of the early years sector and provide valuable services to disadvantaged children. However, the Department for Education does not hold data on the number of families who are eligible for a maintained school nursery place.

**Attachments:**

1. 30809\_30810\_table [PQ 30809 & 30810 Table of number of children benefiting from funded early education and estimated eligible population.doc]

■ **Colorimetry: Finance**

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[29204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the health and wellbeing of students in higher education with visual stress of the removal of colorimetry funding for those students.

**Michelle Donelan:**

The department is in discussion with the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education as to whether any additional types of assistance would be appropriate for students with a diagnosis of visual stress.

■ **Disabled Students' Allowances**

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [\[29203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on the health and wellbeing of students in higher education with brain injuries of the change in the level of disabled student allowance funding for mentoring those students.

**Michelle Donelan:**

There has been no change to the level of funding available through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for mentoring support. All students who are eligible for DSAs, including those with brain injuries, are assessed in respect of the type and level of support they specifically require.

**■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus****Mrs Sharon Hodgson:** [30702]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools will provide access to free school meals to eligible pupils during any closures in relation to covid-19.

**Vicky Ford:**

The continuing provision of free school meals to children from out of work families or those on low incomes is of the utmost importance to this government. No child who would ordinarily receive a free school meal should go without this due to school closures or having to self-isolate at home.

Guidance for schools on the action to be taken has been published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>.

**Catherine McKinnell:** [31509]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, if he will issue guidance on the use of free school meal funding in the event of school closures.

**Vicky Ford:**

On 19 March, the government published guidance for schools, giving them the flexibility to provide meals or shop vouchers to the 1.3 million children entitled to free school meals if they are no longer attending school, either due to closures or as a result of self-isolating at home.

The guidance can be viewed at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance>.

**■ Free School Meals: North West****Conor McGinn:** [30892]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of school pupils are in receipt of free school meals in (a) St Helens, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West.

**Vicky Ford:**

Information on the number of pupils and schools in local authorities and regions, including free school meal eligibility, is published in the annual Schools, pupils and their characteristics statistical release. The most recent figures, for January 2019, are available at the link below. Table 4c shows breakdowns for different school phases and types by local authority and region.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019>.

## ■ Pupils: Per Capita Costs

**Robert Largan:**

[\[29285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department will allocate per pupil in (a) secondary and (b) primary schools in High Peak constituency in (i) 2020-21, (ii) 2021-22 and (iii) 2022-23.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is increasing school funding in England by £14.4 billion over the next three years - by £2.6 billion in 2020-21, followed by increases of £4.8 billion and £7.1 billion in 2021-22 and 2022-23 respectively, compared to 2019-20. In 2020-21, primary schools and secondary schools in the High Peak constituency will attract, on average, £4,377 and £5,262 per pupil respectively through the national funding formula. We will confirm how the funding for the subsequent two years will be allocated in due course.

## ■ Schools: Community Relations

**Nickie Aiken:**

[\[29295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has allocated to the national schools linking programme in each year since the establishment of that programme; what plans he has for the maintenance of that funding in each of the next five years; and whether he has made an assessment of the effectiveness of that programme.

**Nick Gibb:**

Together with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), we have provided £1,339,240 to the Linking Network, since September 2016, to support their national school linking programme. The Department's contribution to the programme over each year is as follows:

2016-17: £0

2017-18: £153,188

2018-19: £197,401

2019-20: £247,000

This has supported the Linking Network to expand their work into more areas and reach more pupils – with sustained linking programmes now taking place in 28 local areas; and in the last year, over 540 schools taking part leading to over 22,500 pupils participating in activities supporting integration.

## ■ Schools: Finance

**Robert Largan:**

[\[29287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has for ensuring equitable funding for urban and rural schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

Since 2018-19, the national funding formula (NFF) has distributed school funding based on the individual needs and characteristics of every school in the country. This is fairer and more equitable than the previous system, which based local authority's allocations for schools on data that was over a decade out of date.

While the majority of school funding is based on pupils and their characteristics, the NFF provides every school a fixed lump sum, worth £114,400 next year. This is particularly beneficial for small schools, which are overrepresented in rural areas, that are more reliant on an element of funding that is not driven by pupil numbers.

The NFF's sparsity factor provides additional funding specifically to small schools in remote areas, in recognition that they do not have the same opportunities to find efficiencies as those elsewhere. Next year, £26.2 million will be allocated through this factor, which is contributing to rural schools attracting on average 4.7% more per pupil next year relative to 2019-20 NFF allocations, compared to a national average increase of 4.1% per pupil.

We keep the national funding formula under review to ensure that it is directing funding where it is most needed, and will set out our plans for 2021-22 shortly.

## ■ Schools: Standards

**Robert Largan:**[\[29284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many schools in High Peak constituency were rated (a) good and (b) outstanding by Ofsted at their most recent inspection.

**Nick Gibb:**

The information requested is published by Ofsted. The table shows the number of schools in High Peak that are rated as 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. It shows that, as at 31 August 2019, there were 43 schools (80%) rated as either 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in High Peak constituency. Nationally, 86% of schools are rated either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

ALL SCHOOLS AS AT AUGUST 2019	NUMBER OF 'OUTSTANDING' SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF 'GOOD' SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF 'REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT' SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF 'INADEQUATE' SCHOOLS	TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF 'GOOD' AND 'OUTSTANDING' SCHOOLS	% OF 'GOOD' AND 'OUTSTANDING' SCHOOLS
High Peak constituen cy	4	39	5	6	54	43	80%
England	4,332	14,420	2,261	792	21,805	18,752	86%

## ■ Sixth Form Education: Finance

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[30713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding for sixth form students.

**Gillian Keegan:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families on 28 January 2020 to [5550](#).

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

**Tom Hunt:**

[\[29263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to allocate additional (a) funding and (b) resources to special educational needs provision in (a) Suffolk and (b) England.

**Vicky Ford:**

As part of the boost to school funding, announced at the spending round last year, mainstream schools in Suffolk will attract £433.1 million this coming year, which will help them provide resources for their pupils with special educational needs. In England the overall increases for schools will be £14.6 billion over 3 years - £2.6 billion in 2020-21, £4.8 billion in 2021-22 and £7.1 billion in 2022-23.

For 2020-21, these overall increases include £780 million additional high needs funding, bringing the total funding for children and young people with the most complex needs to £7.2 billion. Every local authority will see an increase in high needs funding of at least 8% per head of population aged 2 to 18. Suffolk county council will receive £75.5 million of high needs funding in 2020-21, 11.1 million more than in 2019-20. This increase will help the council and other local authorities with the resources they need to support those young people who need the most support, including those with education, health and care plans.

Allocations for high needs in 2021-22 and 2022-23 will be announced in due course.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Off-payroll Working

**Justin Madders:**

[\[29242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Victoria Prentis:**

In Defra, we can confirm that we assess the employment status for tax purposes of every contractor according to the 2017 IR35 amendment. We are currently engaged with 634 contractors, of which 92 are currently in scope of the IR35 tax legislation.

■ **Food: Labelling****Alberto Costa:**[\[29271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to make the labelling of food suitable for vegetarians a legal requirement.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The fundamental principles of our food labelling rules are that information provided to consumers must not mislead and must enable consumers to make informed decisions. While our rules lay out what information must be given to consumers and how it must be provided, there is no legal definition for vegetarian food in our legislation. Nor is there a legal requirement to label food as either vegetarian or non-vegetarian.

Food manufacturers are free to label products as vegetarian voluntarily and so inform consumers who seek such information, providing they do not mislead consumers. Organisations such as the Vegetarian and Vegan Societies provide accreditation services to food producers, allowing food products which fulfil their respective requirements to carry their logos.

Looking forward, we have an opportunity to review food labelling to make sure that consumers can have confidence in the food that they buy.

■ **Litter: Tobacco****Luke Pollard:**[\[29305\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's powers to require the tobacco industry to take steps to limit littering from its products.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government would like to see the tobacco industry delivering on the commitment given by the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association to tackle the litter created by its products and their users. We support ongoing efforts by the environmental organisation Keep Britain Tidy to work in partnership with the tobacco industry to devise a voluntary scheme through which the industry can contribute to the clean-up of cigarette related litter, and we are watching this space with interest.

Clause 48 in Section 3 of the Environment Bill grants powers to introduce extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes. In the Resources and Waste Strategy, we committed to looking into and consulting on EPR for five new waste-streams by 2025, and consulting on two of these by 2022. Waste tobacco filters were not included in this list of priorities but progress on the industry's voluntary approach to litter reduction will be monitored.



Tobacco packaging is covered by the current producer responsibility regulations, which require companies to recycle a proportion of the packaging waste they place on the market. Producers of tobacco packaging will be subject to the forthcoming EPR scheme for packaging which will cover the full net costs of managing packaging at its end of life. In our consultation we proposed that producer fees should cover the full cost to local authorities of dealing with littered and fly-tipped packaging waste.

## ■ **Metaldehyde**

**Daniel Zeichner:**

[\[30111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to introduce a ban on outdoor use of metaldehyde; and what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) producers of metaldehyde, (b) the wildlife and the environment and (c) water companies of not implementing the ban announced in 2018.

**Victoria Prentis:**

All pesticides are subject to strict regulation and can only be sold and used if they are authorised following an assessment of risks to people, wildlife and the environment. In December 2018, the Government took the decision to prohibit the sale and use of metaldehyde products other than in greenhouses. Following a legal challenge based on the decision-making process, the Government agreed to withdraw the prohibition.

The Government is now required to make a fresh decision on whether the sale and use of metaldehyde products should continue to be authorised. This decision will be taken as soon as possible and will be taken on the basis of the legal requirements and the assessment of the scientific evidence on risks to people, wildlife and the environment. The economic effects on producers of metaldehyde and on water companies are not considered as part of this assessment.

## ■ **Moorland and Peat Bogs: Conservation**

**Robert Largan:**

[\[29288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans Department has to restore (a) peatlands and (b) moorlands.

**Rebecca Pow:**

We are currently allocating £10 million in 2018-2021 for approximately 5,948 hectares of peatland restoration. The Chancellor has announced that peatland restoration will feature as part of the Government's Nature for Climate fund that will lead to the restoration of 35,000 hectares of peatland over the next five years.

In the 25 Year Environment Plan, we committed to publishing an England Peat Strategy to create and deliver a new ambitious framework for peat restoration in England. We intend to publish it in due course.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

**Bridget Phillipson:**

**[31495]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent meetings he has had with representatives of (a) the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and (b) Nissan to discuss the Government's (i) net zero emissions and (ii) clean air targets.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Secretary of State has not met the SMMT or Nissan. Defra officials have recently updated members of the automotive trade on plans to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>). Officials also met SMMT to discuss gathering vehicle data for the Clean Air Zone vehicle checker, which is directly related to the NO<sub>2</sub> target.

## ■ Pesticides

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[29963]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether a significant reduction in pesticide use will be required to meet the Government's targets set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government is clear that it is right to minimise the use of pesticides and is committed to putting Integrated Pest Management at the heart of its approach, to make the greatest possible use of alternative pest and disease control methods in support of sustainable farming and land management. This will support the goals and targets of our 25 Year Environment Plan.

## ■ Pet Travel Scheme

**Dr James Davies:**

**[31592]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what his policy is on pet passports after the end of the transition period; and if he will take steps to ensure that pets will be able to travel freely with their owners throughout the EU.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The non-commercial movement of cats, dogs and ferrets is covered by the EU Pet Travel Scheme which has three categorisations of third country: unlisted; Part 1 listed; and Part 2 listed. Third countries can apply to the European Commission to be listed under the EU Pet Travel Scheme.

The UK has submitted its application to allow the UK to become a Part 1 listed third country under Annex II of the EU Pet Travel Regulations to the European Commission. Should the UK become a Part 1 listed country, there would be little change to the current arrangements, with only minor changes needed for documentation and, in most cases, no change for owners from what they currently need to do in terms of their animal's health preparation. It is now for the Commission to consider our application for listed status.

## ■ Seals

**James Gray:** [\[31430\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many seals have been shot to protect (a) aquaculture and (b) fisheries interests in England in each of the last 10 years.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970, it is an offence to take or kill common and grey seals out of season (when they have pups) or to use certain methods to kill or take, unless permitted to do so by a licence issued under the Act. In the last ten years there have been no licenses issued to shoot seals to protect aquaculture or fisheries interests in England.

Fishers have the legal defence to take unlicensed emergency measures in relation to individual seals to prevent damage to their fishing equipment or fish contained within it. There are no reporting requirements under this provision.

## ■ Slaughterhouses

**Robert Largan:** [\[29289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support micro-abattoirs.

**Rebecca Pow:**

I recognise the role smaller operators play in meeting the needs of local supply chains and Defra is committed to work across Government to support the whole abattoir sector - including micro abattoirs - to sustain a network of slaughtering provision across the country.

The issues faced by small and micro abattoirs are varied and complex. As such, Defra chairs a Small Abattoir Working Group with representatives from industry and the wider sector to address such challenges.

In relation to micro-abattoirs, the Food Standards Agency are exploring ways in which existing flexibilities in regulations can be best utilised by smaller operators in supporting their operations.

## ■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

**John Cryer:** [\[29817\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions the Government has had with major supermarkets on limiting or rationing items during the outbreak of covid-19.

**Ellie Reeves:** [\[30125\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what guidance he has issued to businesses on preventing members of the public from stockpiling (a) food and (b) other essential products.

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[30140\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure supermarkets do not run out of food as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[30170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help reduce stockpiling from supermarkets by the general public in response to covid-19.

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[30171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of stockpiling from supermarkets by the general public on the ability of supermarkets to maintain stocks during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government has well-established ways of working with the food industry during disruption to supply situations. Our retailers already have highly resilient supply chains and they are working around the clock to ensure people have the food and products they need. Industry is adapting quickly to any changes in demands, and food supply into and across the UK is resilient.

The Secretary of State is in regular dialogue with industry, including the British Retail Consortium and supermarket chief executives to discuss any additional support the Government can provide. To help supermarkets respond to this unprecedented demand we have already introduced new measures to keep food supply flowing. We have issued guidance to local authorities to allow extended delivery hours to supermarkets so that shelves can be filled up quicker, and we have implemented extensions to drivers' hours.

We fully recognise the additional pressures on our food supply chain as a result of recent events. The UK's major supermarkets have last weekend issued a statement to encourage everyone to shop as they normally would and pull together to support those staying at home.

We will continue to work closely with the industry over the coming days and months.

## ■ **Tree Planting: Flood Control**

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[30676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure the planting of additional trees to reduce the risk of flooding; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

This Government has committed to increase planting across the UK to 30,000 hectares of trees per year by 2025. This will be supported in England by our £640 million Nature for Climate Fund, announced at the spring budget.

Additionally, we will soon consult on our English Tree Strategy. The consultation will seek feedback on policies to increase tree and woodland cover, including riparian planting along rivers and on hillsides. Planting trees can contribute to a wider catchment-based approach to flood alleviation, slowing the flow of water. The right tree in the right place can also improve water quality, biodiversity, air quality, and soil health.

■ **Tree Planting: Peak District National Park**

**Robert Largan:**

[\[29290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans his Department has to plant trees in the Peak District.

**Rebecca Pow:**

As part of the 25 Year Environment Plan, we are investing £5.7 million to support the existing partnership of the Community Forests and the Woodland Trust to accelerate and further develop the Northern Forest. Specifically, our funding will support the planting of 1.8 million new trees by 2022 across the Northern Forest, including in the parts of the Peak District which are located within its boundary, and help the Northern Forest partnership towards their long-term target of 50 million new trees planted over 25 years.

The Government's support for woodland creation includes 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 wherever they are in the country. We are working to increase the uptake of grant schemes and strongly encourage eligible organisations to do so.

**FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[30035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to strengthen consular support for UK nationals overseas facing quarantine as a result of covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are aware of cases where British nationals have been quarantined. We are in close contact with the local authorities in the countries concerned and are providing consular assistance to all those who request it. This includes maintaining contact with family members; helping them understand the local situation, providing assistance in securing medication or liaising with tour operators and airlines about onward travel once they are allowed to leave.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[30778]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support his Department is providing to UK embassies and missions to enable them to support UK nationals trying to return to the UK as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

Like other organisations, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will be affected if large numbers of staff become infected with covid-19. The same will be true of our overseas network. In that context, we are reprioritising activities and reassigning staff to make sure that we can continue to lead a global response to Covid-19 and deal with other urgent matters as they arise.

We are continuing to work closely with local authorities, commercial airlines and other diplomatic missions to enable British people to get home. Our consular team is working around the clock to provide support, advice and information. The situation is fast moving, and our advice at this time is for British nationals to secure safe accommodation and to speak to their tour operator, airline and insurance company to discuss the options available to them.

**Jonathan Edwards:**

**[31470]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of UK nationals stranded in countries that have closed their borders, by country.

**Nigel Adams:**

Consular Assistance is given on a case by case basis and if British Nationals require assistance they can contact us by phone 24/7 for help or advice from anywhere in the world by calling the Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office)) on 0207 008 1500, or the nearest British embassy, High Commission or Consulate ([www.gov.uk/world/embassies](http://www.gov.uk/world/embassies)). We do not register British nationals abroad, and do not therefore have numbers of British nationals in each country.

**Neil Coyle:**

**[31521]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking with (a) TUI and (b) other flight operators to ensure they bring back UK nationals currently stranded abroad.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are in daily touch with the travel industry. We are working together to respond to the unprecedented challenges created by the far-reaching entry restrictions and other measures countries are introducing, often without notice.

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[32080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what protocols his Department has in place to repatriate vulnerable UK nationals from overseas due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are working closely with local authorities, commercial airlines and other diplomatic missions to enable British people to get home. Our consular team is working around the clock to provide support, advice and information. The situation is fast moving, and our advice at this time is for British nationals to secure safe accommodation and to speak to their tour operator, airline and insurance company to discuss the options available to them.

**British Nationals Abroad: Prisoners****Emily Thornberry:**[\[24294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the provision of advice to British citizens in prison overseas on limiting their risk of contracting covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary and the Health Secretary have met frequently to discuss the UK's response to Covid-19, including our international response. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of Health and Social Care are in constant contact to discuss the provision of advice to British nationals overseas. 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.

**Canada: Coronavirus****Margaret Ferrier:**[\[30795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make it his policy to advise against all but essential travel to Canada as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Office now advises against all but essential travel globally. The situation is changing rapidly, with many countries imposing restrictions and closing borders. We urge all British nationals in country to speak to their travel provider if they wish to return to UK and follow the guidance of local authorities while they remain overseas. Travellers should speak to their tour operator, airline, transport/accommodation provider and insurance company (as applicable) to discuss the options available to them.

**China: Press Freedom****Mr Alistair Carmichael:**[\[31448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential for British journalists to be expelled from (a) mainland China, (b) Hong Kong, and (c) Macau, following the decision by the Chinese Foreign



Ministry to expel US citizens working for the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times from those regions.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

We remain fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms underpinned by the legally binding Joint Declaration, and the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

[\[31449\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential for US citizens working for British news publications to be expelled from (a) mainland China, (b) Hong Kong, and (c) Macau, following the decision by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to expel US citizens working for American news publications from those regions.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

We remain fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms underpinned by the legally binding Joint Declaration, and the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law.



**Mr Alistair Carmichael:**

**[31450]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on introducing sanctions in response to the decision by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to expel US citizens working for the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have announced our intention to establish a UK autonomous Global Human Rights ('Magnitsky-style') sanctions regime. It would be inappropriate to comment on potential designations before the regulations come into force.

**Fiona Bruce:**

**[31471]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the decision by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to expel United States citizens working for the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, as it pertains to the obligations arising from the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

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**Fiona Bruce:**

**[31472]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the decision by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to expel US citizens working for the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, as it pertains to Hong Kong's Basic Law.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao

further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

We remain fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms underpinned by the legally binding Joint Declaration, and the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law.

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[31473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the decision by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to expel US citizens working for the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post and the New York Times from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, as that decision pertains to the Hong Kong Basic Law.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

We remain fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms underpinned by the legally binding Joint Declaration, and the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law.

**Catherine West:**

[\[31648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect on British journalists in China following the expulsion of US journalists from China in March 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement

that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China, Macao and Hong Kong further restricts transparency at a particularly important time.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese Government on this issue.

**Catherine West:**

**[31649]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support British journalists based in (a) China, (b) Hong Kong, and (c) Macau following the expulsion of US journalists from China in March 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

We remain fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms underpinned by the legally binding Joint Declaration, and the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law.

**Catherine West:**

**[31650]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with the Chief Executive of Hong Kong on the expulsion of US journalists from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau in March 2020.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

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#### ■ **Coronavirus: Travel Information**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[29844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the provision of accurate guidance on the risk of covid-19 in relation to overseas travel.

**Nigel Adams:**

Since 17 March, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised against all but essential travel globally. For British Nationals who remain overseas we advise them to be prepared to follow the advice of local authorities abroad and to be ready to comply with local isolation or quarantine requirements. We keep our travel advice under review.

#### ■ **Côte d'Ivoire: Foreign Relations**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[29804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Ivory Coast counterpart on bilateral relations.

**James Duddridge:**

The British Government has a strong bilateral partnership with Cote d'Ivoire. Stability, climate change and inclusive economic growth are shared priorities. The Foreign Secretary met the President of Cote d'Ivoire and five government ministers at the Africa Investment Summit on 20 January. The Prime Minister also met the Ivoirian President on the same day. Our Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire and her team regularly meet Ivoirian authorities, including ministers, in pursuit of our shared interests.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[29863\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the government the Ivory Coast on the importance of strong bilateral relationship.

**James Duddridge:**

The British Government has a strong bilateral partnership with Cote d'Ivoire. Stability, climate change and inclusive economic growth are shared priorities. The Foreign Secretary met the President of Cote d'Ivoire and five government ministers at the Africa Investment Summit on 20 January. The Prime Minister also met the Ivoirian President on the same day. Our Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire and her team regularly meet Ivoirian authorities, including ministers, in pursuit of our shared interests.

## ■ Democratic Republic of Congo: Homicide

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[29870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the role of Democratic Republic of Congo (a) police, (b) army and (c) elected officials in Yumbi province in the recent killings and disenfranchisement of civilians in that province.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK remains deeply concerned by the continued violations of human rights perpetrated by state agents in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including in Yumbi territory. The UK uses multilateral platforms to urge the Government of DRC to ensure those who violate human rights are held to account, including state agents regardless of their rank or affiliation.

More broadly, the UK continues to support the UN Joint Human Rights Office, which monitors and reports human rights violations in DRC. We also support protection of civilians through contributions to the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO), humanitarian funding and UK Aid conflict programming focused on stabilisation and peacebuilding. During the annual renewal of the MONUSCO mandate, the UK lobbied to ensure protection of civilians remained a central component of the mission.

## ■ Hong Kong: Press Freedom

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[31474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure press freedom in Hong Kong in line with the UK's obligations under the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

**Nigel Adams:**

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, we have consistently stated our concern about media freedoms in China. The Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao further restricts transparency at a particularly important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is deeply concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

We are concerned about the implications this decision could have upon British Journalists. We will continue to monitor the situation and work with the Chinese and Hong Kong Governments on this issue.

We remain fully committed to upholding Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and rights and freedoms underpinned by the legally binding Joint Declaration, and the 'One Country, Two Systems' framework set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law.

**■ Israel: Coronavirus****Margaret Ferrier:** [\[30792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make it his policy to advise against all but essential travel to Israel during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Office now advises against all but essential travel globally. The situation is changing rapidly, with many countries imposing restrictions and closing borders. We urge all British nationals in country to speak to their travel provider if they wish to return to UK and follow the guidance of local authorities while they remain overseas. Travellers should speak to their tour operator, airline, transport/accommodation provider and insurance company (as applicable) to discuss the options available to them.

**■ Kashmir: Detainees****Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[28591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people in Kashmir that have been (a) placed in preventative custody and (b) detained under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act 1978 by the Indian authorities since August 2019.

**Nigel Adams:**

According to Indian Home Ministry records dated 29 February, 7357 people have been taken into preventative custody since 5 August 2019. The Home Ministry records state that 451 persons are currently under preventative detention, which includes 396 people detained under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act. We have raised our concerns about the ongoing detentions with the Government of India.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[28592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of people in Kashmir that are currently (a) in preventative custody and (b) detained under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act 1978 by the Indian authorities.

**Nigel Adams:**

According to Indian Home Ministry records dated 29 February, 7357 people have been taken into preventative custody since 5 August 2019. The Home Ministry records state that 451 persons are currently under preventative detention, which includes 396 people detained under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act. We have raised our concerns about the ongoing detentions with the Government of India.

## ■ Peru: Coronavirus

**Neil Coyle:**

[\[30776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support British nationals in (a) Lima and (b) Peru trying to return to the UK during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Wendy Morton:**

We are working closely with local authorities, commercial airlines and other diplomatic missions to enable British people in Peru to get home. Our consular team is working around the clock to provide support, advice and information. The situation is fast moving, and our advice at this time is for British nationals to secure safe accommodation and to speak to their tour operator, airline and insurance company to discuss the options available to them.

## ■ Sahel and West Africa: Terrorism

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[29866\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the accuracy of the remarks by UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel to the UN Security Council on 8 January 2020 that countries in West Africa and the Sahel are experiencing unprecedented terrorist violence.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK is deeply concerned at the scale of instability in the Sahel, including terrorist violence. We are expanding the UK's development, diplomacy and defence engagement to address the impacts and drivers of conflict and poverty. This includes providing three CH-47 Chinook helicopters to French counter terrorism operation Barkhane, a UN peacekeeping deployment later this year, humanitarian aid, and longer-term efforts to improve governance and stability.

## ■ South Sudan: Capital Punishment

**Catherine West:**

[\[30858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations the Government has made to the South Sudanese Government on halting the death sentences of people detained under the age of 18.

**James Duddridge:**

We regularly raise our concerns about the use of the death penalty in South Sudan at senior levels, and will continue to do so. The UK has made consistently clear to the Government of South Sudan its opposition to the death penalty, in all circumstances. We monitor events in South Sudan closely and continue to encourage the Government of South Sudan to deliver on its international and domestic commitments. We urge the new cabinet to act with unity to fulfil its commitments on transitional justice and human rights under the revitalised peace agreement.



**■ Travel: Insurance****Dame Diana Johnson:** [\[31457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will issue a travel ban on all travel to destinations outside the UK to enable people unwilling to travel due to health conditions to make a claim on their travel insurance.

**Nigel Adams:**

Since 17 March, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised against all but essential travel globally. Travellers should check the details of their policy and speak to their insurance company about any claim they wish to make.

**■ USA: Coronavirus****Andrew Rosindell:** [\[29847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussion he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on steps taken by that country to tackle the spread of covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Prime Minister and the US President took part in a G7 leaders' call on 16 March. Members issued a joint statement of solidarity pledging to act together to resolve the health and economic risks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and to set the stage for a strong recovery of strong, sustainable economic growth and prosperity. In addition, we are in discussions with the US on how we can best coordinate our COVID-19 response in vulnerable countries and research into vaccine development. The British Government will continue to work closely with like-minded partners to ensure an effective, science-led response. Our 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.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Acute Beds: North West****Conor McGinn:** [\[30894\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many acute beds there are in each NHS hospital trust in the North West.

**Edward Argar:**

This information is not available in the format requested.

**■ Agency Nurses: Sick Pay****Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[29304\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure agency nurses are entitled to sick pay.



**Helen Whately:**

NHS Providers do not directly pay sick pay to agency workers as they are not employed by the trust. Agency workers are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP), with responsibility falling to the employing agency. When a rate is agreed with an agency, it includes sick pay entitlement within the total charge rate being invoiced to the trust.

The Department is working closely with the agency sector to ensure that these requirements are understood and honoured, and to ensure that no National Health Service workers are put at any disadvantage at this time.

Individual agency workers should contact their respective agencies or follow the guidance on the Government website for more information on the rules and guidance on statutory sick pay.

**■ Autism: Children****Mr Barry Sheerman:****[30680]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the merits of the policy in Sweden of screening children for autism aged 2.5 to 3 years old.

**Helen Whately:**

The United Kingdom National Screening Committee's (UK NSC) recommendation to not offer population screening for autism spectrum disorders in children is currently under review as per its published evidence review process. The UK NSC will look at all relevant published peer reviewed evidence since the last review in 2012.

The UK NSC will hold a public consultation on the evidence review later in 2020/21 and welcomes comments from members of the public and stakeholders. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/screening-recommendations.php>

**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[30681]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of waiting times in the autism diagnosis process.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[30682]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the early interventions offered by the NHS to autistic children.

**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[30683]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the level of support offered to the parents of autistic children (a) at and (b) after the point of initial diagnosis.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS Digital published statistics, on 14 November 2019, that present the number of new referrals to mental health services for which the referral reason was suspected

autism, as well as their waiting times to first appointment. These are Experimental Statistics and have been published by NHS Digital to involve users and stakeholders in the future development of the data, including work to improve the quality of the data. The data is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/autism-statistics/autism-statistics>

The NHS Long Term Plan, published on 7 January 2019, commits to supporting people with learning disabilities or autism or both by improving diagnostic pathways, reducing over-prescribing of medicines, and ensuring people have access to high-quality care and support in the community.

Over the next three years, autism diagnosis will be included alongside work with children and young people's mental health services to test and implement the most effective ways to reduce waiting times for specialist services. This will be a step towards achieving timely autism diagnostic assessments in line with best practice guidelines.

Included within the NHS Long Term Plan is a commitment that by 2023/24, children and young people with a learning disability, autism or both with the most complex needs will have a designated keyworker. In addition, together with local authority children's social care and education services and expert charities, NHS England and NHS Improvement will jointly develop packages of support for autistic children and their families throughout the diagnostic process.

## ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

**[31447]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure local authorities are able to support the care home sector.

**Helen Whately:**

We are providing £1.6 billion of additional funding to local authorities to assist them in their response to COVID-19. We expect the majority of this resilience funding will go to adult social care to meet increased demand and support providers and the workforce. In addition to this we are giving £1.3 billion to enhance the National Health Service discharge process which will get patients who no longer need urgent treatment home from hospitals safely and quickly.

In addition to COVID-19 funding, we announced that in 2020/21 we are providing councils with an additional £1.5 billion for adult and children's social care which will support local authorities to meet rising demand and continue to stabilise the social care system.

## ■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges

**Dan Jarvis:**

**[30071]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the financial effect on self-funded care home residents of recent increases in prices from care home providers.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The level of fees charged to people who fund their own care is a private contractual matter.

In the longer term, the Government is committed to establishing a fair and more sustainable basis for adult social care, in the face of future demographic challenge.

## ■ Carers

**Jeremy Hunt:**

**[31462]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of unpaid carers providing support to a family member.

**Helen Whately:**

This information is not held centrally. However, the 2011 Census indicates that about 10% of the population in England were providing informal care, equivalent to approximately 5.4 million people in 2011<sup>1</sup>.

The Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey suggests that just below 40% of carers provide care to a parent, and around 20% care for a spouse, partner or cohabitee within the same household<sup>2</sup>.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Official Labour Market Statistics, 2016/2017

<sup>2</sup> DWP, 2019. Family Resources Survey 2017/18

## ■ Coronavirus: Carers

**Fleur Anderson:**

**[30072]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish guidance on protecting vulnerable individuals from coronavirus for carers caring for (a) ill and (b) elderly people at home.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Published guidance on how carers can protect vulnerable individuals is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

The guidance highlights the importance of ensuring carers follow advice on good hygiene.

Further information is also available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance/covid-19-guidance-on-home-care-provision>

This guidance is aimed at those who support and deliver care to people in their own homes, setting out key messages to support planning and preparation in the event of an outbreak or widespread transmission of COVID-19.

We will continue to revise and update this guidance, as required.

## ■ Coronavirus: Lung Diseases

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:**

**[27944]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the situation relating to covid-19, what advice his Department is providing to parents of young children with chronic lung conditions; and whether those children can be removed from schooling.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 16 March 2020]:* Schools in the United Kingdom closed on Friday 20 March 2020. Only children of key workers, and some children that attend special schools, may continue to attend school after this date.

People who have been identified by their general practice as being high risk from COVID-19 infection will receive a letter from the National Health Service this week telling them what additional precautions they need to take. Guidance on social distancing and vulnerable people is available to view here at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

The stay at home guidance is available to view here at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Local Health Protection Teams from PHE will work with the Local Education Authority, headteachers, principals or management teams, to advise on the management of children, pupils, students or staff in relation to COVID-19.

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

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

## ■ Coronavirus: Members

**Andrea Jenkyns:**

**[28030]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue guidance to hon. Members and their staff in contact with vulnerable constituents on how to deal with the risk of covid-19 infection.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 16 March 2020]*: Public Health England (PHE) recommends that hon. Members and noble Lords, representing members of the public model good behaviour and follow public health advice on self-isolation issued by PHE.

Guidance on self-isolation for people with confirmed or possible COVID-19 infection is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

PHE recommends that the following general cold and flu precautions are taken to help prevent people from catching and spreading COVID-19. This includes covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve, not your hands, when you cough or sneeze. Putting used tissues in the bin straight away and washing your hands with soap and water often, using hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available. Avoiding close contact with people who are unwell, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces, and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

If a hon. Member or their staff thinks they have been exposed to a confirmed case, and they are worried about symptoms, they should call NHS 111. They should not go directly to their general practice or other healthcare environment.

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

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

**■ Coronavirus: Mental Health****Emma Hardy:****[30802]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional mental health support is being provided to vulnerable people who have to self isolate for extended periods of time.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Government recognises that social distancing and self-isolation are likely to increase the risk of loneliness and mental health issues.

Public Health England (PHE) have published guidance on social distancing for everyone in the United Kingdom and guidance on self-isolation and staying at home. These include a section on Mental Health and Wellbeing and how to protect older adults and vulnerable people. We are expecting PHE to publish further guidance on how members of the public can look after their mental health and where to get further support. PHE will also be publishing additional advice for the public on the Every Mind Matters website.

We are working with the voluntary sector and across Government to improve mental health support, such as helplines and community volunteering efforts, for those in self isolation.

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Off-payroll Working

**Justin Madders:** [\[29236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Edward Argar:**

In line with the off-payroll working rules as applicable to the public sector introduced in April 2017, the Department has carried out IR35 status determinations on contractors working for the Department where the legislation requires. New rules being implemented from April 2020 do not alter the requirements on public sector bodies to carry out assessments. It should be noted that due to COVID-19 these changes have now been pushed back to April 2021.

For 2019/20 the number of contractors working at the Department is very fluid given current work priorities but all contractors working with the Department are subject to IR35 determinations. Figures for previous financial years can be found in the Departmental Annual Report and Accounts.

## ■ Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group: Finance

**Robert Largan:** [\[29292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding will be allocated to Derby and Derbyshire CCG in (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22, (c) 2022-23 and (d) 2023-24.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England is responsible for the allocation of resources to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). Funding is distributed on the basis of a weighted capitation formula, informed by independent advice from the Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation, and population estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics.

NHS England published five-year CCG allocations 2019-20 to 2023-24 on 8 February 2019 at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/ccg-allocations-2019-20-to-2023-24-core-services/>

Final allocations after local adjustments captured by the formula for Derby and Derbyshire CCG in the years requested are set out in the following table.

£000's

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Revenue allocation	1,511	1,568	1,624	1,677

## ■ Doctors and Nurses: Derbyshire

**Robert Largan:**

[\[29291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time (a) doctors and (b) nurses were employed by the NHS in Derbyshire in (a) November 2010 and (b) November 2019.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS Digital publishes Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) workforce statistics. These include staff working in hospital trusts and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), but not staff working in primary care or in general practitioner surgeries, local authorities or other providers.

The following table shows the full time equivalent (FTE) number of doctors employed in National Health Service trusts in the local authority of Derbyshire as at November 2010 and 2019.

DOCTORS (FTE)		
	November 2010	November 2019
Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	310	402
Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust		25
Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	93	121
East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust		3
Derby City Primary Care Trust (PCT)	25	
Derbyshire County PCT	36	

The following table shows the FTE number of nurses and health visitors employed in NHS trusts in the local authority of Derbyshire as at November 2010 and 2019.

NURSES AND HEALTH VISITORS (FTE)		
	November 2010	November 2019
Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	671	848
Derbyshire Community Health		1,066

## NURSES AND HEALTH VISITORS (FTE)

Services NHS Foundation Trust

Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	652	854
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East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust	18	29
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Derby City PCT	282
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Derbyshire County PCT	993
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Staff transferred from Derbyshire County PCT to Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust in September 2011.

Staff transferred from Derby City PCT to Derby Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in April 2011.

Derby Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust acquired Burton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in July 2018 to form University Hospitals of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust and as such the latest figures cannot be accurately compared to 2010.

## ■ Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust: Finance

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[30213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

**Edward Argar:**

National Health Service providers (NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts) such as Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, are not funded centrally but instead fund their spending from income mostly received from NHS commissioners in return for the provision of healthcare services to their local population.

The NHS Long Term Plan, backed by the Government's funding of £33.9 billion in cash terms by 2023-24, has been developed to take the health system forward. As part of this the Government has set clear objectives for the NHS in the form of five financial tests, including a financial sustainability commitment to return the provider sector to balance in 2020-21.

## ■ Encephalitis

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[29219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that NHS staff are trained in the treatment of encephalitis.



**Helen Whately:**

Training programmes for healthcare professionals must meet the standards set by the regulatory body for their profession.

Employers in the health system are responsible for ensuring that their staff are trained to the required standards to deliver appropriate treatment for patients.

Decisions about the National Health Service workforce in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are a matter for the devolved administrations of those countries.

**General Practitioners: Negligence****Jessica Morden:**[\[30715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will discuss with the Royal College of Nursing the need to ensure that GP's medical negligence insurance is extended to provide cover in the event GPs are required to provide medical support for neighbouring surgeries during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Arrangements are in place to indemnify healthcare professionals through one of the following state indemnity schemes:

- The Clinical Negligence Scheme for Trusts, if they are engaged by a National Health Service trust to provide NHS services; and
- Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice, if they are engaged by a general practitioner (GP) practice to provide NHS services (i.e. a GP practice, the main business of which is the provision of primary medical services for the NHS).

During the outbreak, existing indemnity arrangements will continue to cover the vast majority of NHS services, including staff working in a place that is not their ordinary place of work. To ensure there are no gaps in indemnity coverage, the Coronavirus Bill seeks additional powers to provide clinical negligence indemnity arising from NHS activities related to the COVID-19 outbreak, where there is no existing indemnity arrangement in place.

Departmental officials have discussed COVID-19 and indemnity with the Royal College of Nursing, and will continue this engagement.

**Home Care Services: Charities****Rosie Cooper:**[\[30710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made a recent comparative assessment of trends in the value of contracts for charities providing regulated care and the UK Homecare Association minimum price for homecare; and if he will make a statement.

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[30711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the ability of local authority care commissioners to pay the UK Homecare Association recommended minimum price for homecare.

**Helen Whately:**

The Department has not made an assessment of the ability of local authority care commissioners to pay UK Homecare Association (UKHCA) recommended minimum price for homecare, neither has the Department made a comparative assessment of trends in the value of contracts for charities providing regulated care and the UKHCA minimum price for homecare.

The Care Act 2014 placed duties on local authorities to shape their local markets so that there is an adequate supply of provision which ensures all adult social care service users have a choice of high-quality services.

As a result, in the case of state-funded care, local authorities negotiate individually with care providers to achieve a balance of quality, effectiveness and value for money for the public purse.

The level of fees charged to people who fund their own care is a private contractual arrangement.

## ■ Hospitals: Discharges

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[29254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients in hospital beds are medically fit to be discharged from hospital care but are unable to be discharged for other reasons; and what steps he is taking to reduce that number.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[29255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients who have been medically fit to be discharged have subsequently become medically unfit for discharge due to the delay in the discharging process, in the last 12 months; and what steps he is taking to reduce the discharge time for patients who are medically fit to be discharged.

**Helen Whately:**

Delayed Transfer of Care data submitted nationally is aggregated and not at patient-level. Therefore, it is not possible to identify how many patients have experienced deterioration in their clinical position due to delayed discharge.

In January 2020 there were an average of 5,182 people experiencing a delayed discharge each day. There are currently (on average) 1,418 fewer people delayed in a National Health Service bed every day than there were at the February 2017 baseline position of 6,660 people delayed per day.

This year the Government provided an additional £240 million for adult social care to help reduce delays in patients being discharged from hospital by providing social care support.

## ■ **Mental Health Act 1983 Independent Review**

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

[\[30679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish its response to the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act, published December 2018; and what plans he has to implement the recommendations of that Review.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have committed to publishing a White Paper which will set out the Government's response to Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review of the Mental Health Act.

We will publish our White Paper as soon as it is possible to do so. Our intention is that this White Paper will pave the way for reform to the Mental Health Act, and tackle issues addressed by the Review. We will ensure that people subject to the Act receive better care and have a much greater say in that care.

We will consult publicly on our proposals and we will bring forward a Bill to amend the Act when parliamentary time allows.

## ■ **Mental Health: Public Consultation**

**Mick Whitley:**

[\[28777\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) the broadest number of people and (b) members of the Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities participate in the public consultation on the mental health White Paper.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have drawn on the expertise of service users, carers and professionals, as we have considered the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act's recommendations.

Once our White Paper on the Mental Health Act is published, we plan to work with third sector organisations, including service user and carer representative organisations and networks, to support people to engage with the public consultation process, in particular with those who have had direct experience of the Act, and those groups who are disproportionately represented under the Act.

As part of the online consultation, we will be collecting demographic information, which will allow us to monitor who is responding so that we can ensure that the consultation reaches a broad range of people and specific groups.

## ■ NHS Trusts: Contracts for Services

**James Murray:**

**[30205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue guidance to employers who provide contracted services to NHS Trusts to provide full pay to staff members self-isolating from the first day of isolation.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* No one should be penalised for doing the right thing.

As part of our emergency COVID-19 legislation measures, Statutory Sick Pay will be paid from day one of sickness to support those affected by coronavirus. Those on zero-hour contracts will also receive Statutory Sick Pay or will be able to claim Universal Credit dependent on their circumstances.

Those who aren't entitled to sick pay, including those who are self-employed, can make a claim to Universal Credit and/or new-style Employment and Support Allowance.

## ■ NHS: Coronavirus

**Conor McGinn:**

**[31660]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what plans he has to postpone the reorganisation of (a) clinical commissioning groups and (b) the NHS.

**Edward Argar:**

It is for NHS England to approve the mergers of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). There are a number of CCGs merging on 1 April 2020, and plans to do so are well advanced. NHS England have, so far, not indicated an intention to pause these mergers.

The Government also remains committed to considering legislative changes to support the NHS implement the Long Term Plan and will bring forward proposals in due course.

## ■ NHS: Remote Working

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

**[31560]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that NHS employees working in non-clinical settings are able to work from home where operationally possible.

**Helen Whately:**

Individual National Health Service organisations, as employers, will be working on how they can support non-clinical staff to work at home wherever possible, in line with their Business Continuity Plans and Government recommendations.

NHS Employers is publishing HR guidance on this area, which states that staff who are self-isolating but are otherwise well enough to work should agree with their line manager whether working from home is a possibility. Line managers should consider the work that it is possible to do remotely, and organisations should consider developing/updating their local homeworking policies.

## ■ **NHS: Standards**

**Jack Lopresti:**

[\[28056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of clinical commissioning groups on making the process of (a) accessing NHS capital funding and (b) making improvements to NHS services (i) easier and (ii) more efficient; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement have regular discussions with representatives of clinical commissioning groups about capital investment in community and primary care. We have already implemented changes to improve the capital business case development and approvals processes and make it more efficient. This includes establishing a joint Departmental and NHS England and NHS Improvement Investment Committee.

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement work closely with commissioners and providers of NHS services to support service improvement.

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[30712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to change the provisions in the NHS constitution in relation to the clinically led NHS access standards review.

**Edward Argar:**

The NHS England and NHS Improvement Clinically-led Review of Access Standards is still underway. The existing National Health Service performance standards remain in place, and the Government will respond to the recommendations for change when they are made.

## ■ **Pregnancy: Carbon Monoxide**

**Liz Twist:**

[\[28653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department provides to the health profession on treating (a) pregnant women and (b) unborn children for carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

Guidance on the management of treatment of pregnant women and unborn children for carbon monoxide poisoning is provided and accessible to healthcare professionals on TOXBASE and the United Kingdom Teratology Information Service (UKTIS) website.

If carbon monoxide poisoning is suspected, the initial management is the same as for a non-pregnant patient and consists of identifying and removing the patient from the source of exposure, followed by administration of high concentration oxygen. The patient's carboxyhaemoglobin concentration should be measured initially and monitored. Treatment may need to be continued for longer in pregnant patients compared to a non-pregnant patient.

It is advised that all cases of carbon monoxide poisoning in pregnancy are discussed with the UKTIS.

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

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[29970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had since 1 March 2020 with the chief executive of Royal Shrewsbury Future Fit programme on its A&E service figures.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has not had discussions since 1 March 2020 with the Chief Executive of Royal Shrewsbury Future Fit programme on its accident and emergency service figures.

■ **Surgery: Romford**

**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[29805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS surgery appointments were cancelled in Romford constituency in the last year for which figures are available.

**Edward Argar:**

This information is not available in the format requested.

**HOME OFFICE**

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

**Elliot Colburn:** [\[901693\]](#)

What steps she is taking to tackle anti-social behaviour.

**Kit Malthouse:**

We are committed to protect communities from the menace of anti-social behaviour. That is why we have enhanced the powers available to tackle anti-social behaviour through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The powers are flexible, allowing local areas to tailor their response according to the circumstances. They are best-placed to understand their communities' needs and the most appropriate response.

We keep anti-social behaviour under review through the ASB Strategic Board which brings together key partners.

**Miss Sarah Dines:**

[\[901698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to increase the number of police officers.

**Kit Malthouse:**

This Government recognises the challenges of policing in the modern age, which is why we are increasing the number of police officers across all forces.

The police funding settlement for 2020/21 sets out the biggest increase in funding for the policing system since 2010.

This Government is also delivering on the people's priorities by recruiting 20,000 additional police officers over the next three years and we are giving police forces £700 million for the recruitment of 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021

**Tim Loughton:**

[\[901700\]](#)

What discussions she has had with the Independent Office for Police Conduct on recent reports into the handling of Operation Midland.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The failings of the Metropolitan Police Service in Operation Midland had devastating consequences for those falsely accused and also risked damaging the confidence of the public.

That is why the Home Secretary requested, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services conduct an inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service to ensure lessons have been learned.

We will continue to seek assurances from the Metropolitan Police that policy and practice is being changed so the failures are not repeated.

**Bob Blackman:**

[\[901701\]](#)

What steps she has taken through her immigration policies to enable religious workers from India to staff places of worship in the UK.

**Chris Philp:**

This Government recognises the importance of faith across our communities in the UK, welcoming the value added by members of religious institutions from across the world.

This is reflected by dedicated immigration routes for Ministers of Religion and Religious Workers. These enable religious ministers and workers, including those from India, to live and practice their faith in the UK.

**■ Drugs: Misuse****Alan Brown:** [\[30024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which (a) Scottish constituency hon. Members, (b) English constituency hon. Members and (c) Members of the Scottish Parliament were invited to the Government's drugs summit held in Glasgow on 27 February 2020.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The following UK and devolved administration parliamentarians attended the UK Drugs Summit in their role as ministers: Kit Malthouse MP; Alister Jack MP; Jo Churchill MP; Joe Fitzpatrick MSP; Julie Morgan AM; and Robin Swann MLA. Vaughan Gething AM and Naomi Long MLA were invited in their ministerial capacities but were unable to attend.

In addition, Pete Wishart MP was invited as Chair of the UK Parliament Scottish Affairs Select Committee but was unable to attend.

**■ Home Office: Written Questions****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[30104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to Question 25184 on shoplifting, tabled on 3 March 2020 by the hon. Member for Slough.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The response given to UIN 25184 was answered on the 23rd March 2020.

**■ Immigration: Coronavirus****Catherine West:** [\[30793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of waiving the requirement for migrants to sign in regularly during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kevin Foster:**

At present we are looking to pragmatically maintain processes where possible and have put in place appropriate measures to safeguard people against the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

The situation is being monitored closely and we will make appropriate adjustments to requirements where necessary.

**■ Metropolitan Police Service's Handling of Non-recent Sexual Offence Investigations Alleged against Persons of Public Prominence Independent Review****Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[29208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Metropolitan Police have taken in response to the Henriques report on Operation Midland.



**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[29209]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether any disciplinary action has been taken against serving or retired police officers as a result of the findings of the Henriques Report on Operation Midland.

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[29210]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of publishing guidance on police forces designating people who report allegations of sexual abuse as complainants rather than victims.

**Kit Malthouse:**

On 13 March 2020 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue

Services published its report, commissioned by the Home Secretary, assessing the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)'s

progress in learning from Operation Midland. The report is available at

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/news/news-feed/met-police-slow-to-learn-lessons-after-operation-midland/>.

A number of referrals have been made to the Independent Office for Police Conduct in relation to Operation Midland. The IOPC has not found a case to answer for any officer but has issued a number of learning recommendations – these can be found at <https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/recommendations/national-recommendations-and-recommendations-made-metropolitan-police-service>.

“Victim” is a commonly accepted term across a wide range of guidance, including the statutory Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims’ Code’) which sets out the services that victims should receive from the criminal justice system following the crime. The Government does not believe that people who report being the victim of sexual abuse should have their allegations treated differently from those who report other offences.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Theft

**Dan Jarvis:**

[30768]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken to help prevent the export of stolen vehicles.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The Government recognises the distressing and disruptive impact vehicle theft can have on victims. We are working with the police, industry and other partners to ensure the response to these crimes is as robust as it can be.

Operational activity to tackle the export of stolen vehicles should be intelligence led and the Government expects the police and other law enforcement agencies to share information to prevent it.

## ■ Nottinghamshire Police: Stun Guns

**Lee Anderson:** [\[28763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to ensure that tasers will be available to all Nottinghamshire Police Force officers who request one.

**Kit Malthouse:**

The use of TASER® remains an operational matter for Chief Officers to decide the number of TASER® and the number of TASER® officers deployed based on their assessments of the threats and risks in their areas.

The Home Secretary will provide £6.7 million ringfenced funding to police forces in England and Wales to purchase 8,155 TASER® devices. This could mean more than 8,000 more officers will be able to carry TASER®.

A total of 41 forces submitted bids and all will receive the full amount of money they requested. This will help forces to better protect themselves and the public from harm.

## ■ Police: Biometrics

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[28590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the implications for her policies of the recommendation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission of the 12 March 2019 that the use by the police of automated facial recognition technology should cease until independent impact assessments and consultations have been carried out.

**Kit Malthouse:**

How the police use technology to protect the public is an operational matter for them. The Government supports the police use of new technologies like facial recognition to identify and locate criminals, in accordance with the law. The High Court has ruled there is a clear and sufficient legal framework, including the Equality Act, for police use of live facial recognition in the UK.

## ■ Shoplifting

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[25184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps she has taken to reduce the number of shoplifting incidents in (a) Slough and (b) the UK.

**Kit Malthouse:**

Through the National Retail Crime Steering Group, we bring retailers and police together to tackle retail crime. We are encouraging closer local partnerships between police and retailers so that better crime prevention measures are put in place by retailers and local police respond effectively to crimes reported.

In 2014 the government also changed the law to enable cases of theft from a shop of goods with a value of £200 or less to be dealt with as summary-only offences. This

enables certain cases of shop theft to be dealt with as swiftly and efficiently as possible, enabling the police to prosecute uncontested cases in the future.

It is for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, as operational leaders and elected local representatives, to decide how best to respond to individual crimes and local crime priorities but to help ensure that the police have the resources they need to do so, we are recruiting 20,000 officers over the next three years. In October 2019, Home Office confirmed officer allocations for every force in England and Wales in the first year of the uplift. Thames Valley Police has been allocated 183 officers in year one of the uplift, to be recruited by the end of March 2021. Decisions on the allocation of officers for years two and three are yet to be taken. More information can be found on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-announces-first-wave-of-20000-police-officer-uplift>

## ■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

**Tommy Sheppard:**

**[30817]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that people who have been granted a visa to enter the UK but are not able to travel during that period because of the covid-19 pandemic are able to enter the UK once those travel restrictions are lifted without needing to reapply for a further visa.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Government recognises that travel plans have been and may continue to be severely disrupted.

This is one of a number of issues the Home Office is working through and we are taking a pragmatic approach to ensure individuals are not penalised as a result of issues arising from the covid-19 pandemic which are beyond their control

## ■ Visas: Coronavirus

**Alison Thewliss:**

**[30886]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will automatically extend visas due to expire during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kevin Foster:**

We are taking a pragmatic approach to visa extensions due to the coronavirus outbreak.

We continue to monitor the situation closely in all countries and are keeping this under constant review. Individuals who are following official advice will not be penalised as a result of issues arising from the covid-19 pandemic which are beyond their control.

**■ Visas: Overseas Visitors****Anneliese Dodds:** [29280]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much revenue accrued to the public purse from visit visa applications which went on to be refused, in each of the last four quarters; and how much of that revenue was profit.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office does not hold the information in the format requested. Visa income is not differentiated between the various categories in which they are received and so our financial systems will not allow us to provide this level of detail.

Visa and immigration income data is published annually in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts. See page 137 of the Home Office 2018-19 Annual Report and Accounts for the most recent disclosure of visa and immigration income.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/807126/6.5571\\_HO\\_Annual\\_Report\\_201920\\_WEB.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807126/6.5571_HO_Annual_Report_201920_WEB.PDF)

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention****Hilary Benn:** [30685]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to paragraph 1.185 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, when he plans to publish the details of the operation of the £1 billion fund.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Government officials are working hard to finalise the operation details of the £1 billion grant fund to remove and replace unsafe non-ACM cladding from high-rise residential blocks. This information will be published shortly.

**■ Homes England****John Healey:** [29201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data will be regularly published by Homes England and to what schedule.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Homes England are committed to the government's transparency agenda and regularly publishes information which includes:

REPORT	PUBLICATION FREQUENCY	CONTENT
Housing Statistics	Bi-annual	The report covers housing delivery, outlining the housing starts and completions within the period.
Help to Buy Housing Statistics	Annual	The report covers performance and financial delivery data.
Annual Report and Financial Statements	Annual	The report covers performance and financial delivery data.
Expenditure Transparency Report	Monthly	This report covers all transactions above £250.
<a href="#">Homes England Register of Interests</a>	Annually and as additions are made.	Register of interests for the members of the Homes England board, committees and management team.
Help to Buy Equity Loan Statistics	Quarterly	This report covers quarterly data on the <a href="#">Help to Buy equity loan scheme</a> , setting out the number of homes purchased and value of equity loans issued under the scheme in England.
Help to Buy Loan Repayment Statistics	Annual	The report covers data on the repayment of Help to Buy Loans.

## ■ Housing

**Tom Hunt:**

**[29273]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that local planning authorities accelerate the delivery of housing set out in their local plans.

**Christopher Pincher:**

In 2018 we introduced a Housing Delivery Test and published the 2019 measurement on 13 February 2020.

On 12 March the Secretary of State set out this Government's plans for housing and planning following the announcements at Budget. This includes continuing to raise the Housing Delivery test threshold to 75 per cent in November 2020, setting a

deadline for all local authorities to have an up-to-date local plan by December 2023, and consulting on reforming the New Homes Bonus to reward delivery.

In addition, in the Spring we will be publishing bold and ambitious Planning White Paper which will propose measures to accelerate planning.

## ■ Landlords

**Luke Pollard:** [\[29293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many names there are on the Rogue Landlords Database as of 1 March 2020.

**Christopher Pincher:**

There were 25 entries and 24 names on the database of Rogue Landlords and Property Agents as of 1 March 2020.

## ■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

**Neil Coyle:** [\[31522\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timescale is for the allocation of funding from the £500 million fund for local authorities to support individuals affected by covid-19, announced in Budget 2020.

**Neil Coyle:** [\[31523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how the £500 million in funding announced in Budget 2020 to help people affected by covid-19 will be allotted to local authorities; and what steps his Department will take to ensure that it is allocated on the basis of need.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The Government will provide English councils with £500 million to support financially vulnerable residents, and expects that most of the funding will be used to provide additional council tax relief. The Government will set out further details and allocations for individual authorities in the coming days.

## ■ Local Government: Coronavirus

**John Cryer:** [\[29814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with local authorities on Government financial support for local authorities to tackle covid-19.

**Christopher Pincher:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* Local authorities have a vital role to play in protecting and supporting their communities during the Covid-19 outbreak.

My Department is in regular contact with the sector about the support they are offering communities. Already the Government is supporting individuals by extending sick pay for those advised to self-isolate and making it easier for them to access

benefits. For businesses, we are increasing business rates relief, introducing a new guarantee loan scheme, and developing more bespoke arrangements for firms to repay outstanding tax liabilities.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Off-payroll Working**

**Justin Madders:**

[\[29296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Luke Hall:**

In MHCLG, we can confirm that we assess the employment status for tax purposes of every contractor according to the 2017 IR35 amendment. We are currently engaged with 42 contractors, of which 19 are currently in scope of the IR35 tax legislation.

■ **Night Shelters: Domestic Abuse**

**John Cryer:**

[\[29818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what discussions the Government has had with local authorities on emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence.

**Luke Hall:**

My Department is working closely with local authorities and the sector to minimise the risk for vulnerable people and those currently unable to self-isolate.

Government officials are in discussion with domestic abuse service providers who are undertaking their own contingency planning, in line with advice from Public Health England, to keep safe accommodation support services open and available to victims of domestic abuse and their children.

£1.6 billion of the £5 billion Covid-19 fund announced in the Budget will go to local authorities to help them respond to Covid-19 pressures across all the services they deliver. This includes increasing support for services helping the most vulnerable.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus**

**Florence Eshalomi:**

[\[30911\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to place temporary restrictions on the use of Section 21 and Section 8 evictions for tenants affected by covid-19.

**Christopher Pincher:**

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.

More information on these plans can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/complete-ban-on-evictions-and-additional-protection-for-renters>.

**Florence Eshalomi:**

**[30913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has ban rent rises in the private rented sector as part of the emergency measures put in place during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Landlords cannot in general increase rent without their tenants' permission and there are no plans to change the rules regarding rent rises at this stage. We will protect renters and landlords affected by coronavirus through a radical package of measures announced on 18 March, including emergency legislation to prevent landlords from starting eviction proceedings for at least a three-month period.

More information on these plans can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/complete-ban-on-evictions-and-additional-protection-for-renters>.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### ■ Coronavirus: Older People

**Dan Carden:**

**[30008]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to protect older people from covid-19 throughout the world.

**James Cleverly:**

The Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting the UK's global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19 and help the most vulnerable, including protecting older people and people with disabilities. This includes the UK committing up to £241 million of UK Aid to support the global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. As part of this, the UK is providing £10 million to the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) Emergency Flash Appeal.

DFID recognises that older people around the world may be vulnerable to acquiring diseases such as COVID-19 and strong health systems are vital to ensuring health security. The UK works to strengthen health systems through our work in-country, as well as through our support to WHO and other global health initiatives. Additionally, the WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, and Operational Planning Guidelines outlines the public health measures that need to be taken to support countries to prepare for and respond to COVID-19, with special considerations to be given to marginalised groups, including older people.



## ■ Dengue Fever

**Andrew Rosindell:** [29854]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much Official Development Assistance his Department has allocated to programmes tackling Dengue Fever in 2018-19.

**Andrew Rosindell:** [29861]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what his Department's total spend on combatting Dengue Fever was in 2018-19.

**Wendy Morton:**

There is no international sector code for spend on dengue fever, but data on UK aid expenditure is published each year and can be accessed from the link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-final-uk-aid-spend-2018>

DFID's health focus is to improve the provision of basic health services for the poorest by supporting health systems strengthening, health worker capacity and access to essential medicines and equipment. Increasing coverage, access and quality will strengthen health services to address all health problems including communicable diseases.

DFID also provides funding to TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. TDR helps support and influence efforts to combat dengue and other Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).

## ■ Department for International Trade: Off-payroll Working

**Justin Madders:** [29243]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how many contractors working for her Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Department for International Development does not hold this data, and the cost of extraction would be too high.

## ■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

**Dan Carden:** [30007]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to help ensure that a covid-19 vaccine developed with support funded by the international development budget is affordable for developing countries.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK is at the forefront of supporting the science-led approach to tackling COVID-19 around the world and has invested £65 million so far into COVID-19 research.

This includes investment in research and development of a possible vaccine, as well as more immediate gains such as rapid diagnostics and therapeutics.

An effective vaccine will be vital to the long-term control of the outbreak. To date the UK has invested £40 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), specifically for COVID-19 vaccine development, alongside our existing support to their research. DFID will work with CEPI and others to ensure that any vaccine candidates are affordable and accessible to developing countries.

We have also made available up to £150 million to the International Monetary Fund to help developing countries meet their debt repayments so that they can focus their available resources on tackling coronavirus. This will enable developing countries to direct greater resources to their healthcare efforts, helping prevent the virus from spreading around the world.

Our response builds on the UK's longstanding record of supporting countries across the globe to prepare for large disease outbreaks. This includes being the largest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Between 2016 and 2020, DFID provided £1.44 billion of support to GAVI. With UK support they have vaccinated 76 million children between 2016 and 2020, saving 1.4 million lives from vaccine preventable diseases.

**Dan Carden:**

**[30009]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what advice (a) her Department and (b) the UK Government Coronavirus International Taskforce is providing to low income countries on covid-19 herd immunity.

**Dan Carden:**

**[30011]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the Government has shared its covid-19 (a) scientific model, (b) evidence and (c) herd immunity conclusions with governments of countries that are recipients of UK (i) aid and (ii) development assistance.

**James Cleverly:**

The Department for International Development (DFID) is supporting the UK's global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19 and help the most vulnerable. G7 leaders made an important statement on Monday on the need to coordinate a global response to COVID-19. DFID is working with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to respond to international requests for technical support in managing COVID-19.

This includes supporting countries with preparedness and disease control interventions to make sure we save lives and protect the vulnerable. We are connecting technical experts in partner countries with epidemiologists and public health experts. We are also sharing information that the UK is using to model the pandemic with others.

## ■ Developing Countries: Health

**Wendy Chamberlain:**

[\[29979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans she has to discuss the development of the health strengthening systems position paper with representatives of third-sector non-governmental organisations.

**Wendy Morton:**

The UK government's manifesto committed to build on existing efforts to end preventable deaths of mothers, new-born babies and children by 2030. Our support for the poorest countries to strengthen their health systems, scale up quality health services and achieve universal health coverage is central to this commitment. We will continue to discuss plans for publication of the health system strengthening position paper with our civil society colleagues, who have contributed valuable feedback to earlier drafts.

## ■ Palestinians: Textbooks

**Stephen Crabb:**

[\[28578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with his EU counterparts on the forthcoming publication of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research's preliminary report into Palestinian Authority school textbooks undertaken on behalf of the EU; and what representations she has made on publishing that report.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. We funded work to develop the methodology for an independent textbook Review sponsored by our European partners. We expect an interim report by June, with a full report later in the year. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the Review. The issue was most recently raised on 18 February by the UK Consul General Jerusalem with the EU Representative in Jerusalem.

**Scott Benton:**

[\[30196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what estimate she has made of the amount of UK funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency that was disbursed on education using Palestinian Authority approved textbooks in the latest period for which figures are available.

**James Cleverly:**

In 2018/19 DFID provided £65.5 million to UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) including £47.5 million to UNRWA's programme budget, which includes their education programme. On average UNRWA spends 58% of this budget on education enabling UNRWA to educate more than 533,000 children, half of whom are girls. Around 325,000 children attend schools in Gaza and the West Bank.

**■ World Health Organisation: Finance****Dan Carden:** [\[30010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans she has to increase medium-term funding for the World Health Organisation until the end of 2020 to tackle covid-19.

**James Cleverly:**

The UK provides around £120 million each year to the World Health Organization (WHO). To support the UK's global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19 and help the most vulnerable the UK has provided an additional £10 million to the WHO's Emergency Flash Appeal to help prevent the spread of this outbreak by supporting developing countries to rapidly identify and care for patients with symptoms. In addition, experts funded by UK aid will be deployed to the WHO to help coordinate the international response.

We are keeping further international funding under regular review.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Department for International Trade: Off-payroll Working****Justin Madders:** [\[29244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many contractors working for her Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Conor Burns:**

All off-payroll public sector staff are subject to being checked against IR35 legislation which came into effect in 2017. New legislative changes for off-payroll workers were confirmed with an implementation by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 with implications for both public and private sector companies. The Government have since announced that this implementation will be delayed until 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The Department for International Trade (DIT) intend to be compliant with the new IR35 rules by the revised date of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Currently, there are 182 workers in scope of IR35 and 141 outside the scope of IR35 within DIT. For UK Export Finance (UKEF), there are currently **no** contractors in scope of IR35. There are currently 14 contractors working for UKEF who fall outside the scope of IR35.

**JUSTICE****■ Disability and Special Educational Needs: Tribunals****Catherine West:** [\[30015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal hearings were adjourned due to a lack of available judiciary in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available.

**Chris Philp:**

In the current last 12 months, 25% of hearings were postponed because of the lack of available judiciary. The monthly figures are shown below.

	<b>POSTPONED FOR LACK OF JUDGE</b>	<b>PROCEEDED</b>	<b>TOTAL CASES</b>	<b>% CANCELLED</b>
<b>Mar-19</b>	91	373	464	<b>20%</b>
<b>Apr-19</b>	45	289	334	<b>13%</b>
<b>May-19</b>	100	304	404	<b>25%</b>
<b>Jun-19</b>	138	317	455	<b>30%</b>
<b>Jul-19</b>	75	399	474	<b>16%</b>
<b>Aug-19</b>	7	207	214	<b>3%</b>
<b>Sep-19</b>	129	363	492	<b>26%</b>
<b>Oct-19</b>	150	370	520	<b>29%</b>
<b>Nov-19</b>	159	527	686	<b>23%</b>
<b>Dec-19</b>	175	308	483	<b>36%</b>
<b>Jan-20</b>	186	400	586	<b>32%</b>
<b>Feb-20</b>	166	406	572	<b>29%</b>
<b>Total</b>	1421	4263	5684	<b>25%</b>

**Catherine West:**[\[30016\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal resulted in a change to the school or college named in Section I of a child or young person's Education, Health and Care Plan, in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

**Chris Philp:**

Under the HM Courts & Tribunals Service's Records Retention and Disposal Policy all electronic records are deleted after three years. The available records show that:

- Of the 289 Section I appeals disposed of at hearing in 2018/19, the Local Authority was ordered to amend the school or college or to name a school or college in 54 cases.
- Of the 191 Section I appeals disposed of at hearing in 2017/18, the Local Authority was ordered to amend the school or college or to name a school or college in 29 cases.

- Of the 103 Section I appeals disposed of at hearing in 2016/17, the Local Authority was ordered to amend the school or college or to name a school or college in 2 cases.

## ■ Ministry of Justice: Off-payroll Working

**Justin Madders:**

[\[29234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Chris Philp:**

In the Ministry of Justice, we can confirm that we assess the employment status for tax purposes of contractors according to the 2017 IR35 amendment. We are currently engaged with 297 contractors through the cross-government framework for the supply of workers, of which 179 are currently in scope of the IR35 tax legislation.

## ■ Prison Officers: Safety

**Antony Higginbotham:**

[\[29258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that prison officers are safe at work.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Prison Officers are some of our finest public servants, and we do not underestimate the challenges faced by everyone working in prisons. We are committed to making prisons a safe place to work and providing prison officers with the right support, training and tools to empower them to do their jobs.

We have recruited more than 4,300 new prison officers over the last two years, and this has given us the capacity to implement the key worker role which will help us deal with emerging threats and to improve safety. We're also investing £2.75 billion to transform the estate, to make prisons safer and cut crime behind bars.

We are rolling out body worn cameras, police-style restraints and PAVA incapacitant spray to prison officers to help them do their job more safely.

In light of recent developments concerning Covid-19, we have put in place robust contingency plans in consultation with Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care. This includes specific advice for staff on steps they should take should they become unwell, or if they have been exposed to Covid-19.

## ■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

**Richard Burgon:**

[\[30078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Government news story of 12 March 2020 on preparedness to deal with coronavirus in prisons, how many prisoners have been (a) placed in isolation due to possible infection with, (b) tested for and (c) diagnosed with coronavirus on each day since the appearance of that disease.

**Richard Burgon:**

**[30079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Government news story of 12 March 2020 on preparedness to deal with coronavirus in prisons, how many prison officers have (a) self-isolated, (b) been tested for and (c) been diagnosed with coronavirus on each day since the appearance of that disease.

**Richard Burgon:**

**[30080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Government news story of 12 March 2020 on preparedness to deal with coronavirus in prisons, how many non-operational prison staff have (a) self-isolated, (b) been tested for and (c) been diagnosed with coronavirus on each day since the appearance of that disease.

**Lucy Frazer:**

HMPPS is doing everything it can to prevent the spread of COVID-19, based on the very latest scientific and medical advice. We are working closely with Public Health England, the NHS and the Department of Health and Social Care to manage the challenges we face.

The safety and wellbeing of staff, prisoners and visitors is paramount and at the heart of our approach.

We have robust contingency plans in place, which are informed by advice from Public Health authorities. Part of our contingency planning involves the ability to deploy staff flexibly. We are taking steps to boost staff availability so that we can look after prisoners properly and minimise the impacts on regimes of staff absences. This includes, as and when required, operational staff currently working in headquarters being redeployed to prisons to support the service.

In line with broader clinical advice, HMPPS has introduced a procedure for the protective isolation of individuals in prison custody when it is considered that they may be potentially infected with the virus.

We are closely monitoring the number of prison officers, prisoners and others who are reported as self-isolating, are being tested for and have been diagnosed with COVID-19. We will publish COVID-19 management information once we have assured its robustness, in a fast-changing picture.

## ■ Prisoners: Females

**Catherine West:**

**[30052]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many women (a) known to be and (b) suspected of being pregnant were subject to physical restraint in each prison in each of the last five years.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The information requested is not centrally monitored as a matter of routine, and so could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.



Under existing prison policy, force can be used when it is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to the seriousness of the circumstances. Prison Governors monitor all Use of Force Incidents as and when they arise in their establishment to ensure they are policy compliant. In terms of pregnant women, Guidance (Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 1600) states that 'In the case of a planned use of force on a female prisoner who is known or suspected of being pregnant, a full risk assessment must be carried out and staff must be fully briefed before any C&R techniques are employed.'

Pregnant women in prison have individual care and management plans. These are communicated to multidisciplinary staff managing an individual's case, including staff who may discharge Use of Force.

A different PSI sets out the current policy on Mother and Baby Units (MBUs), and the Policy Guidance adjoining the Women's Policy Framework 2018 contains comprehensive operational guidance on perinatal support to women in custody. This policy is under review, and seeks to improve the support that is available to these cohorts across the board. This will include greater practical advice for staff, increased training, and more. It is due for publication in the summer of this year.

In 2019 NHSE/I provided Health and Justice Commissioners with funding for improved perinatal health provision. This is being used to develop bespoke perinatal pathways in each prison, and is being rolled out throughout 2020.

## ■ Reoffenders

**Antony Higginbotham:**

**[29259]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of offenders convicted of serious offences have reoffended within 12 months of their release from prison in the latest period for which figures are available.

**Lucy Frazer:**

This Government is committed to reducing reoffending by ensuring all offenders have the tools they need to turn their backs on crime. The Ministry of Justice regards every crime as serious, so does not group offence types on that basis. The 'Proven Reoffending Type Data Tool, January to December 2016, England and Wales' can be used to look at the various reoffending rates for specific offence categories:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/797424/Reoffence\\_type\\_data\\_tool.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/797424/Reoffence_type_data_tool.xlsx)

As an example, from this toolkit, the relevant reoffending rates for a selection of index offences were:

### PROVEN REOFFENDING OF ADULT OFFENDERS RELEASED FROM CUSTODY, BY SELECTED INDEX OFFENCE TYPE (JANUARY-DECEMBER 2016 COHORT)

Offence	Number of Reoffenders	Reoffending Rate (%)
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**PROVEN REOFFENDING OF ADULT OFFENDERS RELEASED FROM CUSTODY, BY SELECTED INDEX OFFENCE TYPE (JANUARY-DECEMBER 2016 COHORT)**

Violence against the person	3,505	36.1%
Sexual	356	14.1%
Robbery	830	31.4%
Drug	1,387	23.5%
Possession of Weapons	1,212	45.7%

**Note:**

1. The January-December 2016 cohort in the table above refers to all adult offenders in the calendar year who were released from custody. A proven reoffence is then defined as any offence committed in a one-year follow-up period that resulted in a court conviction or caution in this timeframe or a further six month waiting period to allow time for cases to progress through the courts.
2. The index offence is the proven offence that leads to an offender being included in the cohort.

**■ Sentencing: Gender Recognition****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**[\[29248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effect on the number of custodial sentences imposed of the requirement for Gender Recognition Certificates when imposing a custodial prison sentence.

**Chris Philp:**

There is no requirement for Gender Recognition Certificates (GRCs) when imposing a custodial prison sentence. The Government's policy in relation to the care and management of individuals who are transgender in custody, including those holding a GRC, was published in July 2019 and is available on Govt.UK. The number of transgender offenders in custody is published annually as part of the HMPPS Equality Statistics.

**NORTHERN IRELAND****■ Terrorism: Northern Ireland****Ruth Jones:**[\[30830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 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**■ **Airports: Closures**

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[31539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to prevent airports throughout the country from closing.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Following the Chancellor's recent announcement, we are working urgently to develop proposals to support the UK aviation industry - we are committed to ensuring the sector and its employees come through this crisis.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus**

**Caroline Lucas:** [\[30734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with chief executive officers of UK-based airlines on using their resources to bring stranded people back to the UK; and if he will make a statement.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Ministers and officials are meeting regularly to discuss the impacts of Covid-19 on the aviation sector. In particular, the Government is absolutely focused on working with the sector to ensure that UK citizens can return.

■ **Aviation: Job Security**

**Gareth Thomas:** [\[30671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure the security of people's jobs in the aviation sector.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Following the Chancellor's recent announcement, we are working urgently to develop proposals to support the UK aviation industry - we are committed to ensuring the sector and its employees continue to thrive.

■ **Blue Badge Scheme**

**Olivia Blake:** [\[30782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) all disabilities are included in the Blue Badge eligibility criteria and (b) the application process is accessible.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Eligibility for the Blue Badge scheme is not condition-based so people with a disability or a condition who meet the eligibility criteria will still be issued a badge. The Department has issued clear non-statutory guidance to local authorities in England on how to administer the scheme.

The Department is currently working on its blue badge business continuity plan to ensure our digital and badge production services are resilient enough to continue to produce badges throughout this unprecedented period. Local authorities are responsible for the day to day administration of the scheme and will therefore be making their own arrangements for business continuity to ensure those in need of a badge can still be issued one. This may include pragmatic measures such as assessing applicants over the telephone, rather than face to face.

**■ Bus Services: Coronavirus****Mike Amesbury:**[\[31632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support coach operators to stay in business during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Within the Budget on 11 March 2020, the Chancellor set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services and businesses through the economic disruption caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

On 17 March, the Chancellor announced a further £330 billion of financial measures, including measures which will support public transport operators.

Any further measures will be announced in due course.

**■ Bus Services: Rural Areas****Mr Laurence Robertson:**[\[30674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to expand bus services in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The bus market outside London is deregulated and decisions regarding service provision are primarily a commercial matter for bus operators. Local authorities are free to make their own decisions about the areas under their care, provided they take account of the relevant legislation.

Local councils are encouraged to utilise the tools in the Bus Services Act 2017, to help improve rural bus services and increase passenger numbers.

The Government provides £43 million of the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) directly to local authorities so that they can subsidise socially necessary bus services. As part of the 2018-19 local government finance settlement, the Government responded to a number of councils' concerns over rural services funding by

increasing the Rural Services Delivery Grant to £81 million. The 2019-20 settlement increased the Grant to the same level.

The additional £5 billion announced by the Prime Minister will boost bus services by including higher frequency services, new priority schemes to make routes more efficient, more affordable, simpler, fares and at least 4,000 new Zero Emission Buses.

This is on top of the £220 million Better Deal for Bus Users package announced by the Government on 30 September to transform bus services across the country. This includes funds for £20 million to support demand responsive services in rural and suburban areas, which local authorities can bid for.

This package contains a further £30 million of funding to improve current services and restore lost services.

■ **Department for Transport: Off-payroll Working**

**Justin Madders:** [\[29245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Following the recent HMRC decision to postpone the implementation of the new IR35 rules until 2021, we are unable to provide a response to this question.

■ **Department for Transport: Public Consultation**

**Colleen Fletcher:** [\[31526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average timescale is for his Department to respond to their consultations; and whether his Department has a target timescale for responding.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

All consultations are conducted in line with the Cabinet Office Consultation Principles. We aim to publish responses within 12 weeks of the consultation, however this is not always possible, especially for complex policies requiring significant additional analysis and stakeholder engagement.

■ **High Speed 2 Railway Line: Coronavirus**

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** [\[31418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will suspend all work on High Speed Two for 12 months in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

The Government will do whatever is necessary to deal with Covid-19 now and will also continue to invest in the country's future infrastructure.

## ■ Large Goods Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[30739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2020 to Question 27569 on Motor Vehicles: Compressed Natural Gas, how many of the 61 zero and low emission heavy good vehicles participating in the Low Emission Freight and Logistics Trial are registered in Wales.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Vehicle registration data is not captured as part of the project reporting for the Low Emission Freight and Logistics Trial. The two consortium leads running Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles as part of the trials operate vehicles from various depots, including Swindon, Bristol, and Milton Keynes.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties and Testing

**Rosie Duffield:**

[\[30857\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a temporary moratorium on requirements for a valid MOT and Road Tax for car owners aged over 70 years old.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Considering the developing situation and the need to balance the risks to road safety with the needs of vulnerable groups and businesses, the legislative requirements relating to vehicle use and testing are under review.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Exhaust Emissions

**Jonathan Edwards:**

[\[30738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department has plans to undertake an assessment of the potential effect of the fall in oil prices on the take up of low emissions vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department for Transport has not assessed the impact of recent changes to fuel prices on the uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs). Fuel prices are one variable that can impact on Ultra Low Emission Vehicle uptake among many, including vehicle pricing, manufacturer supply, consumer demand for vehicles, infrastructure provision and the regulatory regime surrounding vehicles. Fuel prices are also volatile and short-term changes may not indicate a change in long-term prices. DfT regularly update long-term projections of ULEV uptake and take into account a wide range of variables, including the best available data on fuel prices produced by BEIS.

The Government is investing £2.5 billion to support the market for electric vehicles. Budget 2020 included £532m extra funding to keep the Plug-in Vehicle Grants for another three years, and favourable benefit-in-kind rates for zero emission vehicles extended out to 2025. Additionally, we are providing £500 million to support the

rollout of a fast-charging network for electric vehicles, ensuring that drivers will never be further than 30 miles from a rapid charging station.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Testing**

**Sir David Amess:**

[\[30664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to implement a temporary reprieve in the need for an annual MOT test in relation to the disruption caused to businesses by the ongoing covid 19 situation.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Considering the developing situation and the need to balance the risks to road safety with the needs of vulnerable groups and businesses, the legislative requirements relating to vehicle use and testing are under review.

■ **Public Transport: Coronavirus**

**Marco Longhi:**

[\[30040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to ensure the continuation of public transport services during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Everyone should do what they can to stop coronavirus spreading.

We are encouraging everyone to stop non-essential contact with others and to stop all unnecessary travel.

However, it is vital that our public transport services continue to run in order to ensure that critical workers can get to work, and that the country can return to normal life once this epidemic is over.

We are in daily contact with transport providers across all modes and will do whatever we can to ensure vital public services continue throughout this period.

We will continue to anticipate and adapt to needs as the situation develops, as demonstrated by the extensive package of measures the Chancellor has announced to support the economy.

**Matt Rodda:**

[\[31535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on public transport.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

Everyone should do what they can to stop coronavirus spreading.

We are encouraging everyone to stop non-essential contact with others and to stop all unnecessary travel.

This is having a significant impact on public transport. However, it is vital that our public transport services continue to run in order to ensure that critical workers can get to work, and that the country can return to normal life once this epidemic is over.

We are in daily contact with transport providers and will do whatever we can to ensure vital public services continue throughout this period.

We will continue to anticipate and adapt to needs as the situation develops, as demonstrated by the extensive package of measures the Chancellor has announced to support the economy.

## ■ **Shipping: Coronavirus**

**Karl Turner:**

[\[29213\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to monitor public health restrictions introduced in response to the covid-19 pandemic in countries that supply seafarer (a) ratings and (b) officers to the UK shipping industry.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The Department is monitoring several intelligence sources in regard the actions of other States in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and is noting measures put in place that may affect the transit and transfer of all seafarers and access to shore leave.

We are in regular contact with ship operators on the effects of pandemic on business.

## ■ **Taxis: Coronavirus**

**Layla Moran:**

[\[31625\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to take steps to support taxi drivers unable to renew their licences due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Layla Moran:**

[\[31626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to issue guidance for local authorities on supporting taxi drivers who cannot renew their licences during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department for Transport is aware of concerns raised by the industry over potential delays to the renewal of taxi and private hire vehicle licences and will be looking at this further.

Those that are self-employed or earning below the Lower Earnings Limit of £118 per week and have COVID-19 or are advised to self-isolate can now more easily make a claim for Universal Credit or new style Employment and Support Allowance. There is also a monthly advance available.

Those self-employed or who own a business and are concerned about not being able to pay tax bills because of COVID-19, they may be eligible for support through HMRC's Time to Pay service.

For small companies who are eligible for Small Business Rates Relief who could provide relief; funding for the scheme will be provided to local authorities by government in early April.

**■ Transport for London: Coronavirus****Wes Streeting:** [\[30847\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what discussions he is having with the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL) on ensuring TfL's financial viability; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Ministers and officials at the Department for Transport maintain regular contact with Transport for London and the Mayor's office to discuss a range of matters, including financial issues, around transport in London during the Covid-19 outbreak.

**■ Transport: Combined Authorities****Bridget Phillipson:** [\[31494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether (a) the North East Combined Authority and (b) other combined authorities without a mayor will be able to bid for funding from the £4.2 billion fund for local transport set out in Budget 2020.

**Rachel Maclean:**

At Budget, Government announced its new £4.2 billion fund for local transport in eight city regions as part of its commitment to level up urban transport. Funding will be delivered through five-year, consolidated transport settlements agreed with central government and based on plans put forward by Mayors. In Tyne and Wear, funding will be conditional on the formation of a single Mayoral Combined Authority across the city region, to ensure accountability and effective delivery of funding, following the model that has worked for London. The details of how Government will take forward the settlement in Tyne and Wear will be set out in due course.

In addition, the whole of England will benefit from the largest ever programme of investment in strategic roads, the £2.5 billion Potholes Fund, and the Transforming Cities Fund. Further local transport funding will be set out at the Spending Review, including the £5 billion announced by the Prime Minister for buses and cycling.

**TREASURY****■ Business: Coronavirus****Neil Coyle:** [\[30777\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when each of the measures announced in Budget 2020 to mitigate the effects of covid-19 will be implemented to support businesses that are adversely affected.

**Jesse Norman:**

On 17 March, in response to Covid-19, the Government introduced a 12 month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England, including Southwark, with no cap on rateable values. Eligible businesses,



large and small, will benefit from this exceptional step worth an additional £9.5bn in 2020-21.

**Martyn Day:**

[\[30841\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that banks are encouraged to extend (a) credit lines and (b) favourable-terms loan payment holidays to keep businesses afloat and pay wages during the current covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government is working closely with the banking industry to ensure that businesses can access the finance they need during this challenging period.

Last week, the Chancellor announced a package of measures to support businesses experiencing increased costs or financial disruption due to the coronavirus outbreak. This included the new Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which launched today (Monday 23 March) and will support loans of up to £5 million in value, with no interest payments due for the first twelve months of the loan. This will help to give lenders the confidence to provide finance to businesses through this period of uncertainty, whilst helping businesses who are facing short-term cashflow issues.

In conjunction with these measures, the Bank of England has acted to help support business and consumer confidence at this difficult time. These actions include cutting interest rates, which will help bolster the cash flows of businesses and households through reducing the cost, and improving the availability, of finance. The Bank also announced a new credit scheme will also help support SMEs specifically, by providing incentives for banks to lend to these firms.

## ■ Business: VAT

**Ian Mearns:**

[\[30754\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to extend the financial support offered to businesses for PAYE and National Insurance contributions to include VAT payments; and what assessment he has made of the effect of VAT liability on cashflow where customers enter administration.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Chancellor has announced an unprecedented economic response to support businesses. This includes deferment of VAT payments. No VAT-registered business will have to make a VAT payment alongside their VAT return to HMRC from now through to June. Businesses will have until the end of the financial year to pay these bills. This is a direct injection of more than £30bn of cash to businesses, equivalent to 1.5% of GDP.

**■ Businesses: Insurance****Tim Farron:**[\[31468\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans the Government has to mandate the closure of businesses to help enable those businesses to access insurance for losses during the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector about its contribution to handling this unprecedented situation.

In addition, the Chancellor has made clear that, for those businesses which have an appropriate policy covering pandemics, the Government's medical advice of 16 March is sufficient to allow businesses to make a claim against their insurance, provided the other terms and conditions in their policy are met. We recognise that most businesses have not purchased insurance that covers pandemic-related losses. Any affected businesses should note the government's full package of support.

The FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim, and appropriate information on its progress; not

reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed.

**■ Excise Duties: Fuels****Ben Lake:**[\[30836\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what impact assessment his Department has undertaken of the potential effect of maintaining different duty rates for (a) alternative fuel, including compressed natural gas, and (b) road fuels.

**Jesse Norman:**

To support the decarbonisation of the UK transport sector, fuel duty rates for alternative fuels (e.g. LPG, CNG etc.) are lower than the main duty rate. Budget 2018 confirmed that the differential between the main rate of fuel and alternative fuel rates would continue until 2032, subject to a review in 2024 to give individuals and industry greater certainty.

**■ Hygiene: Products****Tonia Antoniazzi:**[\[31545\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government will allow businesses in the UK to produce hand sanitiser, for free local distribution, from waste alcohol without an industrial manufacturing licence during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

Manufacturers of hand sanitiser do not need a licence, although anybody that uses alcohol or alcohol waste within a manufacturing process must be authorised by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

To meet the additional demand for hand sanitiser, the Government has been supporting manufacturers by ensuring they have access to the denatured alcohol they need. Since the beginning of March, HMRC has fast-tracked the authorisation of over 3 million additional litres of denatured alcohol for hand sanitiser production.

However, in light of continuing high demand for duty free alcohol in these products, HMRC have now announced several easements to their current requirements. Under these new measures alcohol or alcohol waste held within an excise warehouse may be used, without HMRC's prior approval, to produce hand sanitiser without the payment of excise duty, provided that the final product meets the World Health Organization's formulation for Handrub.

Further information on all the measures introduced by HMRC to support hand sanitiser production can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>.

**■ Insurance Companies: Coronavirus****Robert Halfon:****[31482]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with insurance companies that will not pay out insurance monies to their customers on the basis that the covid-19 has not yet been put on their list of infectious diseases.

**John Glen:**

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector about its contribution to handling this unprecedented situation. Most businesses have not purchased insurance policies that cover unspecified notifiable diseases, such as COVID-19. Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers.

In addition, the FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim, and appropriate information on its progress; not reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed.

On Tuesday 17 March the Chancellor announced that the Government would do whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and that he stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary.

**■ Insurance: Coronavirus****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[30787]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that people that are working from home as a result of Government guidance on covid-19 continue to be insured under their existing home insurance policies in cases where those policies may not cover home working.

**John Glen:**

On Tuesday 17 March the Chancellor announced that the Government would do whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and that he stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary. The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector about its contribution to handling this unprecedented situation.

The FCA expects insurers to take into account any change in a customer's circumstances because of coronavirus, such as working from home or driving to work. Insurers should ensure that any change in circumstances to comply with government advice and requirements does not impact their customer's current home contents or motor policy.

In addition, the FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim, and appropriate information on its progress; not reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed.

**■ Leisure: Businesses****Caroline Lucas:****[30731]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect on the ability of (a) pubs, (b) restaurants, (c) hotels and guest houses, (d) event planners and suppliers, (e) theatres and cinemas and (f) other hospitality businesses affected by social distancing measures announced by the Prime Minister during the press conference on 16 March 2020 to access insurance in the absence of an order to close; and if he will make a statement.

**Thangam Debbonaire:****[30785]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the insurance industry on compensating (a) hospitality, (b) events and (c) entertainment businesses for lost business resulting from the outbreak of covid 19.

**John Glen:**

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector about its contribution to handling this unprecedented situation.

In addition, the Chancellor has made clear that, for those businesses which have an appropriate policy that covers pandemics, government's medical advice of 16th March is sufficient to allow businesses to make a claim against their insurance, provided the other terms and conditions in their policy are met.

The FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim, and appropriate information on its progress; not reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed.

However, most businesses have not purchased insurance that covers pandemic related losses. As such, any affected businesses should note the government's full package of support.

The Chancellor has announced two packages to support the people and businesses of the UK. A three-point plan providing £12 billion of support for public services, individuals and businesses whose finances are affected by the outbreak, and a package to provide further support for businesses and individuals totalling £350bn.

## ■ Mortgages and Rents: Coronavirus

**Tim Farron:**

**[30720]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to instruct (a) banks and (b) landlords to provide (i) mortgage and (ii) rent holidays for (A) households and (B) businesses experiencing financial hardship during the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

Banks and building societies are ready and able to support consumers impacted by COVID-19. On 17 March, the Chancellor announced on behalf of the sector that banks and building societies will offer a 3-month 'mortgage holiday' for borrowers that are financially struggling. This will enable affected borrowers to more easily defer their mortgage payments for up to 3 months. Customers who are concerned about the current financial situation should get in touch with their lender at the earliest possible opportunity. The benefits system is ready to assist renters with their housing costs if they find their incomes disrupted by coronavirus.

Following urgent discussions with the banking industry, the mortgage payment holiday of up to 3 months announced on 17 March will be extended to landlords whose tenants are experiencing difficulty due to coronavirus. Lenders have also agreed to a three-month moratorium on residential and buy to let possession action to start immediately to provide customers with reassurance that they will not have their homes repossessed at this difficult time.

The government has announced that to further protect renters, 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. At the end of this period, landlords and tenants will be expected to work together to establish an affordable repayment plan, taking into account the tenant's individual circumstances.

The Chancellor also announced tax cuts of nearly £20bn for British businesses. Budget announced that eligible properties in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, with a rateable value of less than £51,000, would pay no business rates this year. The Chancellor's announcement of 17 March goes further and provides those businesses an additional cash grant of up to £25,000 per business. It also extends

the business rates holiday to all eligible properties in those sectors, irrespective of rateable value, so that all businesses in retail, hospitality or leisure will pay no business rates for 12 months.

Budget announced government will provide £3,000 grants to 700,000 SMEs. This grant is now increased to £10,000.

## ■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

**John Cryer:**

[\[29815\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he is having with (a) Cabinet colleagues, (b) the Bank of England and (c) representatives of mortgage companies on suspension of mortgage payments for people affected by covid-19; and whether benefits from such suspensions will be passed on to renters.

**John Glen:**

Banks and building societies are ready and able to support consumers impacted by COVID-19. On 17 March, the Chancellor announced on behalf of the sector that banks and building societies will offer a 3-month 'mortgage holiday' for borrowers that are financially struggling with their repayments. This forbearance measure will enable affected borrowers to defer their mortgage payments for up to 3 months while they get back on their feet. Customers who are concerned about the current financial situation should get in touch with their lender at the earliest possible opportunity.

Lenders have also agreed to a 3 month moratorium on residential and buy-to-let possession action to start immediately to provide customers with reassurance that they will not have their homes repossessed at this difficult time.

The benefits system is ready to assist renters with their housing costs if they find their incomes disrupted by COVID-19.

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The government has announced that to further protect renters, 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 3 month period. At the end of this period, landlords and tenants will be expected to work together to establish an affordable repayment plan, taking into account the tenant's individual circumstances.

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[31542\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of the proposed three month mortgage holidays on individuals credit scores.

**John Glen:**

With regards to personal credit ratings, payment holidays can be a feature of lending products or can be offered by lenders in exceptional circumstances outside of the customer's control. This covers a multitude of potential scenarios, illness being one of them. Where payment holidays as a result of COVID-19 are agreed with a lender, we

would expect lenders to ensure that taking a payment holiday should not impact credit scores. Ministers and officials are working closely with industry to protect consumers from harm during these unprecedented times.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[31548\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to his oral contribution of 17 March 2020, Official Report column 931, what estimate he has made of the number of households that will be eligible for the proposed mortgage holiday.

**John Glen:**

Banks and building societies are ready and able to support consumers impacted by COVID-19. On the 17 March, the Chancellor announced on behalf of the sector that banks and building societies will offer a 3-month 'mortgage holiday' for borrowers that are financially struggling with their repayments. This forbearance measure will enable affected borrowers to defer their mortgage payments for up to 3 months while they get back on their feet.

The option of a mortgage repayment holiday will be open to any customer who is up-to-date with their repayments and not already in arrears. Any customer who is concerned about their current financial situation can get in touch with their lender at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the best option for them.

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[31631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with credit rating agencies on the potential effect mortgage holidays on credit scores.

**John Glen:**

With regards to personal credit ratings, payment holidays can be a feature of lending products or can be offered by lenders in exceptional circumstances outside of the customer's control. This covers a multitude of potential scenarios, illness being one of them. Where payment holidays as a result of COVID-19 are agreed with a lender, we would expect lenders to ensure that taking a payment holiday should not impact credit scores. Ministers and officials are working closely with industry to protect consumers from harm during these unprecedented times.

## ■ **Non-domestic Rates and VAT: Coronavirus**

**Mr Laurence Robertson:**

[\[30677\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will defer the payment of (a) business rates and (b) VAT for businesses which can demonstrate loss of trade as a result of covid-19.

**Jesse Norman:**

In response to COVID-19, on 17 March the Government introduced a 12 month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England, where help is needed the most. Eligible businesses large and small will benefit from this exceptional step worth an additional £9.5bn in 2020-21.

HMRC already offer help to businesses struggling to meet their VAT payments with arrangements such as Time to Pay.



In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Chancellor has pledged a range of measures to help business through the crisis, including grants, loans and relief from business rates worth more than £300 billion. The Chancellor will continue to keep the situation under review.

■ **Non-domestic Rates: North West**

**Conor McGinn:**

**[30910]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of businesses in (a) St Helens, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West have a rateable value of less than £51,000.

**Jesse Norman:**

As of 31 March 2019:

(a) For the St Helens billing authority, there were 4,704 non-domestic properties. 4,267 (91%) of these had a Rateable Value of less than £51,000;

(b) For the Liverpool City Region (combining the billing authorities of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral) there were 47,676 non-domestic properties. 43,541 (91%) of these had a Rateable Value of less than £51,000;

(c) For the North West region, there were 273,784 non-domestic properties. 251,829 (92%) of these had a Rateable Value of less than £51,000.

The Valuation Office Agency publishes statistics on the stock of properties at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/non-domestic-rating-stock-of-properties-including-business-floorspace-2019>. The next update to these statistics is planned for July 2020.

■ **Revenue and Custom: Telephone Services**

**Claire Hanna:**

**[31622]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will allocate more resources to the dedicated HMRC helpline for businesses concerned about paying their tax as a result of the outbreak of covid-19.

**Jesse Norman:**

At the Budget, the Chancellor directed 2,000 civil servants to staff HMRC's dedicated Covid-19 helpline. HMRC are delivering an enhanced Time to Pay offer to fit the specific impacts of the virus. Time to Pay is available to all firms and individuals who are in temporary financial distress as a result of Covid-19 and are unable to pay their tax on time or have existing liabilities. The bespoke arrangement, which is agreed depending on circumstance, can cover all debts owed to HMRC. Taxpayers may be able to defer payments for up to three months if they are unable to make a payment immediately. The Covid-19 helpline can be reached by calling: 0800 0159 559 and enables those eligible to get practical help and advice. HMRC have already seen significant take-up of the service and will keep resourcing of the helpline under constant review as the situation develops.



**■ Self-employed: Coronavirus**

**Mr Laurence Robertson:** [\[30678\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will reduce employer national insurance contribution rates for businesses that can demonstrate loss of trade as a result of covid-19.

**Tim Farron:** [\[30719\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide financial support to businesses and households whose incomes will be adversely affected by restrictions in place as a result of covid-19.

**Robert Halfon:** [\[30744\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether (a) tax breaks and (b) financial support have been implemented for the self-employed during the coronavirus outbreak.

**Martyn Day:** [\[30831\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to introduce an Immediate deferment of HMRC payments for a period of six months in order to support cash flow for businesses and households during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Wes Streeting:** [\[R\] \[30891\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a tax holiday to defer payments from self-employed people ahead of the July deadline.

**Jamie Stone:** [\[31652\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to exempt businesses from paying (a) national insurance, (b) VAT, (c) corporation tax and (d) business rates over the next three months.

**Emma Hardy:** [\[32287\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to defer the payment of (a) National Insurance, (b) PAYE and (c) VAT for 12 months for charities, such as The Deep, that rely on visitor income to fund their costs and activities.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has announced an unprecedented package of support for businesses and individuals affected by Covid-19, and remains committed to doing whatever it takes to support the economy as necessary.

UK VAT registered businesses, including charities, can defer VAT payments due with their VAT returns between now and the end of June. No UK VAT registered business will have to make a VAT payment alongside their VAT return to HMRC in that period. They will have until the end of the financial year to repay.

The Government will also give all eligible retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England a 100% business rates holiday for the next 12 months. The Government

also extended the support available to individuals and businesses, including a package of government-backed and guaranteed loans, which make available an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of GDP.

For Income Tax Self-Assessment, payments due on the 31st of July 2020 will be deferred until the 31st of January 2021.

Under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, employers (including charities) can put workers on temporary leave and the government will pay them cash grants of 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2,500 a month, providing they keep the worker employed. They will receive the grant from HMRC, covering the cost of wages backdated to 1 March 2020.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be available for those unable to work because they are self-isolating in line with government advice; this is on top of the Prime Minister's announcement that SSP will be payable from day 1 instead of day 4 for affected individuals. Support will be available through Universal Credit and Contributory Employment and Support Allowance for those not eligible for SSP.

HMRC have scaled up their Time to Pay offer to all taxpayers, including charities, who are in temporary financial distress as a result of Covid-19 and have outstanding tax liabilities. Taxpayers can contact HMRC's dedicated Covid-19 helpline to get practical help and advice on 0800 0159 559.

The Chancellor will continue to review and make further announcements as events unfold if required.

**Daniel Kawczynski:** [\[30718\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support self-employed people in the event they are without an income as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[31529\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he will take to protect the incomes of self-employed people affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Robert Largan:** [\[31599\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support self-employed people affected by covid-19.

**Mike Hill:** [\[31613\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support self-employed people during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is deferring tax payments, through the Income Tax Self-Assessment (ITSA) and VAT system to help support businesses and the self-employed with cash flows. VAT payments due between now and mid-June will be deferred. No business will have to make a VAT payment to HMRC in that period. Income tax payments due

in July 2020 under the Self-Assessment system will be deferred to January 2021, benefitting up to 5.7m self-employed businesses.

The Government has also announced it is delaying the reforms to the off-payroll working rules (IR35) from April 2020 to April 2021 and the reforms will be legislated for in the 2020 Finance Bill. This deferral has been announced in response to the spread of Covid-19, to help businesses and individuals deal with the economic impacts of the pandemic.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme is available to self-employed individuals with an eligible business entity. By providing an 80% government guarantee on finance facilities up to £5 million, this scheme will help more businesses access the finance they need. The Government will not charge businesses for this guarantee, and will also cover the first 12 months of interest payments for businesses. For more information on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme go to: [www.British-business-bank.co.uk/CBILS](http://www.British-business-bank.co.uk/CBILS).

The Minimum Income Floor will be temporarily relaxed for all self-employed UC claimants for 1 year from 6 April. This means a drop in earnings due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 will not affect the amount of UC a claimant receives. This goes further than the Budget announcement to temporarily relax the MIF only for claimants who are directly affected by Covid-19, which has already come into effect. For those directly affected or self-isolating, there will be no attendance requirements, and Universal Credit can be claimed online or via phone.

Self-employed people unable to work because they are directly affected by Covid-19 or self-isolating will be eligible for Contributory Employment and Support Allowance. This is now payable from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth. Eligible claimants under 25 will be entitled to £57.90 per week, and over 25s £73.10 per week.

## ■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

**Lilian Greenwood:**

**[30758]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department plans to implement the mechanisms of financial support for small businesses announced in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

Officials are working at pace to deliver the measures for small businesses as announced by the Chancellor. The Covid-19 Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which will provide financing facilities for SMEs of up to £5 million, launched today (Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March). The Small Business and Retail grants will be made available by local authorities in coming weeks - with extra resources being provided to them to help deal with the administration of such grant schemes. These measures are part of a wider, unprecedented package of support for businesses and workers to ensure as best we can that people remain employed and firms financially secure.

**Neil Coyle:****[30773]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the guidance published by Public Health England on 16 March 2020, what plans he has to provide additional underwriting to SMEs that will be affected by social distancing.

**John Glen:**

For businesses which have a policy that covers pandemics, the government's action is sufficient and will allow businesses to make an insurance claim against their policy. Furthermore, we are providing £10,000 grants to over 700,000 SMEs across England, and increased grants for qualifying retail, hospitality and leisure businesses of up to £25,000 per property. These measures are part of a wider, unprecedented package of support for businesses and workers to ensure as best we can that people remain employed and firms financially secure. The Government stands ready to do whatever it takes to support businesses through this outbreak.

## ■ Theatre: Coronavirus

**Claire Hanna:****[31555]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support (a) self-employed artists and (b) theatre companies that are having their work cancelled during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is deferring tax payments, through the Income Tax Self-Assessment (ITSA) and VAT system to help support businesses and the self-employed with cash flows. VAT payments due between now and mid-June will be deferred. No business will have to make a VAT payment to HMRC in that period. Income tax payments due in July 2020 under the Self-Assessment system will be deferred to January 2021, benefitting up to 5.7m self-employed businesses.

The Government has also announced it is delaying the reforms to the off-payroll working rules (IR35) from April 2020 to April 2021 and the reforms will be legislated for in the 2020 Finance Bill. This deferral has been announced in response to the ongoing spread of Covid-19, to help businesses and individuals deal with the economic impacts of the pandemic.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme is available to self-employed individuals with an eligible business entity. By providing an 80% government guarantee on finance facilities up to £5 million, this scheme will help more businesses to get access to the finance they need. The Government will not charge businesses for this guarantee, and will also cover the first 12 months of interest payments for businesses. For more information on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme go to: [www.British-business-bank.co.uk/CBILS](http://www.British-business-bank.co.uk/CBILS).

The Minimum Income Floor will be temporarily relaxed for all self-employed UC claimants for 1 year from 6 April. This means a drop in earnings due to the economic impacts of Covid-19 will not affect the amount of UC a claimant receives. This goes further than the Budget announcement to temporarily relax the MIF only for claimants

who are directly affected by Covid-19, which has already come into effect. For those directly affected or self-isolating, there will be no attendance requirements, and Universal Credit can be claimed online or via phone.

Self-employed people unable to work because they are directly affected by Covid-19 or self-isolating will be eligible for Contributory Employment and Support Allowance. This is now payable from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth. Eligible claimants under 25 will be entitled to £57.90 per week, and over 25s £73.10 per week.

Theatres in England will benefit from the Government's introduction of a business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England for the 2020 to 2021 tax year. Those operating from smaller premises, with a rateable value below £15,000 will also be eligible for a £10,000 grant, while those operating from properties valued between £14,999 and £51,000 will be provided with a £25,000 grant.

## ■ Travel: Insurance

**Robert Halfon:**

**[30745]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that people that can no longer travel as a result of the outbreak of covid-19 can claim compensation through their travel insurance.

**John Glen:**

On Tuesday 17 March the Chancellor announced that as the wider economic picture becomes clearer, the Government would do whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and that he stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary. The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector about its contribution to handling this unprecedented situation.

In the first instance, customers who can no longer travel should seek compensation from their travel providers. Many UK carriers are offering vouchers, free rebooking or refunds.

Further, on 17 March the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advised against all non-essential travel abroad. Generally, insurance for cancellation or travel disruption will be triggered by FCO advice. This decision will therefore allow policyholders to claim for cancelled trips that were already booked and cannot now go ahead, if they have the relevant cancellation or travel disruption cover in place.

In addition, the FCA's rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim, and appropriate information on its progress; not reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed.

**■ Treasury: Off-payroll Working****Justin Madders:** [\[29238\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many contractors working for his Department have had their employment status assessed in relation to the new IR35 rules on off-payroll working; and how many of those staff are subject to those rules.

**John Glen:**

The information is not held centrally. Sourcing interim staff is decentralised to individual business groups across HM Treasury who take responsibility for making IR35 assessments in line with HMRC guidance.

**WORK AND PENSIONS****■ Employment and Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[31663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional steps the Government is taking to protect the employment and benefits of people who (a) live with and (b) care for people with weakened immune systems during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

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.

**■ Employment and Support Allowance: Coronavirus****Tim Farron:** [\[30722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to pay employment and support allowance to claimants on the first day of application as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

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.

**■ Flybe: Isle of Man****Gavin Newlands:** [\[29272\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the (a) representatives of the Isle of Man Government and (b) the administrators of Flybe Limited, on the outstanding pension liabilities of Flybe Limited (in Administration).

**Guy Opperman:**

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has engaged with the Isle of Man Government to enquire how they plan to work with Flybe and regulators to support pension scheme members. The Secretary of State has not engaged with the administrators of Flybe Limited.

**Low Incomes: Coronavirus****Stephanie Peacock:**[\[31604\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to prevent low-paid workers from being pressured to work when Government guidance suggests they should self-isolate.

**Mims Davies:**

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.

**Maternity Pay: Coronavirus****Emma Hardy:**[\[31596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will change the period of time for calculating maternity pay based on a person's income to the eight weeks period prior to the outbreak of covid-19.

**Mims Davies:**

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.

**Personal Income: Coronavirus****Ronnie Cowan:**[\[30848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a basic income to provide financial assistance to people affected by covid-19.

**Mims Davies:**

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.



**■ Personal Independence Payment: Chronic Illnesses****Paul Blomfield:****[31499]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of personal independence payment evaluation criteria for evaluating (a) chronic fatigue syndrome, (b) fibromyalgia and (c) other chronic illnesses.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

All health professionals carrying out assessments are clinically qualified and registered practitioners in their own field. DWP requires health professionals to have a broad training in disability analysis as well as awareness training in specific conditions, which includes chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and other chronic illness.

The PIP consultation is not a medical assessment requiring the health professional to diagnose a condition or its severity and recommend treatment options. Instead it requires the assessor to look at the impact of conditions and impairments on an individual's daily life. This helps ensure that assessment reports are fit for purpose, clinically justified and sound, and provide sufficient information for the department to make a reasonable decision on entitlement to benefit.

**■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations****Rachel Hopkins:****[31617]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether personal independence payments (PIP) claimants who are due for reassessment will continue to receive payments of PIP until face-to-face assessments are recommenced.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

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.

**■ Pregnancy: Coronavirus****Alison Thewliss:****[30786]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to ensure that pregnant women that are required to self-isolate do not lose out on maternity entitlements.

**Mims Davies:**

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.



## ■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[30724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether people with a reduced income after following guidance on covid-19 are eligible for assistance with rented housing costs through the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme; and whether additional funding has been allocated to local authorities for that payment scheme.

**Will Quince:**

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.

## ■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

**Stephen Timms:**

[\[31422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 17 March 2020, Official Report column 953, that self-employed people who self-isolate can apply for employment and support allowance (ESA), whether ESA will be available to people who are not themselves ill.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

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: Coronavirus

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

[\[31441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to increase the payment amount of (a) universal credit and (b) employment support allowance for claimants who are diagnosed with covid-19.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is monitoring the adequacy of its response to the spread of COVID-19 closely and is determined to provide effective support to people across the country during this challenging period. Further measures will be taken if shown to be necessary.

## ■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[29306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to her Department's pilot of a single system for disability assessments announced in March 2020, how the

single assessment system will encompass the descriptors used to assess personal independence payments, limited capability for work under universal credit (UC), limited capability for work and work related activity of UC, limited capability for work under employment and support allowance (ESA) and limited capability for work and work related activity under ESA; and if she will set out how the single assessment process will work.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

On 02 March 2020 we announced plans regarding the single, integrated service that will simplify the assessment process for millions of people claiming health related benefits. [Announcement on Health and Disability Assessments.](#)

Today separate organisations deliver PIP assessments and Work Capability Assessments using different IT systems; we will replace this with a single digital platform delivered by DWP and covering all benefits that need a health assessment. The new service will simplify the assessment process reducing the need to submit information multiple times and potentially minimise the need for face-to-face assessments.

Building on the work of the integrated service, the Department announced it would study the feasibility of using a single assessment for PIP and ESA/UC to establish if this would improve the assessment process for claimants who are eligible to be assessed for these benefits at the same time. We have recently concluded the study, which involved discussions with key stakeholders, as well as research and analysis to examine how a single assessment could work in practice with a sharp focus on whether it would improve the claimant experience. The Department will be reviewing the evidence from this study before determining next steps.

The Government is committed to continuously improving the experience for customers with health conditions and disabilities and the upcoming Green Paper on health and disability support will seek to address this further.

■ **State Retirement Pensions: Coronavirus**

**Catherine West:** [\[31589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government has made an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the basic rate of the state pension during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Guy Opperman:**

The Government has made no such assessment.

■ **Statutory Sick Pay**

**Matt Western:** [\[31661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to paragraph 1.99 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, when her Department plans to issue guidance to employers on the operation of the Statutory Sick Pay repayment mechanism.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

The Department is working closely with HMRC on the necessary clauses in the Coronavirus Bill and on the underpinning guidance which employers will need.

**■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus****Ms Angela Eagle:**[\[31442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions her Department has had with the Treasury on increasing the amount of Statutory Sick Pay paid to people who have to (a) self-isolate or (b) are diagnosed with covid-19.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

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****Caroline Lucas:**[\[28608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many women in receipt of (a) statutory maternity pay and (b) maternity allowance have applied for universal credit since 1 January 2019.

**Mims Davies:**

In 2019, approximately 34,000 Universal Credit claims were made by households containing an individual who declared that they are receiving Maternity Allowance. This represents just under 1% of claims submitted over this time period.

**■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus****Tim Farron:**[\[30721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to pay universal credit to claimants on the day of application as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is monitoring the adequacy of its response to the spread of COVID-19 closely and is determined to provide effective financial support to people across the country during this challenging period. Further measures will be taken if shown to be necessary.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[30851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to ensure that universal credit advances are non-repayable during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is monitoring the adequacy of its response to the spread of COVID-19 closely and is determined to provide effective financial support to people across

the country during this challenging period. Further measures will be taken if shown to be necessary.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[30852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make her policy for work-search requirements and work preparation activities to be automatically suspended for universal credit claimants in the event that schools close or children have to stay home from school or nursery as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[30855\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to introduce a temporary uplift in (a) the universal credit standard allowance, (b) jobseeker's allowance, (c) employment support allowance and (d) income support to help people who have to self-isolate in line with the Government's advice on managing the covid-19 outbreak.

**Will Quince:**

The Department is monitoring the adequacy of its response to the spread of COVID-19 closely and is determined to provide effective support to people across the country during this challenging period. Further measures will be taken if shown to be necessary.

**Stuart C McDonald:** [\[31531\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take to ensure that people that are unable to access the internet as a result of the closure of libraries and other public institutions during the covid-19 outbreak can (a) apply for universal credit and (b) manage their claim.

**Will Quince:**

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:** [\[28735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how often her Department updates the housing element of universal credit to reflect changes in local market rents; what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the length of time between those updates; and if she will take steps to ensure that the housing element of universal credit reflects those rents.

**Will Quince:**

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates form part of the Universal Credit housing costs calculation for households in the private rented sector. This calculation is based on either the total amount of rent and service charges they pay, or the applicable LHA

rate - whichever is lowest, less any deductions for housing costs contributions for any relevant non-dependents living in the claimant's home.

LHA rates are usually considered annually with any changes to LHA rates effective from April each year. From April 2020 LHA rates will be increased by CPI.

■ **Winter Fuel Payments: Pensioners**

**Alex Norris:**

**[30876]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of an additional fuel payment to pensioners following Government advice for them to stay at home.

**Guy Opperman:**

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.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Impact of Covid-19 on Summer Exams

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

**[\[HCWS176\]](#)**

As I announced to the House on 18 March, in light of the unprecedented public health emergency the Government has taken the difficult decision to cancel all exams due to take place in schools and colleges in England this summer. We recognise that students have been working hard towards these exams, and this is not a decision we have taken lightly.

Our priority is to ensure that students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including starting university, college or sixth form, or an apprenticeship or a job in the autumn. For GCSE, A and AS level students we will also make sure they are awarded a grade which reflects their work. Our intention is that a grade will be awarded this summer, based on the best available evidence, including any non-exam assessment that students have already completed. There will also be an option, for students who do not feel this grade reflects their performance, to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity once schools are open again.

Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible, and will work with the exam boards to ensure this is consistently applied for all students. The exam boards will be asking teachers, who know their students well, to submit their judgement about the grade that they believe the student would have received if exams had gone ahead. To produce this, teachers will take into account a range of evidence and data including performance on mock exams and non-exam assessment – clear guidance on how to do this fairly and robustly this will be provided to schools and colleges. The exam boards will then combine this information with other relevant data, including prior attainment, and use this information to produce a calculated grade for each student, which will be a best assessment of the work they have put in. Ofqual and exam boards will be discussing with teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that it is as fair as possible. More information will be provided as soon as possible.

The aim is to provide these calculated grades to students before the end of July. In terms of a permanent record, the grades will be indistinguishable from those provided in other years. We will also aim to ensure that the distribution of grades follows a similar pattern to that in other years, so that this year's students do not face a systematic disadvantage as a consequence of these extraordinary circumstances. Furthermore, university representatives have confirmed that they expect universities to be flexible and do all they can to support students and ensure they can progress to higher education.

We recognise that some students may nevertheless feel disappointed that they haven't been able to sit their exams. If they do not believe the correct process has been followed in their case, they will be able to appeal on that basis. In addition, if they do not feel their

calculated grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity once schools are open again. Students will also have the option to sit their exams in summer 2021.

There is a very wide range of different vocational and technical qualifications as well as other academic qualifications for which students were expecting to sit exams this summer. These are offered by a large number of awarding organisations and have differing assessment approaches – in many cases students will already have completed modules or non-exam assessment which could provide evidence to award a grade. We are encouraging these organisations to show the maximum possible flexibility and pragmatism to ensure students are not disadvantaged. Ofqual is working urgently with the sector to explore options, and we will work with them to provide more details shortly.

The Government will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.

## TRANSPORT

### ■ Rail Update

**Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):**

**[[HCWS175](#)]**

In these uncertain times, the railway has a vital role to play in ensuring Britain's key workers can travel and vital supplies are kept moving. My absolute focus is on making sure services continue so that journeys that are vital in tackling this crisis can continue to take place, so today, to make sure our railways stay open, we are providing train operators on franchises let by my Department the opportunity to temporarily transition onto Emergency Measures Agreements.

These agreements will suspend the normal financial mechanisms of franchise agreements, transferring all revenue and cost risk to the government. Operators will continue to run day-to-day services for a small, pre-determined management fee. Companies entering into these agreements will see a temporary suspension of their existing franchise agreement's financial mechanisms for an initial period of six months, with options for further extension or earlier cancellation as agreed.

Today's offer will provide greater flexibility to the train operators and the government and make sure the railway can continue to react quickly to changing circumstances and play its part in serving the national interest. It will ensure vital services continue to operate for key workers who are keeping the nation running and that we are able to reinstate a normal service quickly when the situation improves.

In the longer term these agreements will also minimise disruption to the rail sector. The railways have already seen up to a 70% drop in passenger numbers, with rail fares revenue reducing as people increasingly work from home and adopt social distancing, and total ticket sales down by two-thirds from the equivalent date in 2019. Suspending the usual financial mechanisms will not only guarantee that services can be sustained over this difficult period, it will also provide certainty for staff working on the railways,

many of whom are working hard every day in difficult conditions to make sure we keep the railway running.

This is not a new model, it is a temporary solution, taking the steps necessary to protect services now in a cost-efficient way, and ensuring current events have as little impact as possible on the railway in the longer term. Allowing operators to enter insolvency would cause significantly more disruption to passengers and higher costs to the taxpayer.

Fees will be set at a maximum of 2 per cent of the cost base of the franchise before the Covid-19 pandemic began, intended to incentivise operators to meet reliability, punctuality and other targets. The maximum fee attainable will be far less than recent profits earned by train operators. In the event that an operator does not wish to accept an Emergency Measures Agreement, the Government's Operator of Last Resort stands ready to step in.

Alongside our focus on keeping the railways open to support key workers, we recognise there will be many who have heeded Government advice and chosen not to travel. We don't want people to lose money for doing the right thing, so I am also announcing today that passengers will be able to get refunds for Advance tickets they aren't able to use while the government advises against non-essential travel.

We have agreed with all the train operators that passengers who have already purchased an Advance ticket will be eligible for a refund without any charge. Those holding a season ticket that they no longer wish to use will also be eligible for a partial refund, determined by the amount of time remaining on the ticket. Ticket holders should contact their operator for further details.

Given the significant timetable changes that have put been in place we are also asking operators to use discretion to allow passengers with Advance tickets to travel on an alternative train at a similar time or date if their ticket is technically no longer valid as a result of cancellations, but they still wish to travel.

We are operating in extraordinary times, but today's announcement will make sure key workers who depend on our railways are able to travel and carry on their vital roles, that hardworking commuters - who have radically altered their lives to combat the spread of coronavirus, are not left out of pocket, and it will provide certainty to the industry's staff who are still working hard every day to make sure the railway plays its part in tackling this crisis.