

**Daily Report****Wednesday, 25 March 2020**

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 25 March 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 25 March 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Hygiene: Products

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[31578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) pharmacists, (b) suppliers and (c) other outlets do not profiteer from the price of hand sanitisers.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: On 5 March, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) issued a public statement to reassure businesses and consumers that it is monitoring retail practices during the Coronavirus outbreak. If required, the CMA will take direct enforcement action or advise the Government to take additional measures.

■ Post Offices: ICT

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[29842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether officials in his Department have been notified of any payments to individual sub-postmasters following the settlement of the group litigation on the Horizon IT system on 12 December 2020.

Paul Scully:

It is impossible to ignore the financial and emotional suffering that the Horizon litigation process has caused for affected postmasters and their families. The Post Office has accepted – on the Horizon Accounting System – that it got things wrong in the past in its dealings with a number of postmasters and has apologised. This apology is only the start of a process of real change in the Post Office so that this situation is never repeated again.

The Post Office has notified the Department that they have settled two long-running and complex disputes with sub-postmasters who had declined to join the group litigation. As an operational matter for the Post Office, the Government was not party to the discussions.

■ Seabed: Mining

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[29891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many exploratory deep sea mining licences the Government has issued.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In 2012 and 2013, the Government sponsored two 15-year exploration contracts for UK Seabed Resources Ltd, a subsidiary of the US corporation Lockheed Martin.

The Government is developing the International Seabed Authority's deep sea mining code, so future mining is conducted in a safe and environmentally sensitive way.

■ **Small Businesses: Government Assistance**

Dan Jarvis:

[31515]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what support is available to small businesses who specialise in contact sport during covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: 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 package of direct support for business through tax relief and cash grants to help business manage cash flow during the Coronavirus outbreak. For example, businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors in England will not have to pay business rates for the 2020-21 tax year.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), delivered by the British Business Bank, is now open for applications from eligible smaller businesses, including unincorporated businesses such as partnerships and sole traders.

Businesses can access the first 6 months of that finance interest free. Decision-making on whether a business is eligible to access CBILS will be fully delegated to the 40+ accredited lenders.

Details on all Government business support is on:

www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

■ **Supermarkets: Coronavirus**

Ms Angela Eagle:

[32057]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his department plans to bring forward legislative proposals to require supermarkets to introduce social distancing measures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: The Government will continue to have regular conversations with industry stakeholders, including the British Retail Consortium and supermarket CEOs. We are keen to ensure supermarkets are well prepared to deal with a range of scenarios, while ensuring their operations remain in line with the latest health guidance.

Supermarkets that remain open will be expected to comply with social distancing requirements. The industry is doing everything it can to meet this challenge and the Government will continue to work with industry to help them do so

CABINET OFFICE■ **Brexit: Coronavirus**

Fleur Anderson: [\[31657\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what discussions the Government has had with the EU on extending the transition period in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to PQ [28064](#) on 11 March 2020.

■ **Paula Vennells**

Gill Furniss: [\[30863\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, on what date Paula Vennells CBE ceased to be a Non-Executive Board Member in the Cabinet Office; and what the circumstances were surrounding her departure from Government.

Chloe Smith:

Details of Cabinet Office Non Executive Board Members are listed on gov.uk and updated as appropriate. Paula Vennells stood down from the Cabinet Office Board on 5 March 2020.

■ **Prime Minister: Ministerial Policy Advisers**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[30101\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 March 2020 to Question 23469, whether any of the Prime Minister's special advisers had developed vetting level security clearance as of 2 March 2020.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[30103\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2020 to Question 25183 on Ministerial Policy Advisors: Dismissal, if he will publish the payments that specialist advisers received on termination of their employment which (a) were and (b) were not in accordance with section 14b of the Model Contract for Special Advisers in each of the last six months.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to PQ [23479](#) on 16 March 2020 with regards to vetting of Special Advisers.

Data related to the number and costs of special advisers is published annually.

Publication of the costs for the most recent reporting period will follow in due course.

DEFENCE**■ Defence Equipment: Costs****Mr Kevan Jones:****[30690]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March to Question 23543, what measures were taken to achieve efficiency savings in the Defence Equipment Plan 2018; and how much was saved through those measures over the 12 month period covered by that plan.

Jeremy Quin:

The Department has developed saving initiative programmes with industry experts, which work with individual projects and programmes to identify and deliver efficiency savings. The specifics of these initiatives vary by project, but include analysis of potential contractual improvements and that can be achieved while delivering performance improvements. Savings initiatives are developed and monitored using a maturity framework which standardises assessment of potential benefits and allows us to have greater confidence in the benefits that will be delivered. In financial year 2018/19 the Department achieved a total delivery of c£1.1 billion of efficiencies on equipment plan spending against a forecast of £0.9 billion in the Equipment Plan 2018 report. The Department is committed to meeting its 10 year target in full.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Arts: Coronavirus****Thangam Debbonaire:****[30868]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will hold discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the exemption from business rates to ensure that waiver covers studios, performance spaces and other venues which are part of the creative industries even if they have a rateable value of more than £51,000 if they have to be closed as a result of Covid 19.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced last week additional measures to support businesses and organisations that have been impacted by the pandemic. Guidance for businesses can be found at:

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

Last week, both the Secretary of State and Minister for Digital & Culture took calls with the cultural and creative industries sector amongst others to understand the challenges that they are facing as they respond to Government advice regarding Covid-19. Ministers have been representing DCMS sectors through COBRA committees.

Officials are continuing to engage with organisations daily in order to best understand how the Government can provide further guidance and support following the announcement of these measures, and regular Ministerial engagement is taking place.

■ **Broadband: Staffordshire**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[30803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to expand the availability of gigabit-capable broadband throughout (a) Staffordshire and (b) Stoke-on-Trent.

Matt Warman:

The Government is committed to delivering nationwide gigabit capable connectivity as soon as possible. Much progress has already been made, with full fibre coverage doubling in the past year to reach 10% of UK premises, according to the latest Ofcom figures.

This Government will continue to take action to remove barriers to network rollout and to ensure that those in the hardest to reach areas are not left behind. We have introduced legislation to make it easier for operators to deploy broadband in blocks of flats, will be legislating to mandate gigabit connectivity in new builds and will invest £5 billion of funding to support gigabit rollout in hard to reach areas.

Specifically in Staffordshire, the Government has already invested £9.6 million into better broadband. Superfast coverage is 98.9% across the area, compared to the UK average of 96%. The Government has also provided £9.2 million to the City of Stoke-on-Trent for a Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) Wave 3 project. In partnership with VXFIBER, this project will develop a publicly owned and operated, open access and gigabit-capable, 60 mile long network with citywide coverage by spring 2021.

■ **Broadband: Standards**

Dr Luke Evans: [\[32144\]](#)

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.

Matt Warman:

I refer the Honourable Member for Bosworth to my answer to his question, reference number 28001, on Monday 23 March.

■ **Internet: Safety**

Ruth Jones: [\[30827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to prevent the availability of harmful online material to children.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Online Harms White Paper sets out our plans to establish in law a new duty of care on companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. The regulator will have strong enforcement powers to deal with non-compliance. Our proposals assume a higher level of protection for children than for the typical adult user.

We expect companies to use a proportionate range of tools, including age assurance and age verification technologies, to prevent children accessing age-inappropriate content and to protect them from other harms.

■ Licensed Premises: Coronavirus**Alex Sobel:****[30887]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, whether the Government has plans to ban the opening of (a) pubs, (b) clubs and (c) small music venues.

Caroline Dinenage:

Last week, the Government ordered certain businesses including pubs, clubs and music venues to close. This was followed on Monday by the Prime Minister's announcement that all non-essential premises must close and that people are required to stay at home, except for the very limited purposes that have been set out. These measures will reduce our day to day contact with other people and are a vital part of our efforts to reduce the rate of transmission of coronavirus. Every citizen is instructed to comply with these new measures and the Government will be ensuring the police and other relevant authorities have the powers to enforce them, including through fines and dispersing gatherings where people do not comply.

The new measures will initially last for the three weeks from 23 March, at which point the Government will look at them again and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

■ Performing Arts: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:****[30865]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will introduce a compensation scheme for performers, events organisers and others affected by the cancellation of performances and festivals as a result of covid-19 pandemic.

Caroline Dinenage:

Last week, the Secretary of State and Minister for Digital and Culture took calls with the creative and cultural sectors amongst others to understand the challenges that they are facing. Officials are continuing to engage with organisations daily in order to best understand how Government can support the cultural and creative sectors and regular Ministerial engagement is taking place.

Arts Council England also announced measures in support of its funded organisations last week. More information for those this may apply to can be found here: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19#section-2>

Businesses that experience increased costs and disrupted cash flow as a result of Coronavirus are being supported. The Chancellor Rishi Sunak has already announced a host of measures to help businesses in this period with £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses across the UK, delivered through two schemes:

- Support for liquidity amongst large firms, with a major new scheme being launched by the Bank of England to help them with any disruption to their cash flows through loans.
- Increasing the amount businesses can borrow through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme from £1.2m to £5m and ensuring businesses can access the first 6 months of that finance interest free, as the Government will cover the first 6 months of interest payments.

£20bn of direct fiscal support for businesses in England through tax relief and cash grants to help business manage cash flow. This includes:

- Cash grants of up to £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with a rateable value of between £15,000 and £51,000.
- Cash grants of £10,000 for several hundred thousand small businesses eligible for business rate relief and rural rate relief.
- Entirely removing all eligible properties in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector from business rates, so that no pub, hotel, or high street shop will pay business rates for 12 months.
- This comes on top of compensation for businesses having to cover Statutory Sick Pay that the Chancellor announced in the Budget.

As part of the government's emergency legislation measures, Statutory Sick Pay will be available from day one for those affected by coronavirus. Anyone on zero-hour contracts who may not be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay will be able to claim Universal Credit or New Style Employment and Support Allowance, dependent on their circumstances.

EDUCATION

■ Academic Year and Free School Meals

Paul Maynard:

[30729]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department received a bid from Blackpool Council for the summer 2020 bidding round of the Holiday Activities and Food scheme.

Vicky Ford:

A bid for funding for the 2020 Holiday Activities and Food programme was submitted by Blackpool Council.

We are now in the process of negotiating grant agreements with the successful bidders and we will announce the successful and unsuccessful areas publicly in due course.

■ Assessments: Teachers**Emma Hardy:**[\[32727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that teacher assessments that will potentially replace exams are fair and impartial.

Nick Gibb:

On 18 March, the Government announced the cancellation of all exams and assessments due to take place in schools and colleges in England this summer, as part of the fight to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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, a job or an apprenticeship in the autumn. For GCSE, AS and A-level students, we will make sure they are awarded a grade which reflects their work. A calculated grade will be awarded this summer based on a range of the best available evidence, including any non-exam assessment that students have already completed. The independent qualifications regulator, Ofqual, is working urgently with the exam boards and teacher representatives to set out proposals for how these arrangements will work and will be talking to teachers' representatives before finalising an approach, to ensure that the approach taken is as fair as possible.

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 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.

■ Asylum: Children**Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[29975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities place unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in regulated care homes.

Vicky Ford:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that they meet the needs of their looked-after children, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and they must ensure that care placements facilitate this.

Each care placement must consider the individual needs of the child and local authorities must have flexibility meeting those needs.

The department recognises the benefits of placing UASC in family-based environments whenever possible. The Safeguarding Strategy for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and Refugee Children commits us to developing resources to support recruitment of supported lodging hosts as a form of semi-independent accommodation.

While there is a place for independent and semi-independent provision in the care system, it is clear that reform is needed to ensure it is being used appropriately and meets the needs of the young people placed there. The department is moving to take action on these issues and has launched a consultation on reforms to the use of independent and semi-independent provision. The consultation covers proposals including banning the placement of children under-16 in this provision and introducing new mandatory quality standards for provision.

■ **Children and Young People: Mental Health Services**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[32157\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the oral statement of 18 March 2020, what steps he is taking to ensure that children and young people whose educational institution is closed are able to access mental health services provided through those institutions.

Vicky Ford:

The department is working with NHS England and Public Health England who are providing guidance on seeking mental health support, including guidance for parents and carers of children and young people on addressing mental health and wellbeing concerns during the COVID-19 outbreak. Where in place, mental health support teams are also actively considering how they continue to deliver a service to support children and young people.

■ **Disability and Special Educational Needs: Children**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[32232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support children with special educational needs and disabilities but who do not have an Education, Health and Care plan when schools are closed.

Vicky Ford:

We are working closely with colleagues across government to ensure that all appropriate arrangements and support are in place for all the department's sectors, from the early years and childcare to schools and children's social care, and for vulnerable groups including children with special educational needs.

We understand that parents will be worried about continued provision for their children with special educational needs while schools are closed. Local authorities, schools and colleges, together with parents, should assess the risks to children and

young people with Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans) to judge whether they can be safely cared for at home or whether it is safer for them to remain at school or college. Local authorities and education settings have discretion to do a similar risk assessment for any individual children and young people who do not have an EHC plan but who have complex needs that could mean it is safer for them to be at school or college than at home. Guidance to help parents understand the changes, including information on vulnerable children can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>.

■ Educational Institutions: Hygiene

Alexander Stafford: [30867]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) schools and (b) other educational establishments have adequate access to (i) soap and (ii) hand sanitiser.

Alexander Stafford: [30869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that teachers are equipped with (a) hand sanitiser, (b) anti-bacterial wipes and (c) soap in the course of their duties.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education is working with Public Sector Buying Organisations and the Crown Commercial Service to understand and try to address supply chain issues. At this time, the supply chain has flagged that for some products there are reduced volume deliveries and less frequent deliveries which means some items may be rationed. They are seeking to find alternatives to any products which are out of stock.

■ Free School Meals

Lucy Powell: [31519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that children on free school meals are provided with a hot meal at home in the event of school closures in England.

Vicky Ford:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Schools will be able to provide meals or vouchers for supermarkets or local shops. The total value of vouchers offered to each eligible child per week will exceed the rate paid to schools for free school meals. The department recognises that these families will not be buying food in bulk and may therefore incur higher costs. These can be sent directly to families who are either self-isolating at home or whose schools are closed on government advice.

Full guidance for schools is available at the link below:

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

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Wes Streeting: [32190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will define vulnerable children in the context of eligibility to access to schools during the covid-19 closure period.

Vicky Ford:

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Rosie Duffield: [32197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to monitor the number of children becoming eligible for free school meal vouchers due to decreased household income as a result of covid-19.

Vicky Ford:

Schools and local authorities will continue to accept free school meal applications from parents and pupils. The department will continue to provide access to the Eligibility Checking System to support schools and local authorities in verifying and awarding free school meals.

Alex Cunningham: [32200]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the vouchers offered to children eligible for free school meals during the school closures will cover the costs of breakfast.

Vicky Ford:

While schools are closed to help reduce the spread of coronavirus, they will be able to provide meals or vouchers for supermarkets or local shops for families. The government has confirmed that the total value of vouchers offered to each eligible child per week will exceed the rate it pays to schools for free school meals.

In addition to this, we are working to consider options to support children who receive a free breakfast through our contracts with Family Action and Magic Breakfast.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [32265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether vouchers for children eligible for free school meals during the covid-19 school closures will cover the cost of breakfast.

Vicky Ford:

While schools are closed to help reduce the spread of coronavirus, they will be able to provide meals or vouchers for supermarkets or local shops for families. The government has confirmed that the total value of vouchers offered to each eligible child per week will exceed the rate it pays to schools for free school meals.

In addition to this, we are working to consider options to support children who receive a free breakfast through our contracts with Family Action and Magic Breakfast.

Free Schools: Stoke-on-Trent North**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[30833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the need for a free school in Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke as a result of local secondary schools being over capacity.

Nick Gibb:

Currently, the Department has not received any applications for a free school in Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke.

The Department has received two applications in the current application wave (wave 14) for new secondary schools elsewhere in Stoke-on-Trent local authority.

In addition, we will welcome applications from all areas where there is a need for good quality school places in future free school application waves. The timing of those waves will be confirmed in due course.

Hospitals: Coronavirus**Robert Halfon:**[\[30749\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on support for (a) students and (b) apprentices on placements at NHS hospitals during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and ministers at the department, are actively engaging with colleagues across government on issues raised by the covid-19 outbreak. The Department for Education is working closely with the Office for Students, the Department of Health and Social Care and other relevant parties to monitor the effects of covid-19 on registered English further and higher education providers and their students, including those on placements in NHS hospitals.

Schools: Finance**Robert Langan:**[\[29286\]](#)

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

Nick Gibb:

The revenue funding allocated for schools for financial years 2009-2010 to 2019-2020 for Derbyshire local authority (LA) is shown in the table below. Schools funding is not allocated to parliamentary constituencies.

FINANCIAL YEAR	DERBYSHIRE LA (£ MILLIONS)
2009-10	484.8
2010-11	502.1
2011-12	500.1
2012-13	504.6
2013-14	535.5
2014-15	551.4
2015-16	566.3
2016-17	566.2
2017-18	576.6
2018-19	593.7
2019-20	620.3

■ Sixth Form Education: Finance

Alexander Stafford:[\[30866\]](#)

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: Coronavirus

Catherine McKinnell:[\[31511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, if he will issue guidance for commissioners and providers of school-based medical services for children with complex health and care needs in special schools and other settings.

Vicky Ford:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: COVID-19 is clearly an unprecedented situation and the department's highest priority.

We are working closely with colleagues across government to ensure that appropriate arrangements and support are in place for all the department's sectors – from early years and childcare to schools and children's social care, and for vulnerable groups including children with complex health and care needs.

The government has published guidance for implementing isolation in atypical settings, such as special settings, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-residential-educational-settings>.

We have also published questions and answers about the provisions being made for vulnerable children and young people:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Ben Lake: [32722]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has considered the suspension of student loan repayments in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ben Lake: [32723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has held discussions with the Welsh Government on suspending student loan repayments in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Fleur Anderson: [32740]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of suspending student loan repayments for people who experience reductions in income due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

The repayment of student loans, which includes borrowers from Wales, is governed by the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009 (as amended). Department officials are in regular contact with the Devolved Administrations and will continue to liaise with them on Student Loan Repayment policy.

The current system protects borrowers if they see a reduction in their income. Repayments are made based on a borrower's monthly or weekly income, not the interest rate or amount borrowed, and no repayments are made for earnings below the repayment thresholds. Repayments are calculated as a fixed percentage of earnings above the relevant repayment threshold - if income drops, so do repayments made. Any outstanding debt is written off at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower.

If, at the end of the year, the borrower's total income is below the relevant annual threshold, they may reclaim any repayments from the Student Loans Company made during that year.

■ Teachers: Violence and Abuse

Jonathan Gullis:

[30835]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent steps his Department has taken to protect teachers from physical and verbal abuse in the course of their work.

Nick Gibb:

Good behaviour in school is crucial if children are to learn and reach their full potential. As well as delivering excellent teaching, schools should be calm, safe and disciplined environments free from the low-level disruption that prevents pupils from learning. All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy which outlines measures to encourage good behaviour, and the sanctions that will be imposed for misbehaviour. This should be communicated to all pupils, school staff and parents. Behaviour is a key element against which schools are assessed during Ofsted inspections.

Abuse of any kind is unacceptable, and this includes abuse of staff, whether by pupils, parents or colleagues. Schools have a duty of care to their staff and should address and resolve issues of abuse that teachers face. If teachers feel they have been subjected to abuse, they should report it to their employer and if necessary the police.

The Department is committed to backing heads and teachers to enforce discipline, and we have given teachers a range of powers to promote good behaviour and discipline misbehaviour. We have extended teachers' searching powers and have allowed them to impose same day detentions. We have also made clear that teachers can use reasonable force where appropriate.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Flood Control

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[30675]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will make payments to farmers to use fields to soak up water at times of flood risk; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

There are many measures the Government can use to mitigate the risk of flooding and coastal erosion in England, especially when considered across an entire catchment. These include building and maintaining traditional defence schemes and using more natural processes, commonly known as natural flood management.

These natural processes, where appropriately designed and situated, play an important role by slowing the flow of flood water as it moves downstream. These processes can include tree planting, leaky debris dams and peatland restoration on upper slopes, flood washlands and river re-connection mid-catchment and management and creation of coastal marsh and sand dune systems in coastal areas.

Floodplains, and many washlands provide a natural and expected space to receive excess water when watercourses are subject to flood conditions. Outside of flood conditions these lands can provide opportunities for food production and/or useful spaces for wildlife and recreation.

However, there are additional spaces, including farmland, where intervention is needed to store flood water temporarily away from watercourses, when it will help to protect a community or critical infrastructure further downstream. Under the Water Resources Act 1991, Risk Management Authorities, including the Environment Agency, may, where appropriate, make payments to the landowner to allow for such land to be used as part of a scheme to create an area of temporary flood storage. The Environment Agency already has around 500 such arrangements with landowners around England.

Furthermore there is also a funding mechanism through Countryside Stewardship grants to encourage making space for water. This grant aims to help water flow in a winding course across floodplains, flooding temporarily to restore river and wetland habitats. It will also reduce the risk of high energy flows and soil erosion, and allow water to drain freely back into the river channel.

Finally, the new Environmental Land Management scheme will roll out from late 2024. The scheme will incentivise the reduction in and protection from environmental hazards. To deliver this public good it could pay farmers and other land managers for land management practices that can help reduce the impacts of, and enhance resilience to, flooding, for example incentivising temporary flood storage areas.

■ **Bovine Tuberculosis: Vaccination**

Ben Lake:

[\[32721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when field trials of cattle vaccination and accompanied DIVA tests will commence.

Victoria Prentis:

In order to start the field trials, we need permission from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in the form of Animal Test Certificates (ATC). We submitted applications on 17 October and have more recently answered a number of detailed follow up questions and submitted further information requested by VMD. Subject to award of the ATCs, invitations to tender for delivery of elements of the field trials will commence as soon as possible.

■ **Seafood: USA**

James Gray:

[\[31428\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department has taken in relation to the introduction of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act Import Provision Rule by that country.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working closely with Marine Scotland, the Marine Management Organisation, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Seafish, the University of St Andrews, the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and the British Embassy in Washington DC on the UK's approach to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Our aim is that the UK can continue to export to the United States when the MMPA is implemented on 1 January 2022.

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus**Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[30169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Government's performance in disseminating information on covid-19 on levels of stockpiling from supermarkets by the general public.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is in regular contact with the food industry on the response to coronavirus, building on our well-established links with the industry to manage disruption. The industry is adapting quickly to what have been unprecedented changes in consumer demands, and food supply into and within the UK remains resilient.

To help supermarkets, the Government has already introduced new measures to keep food supply flowing. We have temporarily relaxed elements of competition law to enable supermarkets to work more closely together to ensure people can access the products they need. Food retailers will now be able to share data on their stock levels, cooperate to keep stores open and share staff, distribution depots and delivery vehicles. This will help keep shops open and staffed and better able to meet high demand. Guidance has been issued to local authorities to show flexibility to allow extended delivery hours to supermarkets to ensure shelves can be replenished more quickly. The Transport Secretary has also announced a temporary and limited relaxation of the drivers' hours rules so that more goods can be delivered to every store every day.

Jon Trickett:[\[32635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people with specific dietary needs as a result of a medical condition can obtain the food they need from supermarkets.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has well-established ways of working with the food industry during disruption to supply situations. We are aware of the additional availability issues faced by people who have particular dietary requirements and are working with the food industry to ensure that everybody is able to get the food that they need. We will continue to work closely with the industry over the coming days and months.

Our retailers already have highly resilient supply chains and they are working around the clock to adapt quickly to these changes in demands. Food supply into and across the UK is resilient.

To help industry respond to this unprecedented demand we have 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 more quickly, and we have implemented extensions to drivers' hours. We are also temporarily relaxing certain elements of competition law to ensure retailers are able to collaborate effectively in the national interest.

Gill Furniss:

[\[32714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential effect of (a) stockpiling and (b) purchase limits being placed on products by supermarkets on the quantity of food donations to food banks.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is in regular contact with the food industry on the response to coronavirus, building on our well-established links with the industry to manage disruption. The industry has adapted quickly to what have been unprecedented changes in consumer demands, and food supply into and within the UK is resilient.

To help supermarkets, the Government has already introduced new measures to keep food supply flowing. We have relaxed competition law, issued guidance to local authorities to allow extended delivery hours to supermarkets so that shelves can be filled up more quickly, and have implemented extensions to drivers' hours.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ **British Airways: Coronavirus**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[32094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with British Airways on the assistance it can provide to the Government in repatriating British nationals.

Nigel Adams:

We are in daily touch with the travel industry. 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.

■ British Nationals Abroad and EU Nationals: Coronavirus**Emily Thornberry:****[32088]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on co-ordinating the repatriation of EU and UK citizens from countries throughout the world.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is in regular contact at the highest levels with our partners from Europe and elsewhere on our joint response to the global pandemic. International cooperation is more important than ever, and the Foreign Secretary has spoken to several of his European counterparts in recent days, including Spanish, Danish and German counterparts to discuss how we work together to protect our citizens, including returning those who find themselves stranded abroad.

FCO teams around the world are working closely alongside European and other partners to ensure that governments have sensible plans to enable the return of British and other travellers, and, crucially, to maintain key transport links to allow British Nationals to return to the UK on commercial flights, wherever possible.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**Emily Thornberry:****[32090]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with UK-based airlines on their role in repatriating UK nationals from overseas.

Nigel Adams:

We are in daily touch with the travel industry. 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.

Emily Thornberry:**[32091]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department will offer people grants or loans to cover the cost of chartered flights to the UK so that cost will not be a barrier to repatriation.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides information on what to do and who to contact if you require financial assistance abroad (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-assistance-abroad/financial-assistance-abroad>). We are helping to reduce travel costs by encouraging airlines to have maximum flexibility on changing return tickets. Where people are in real need, our consular teams will work with them to consider their options and, as a last resort, offer an emergency loan. 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.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[32235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will set up an emergency hotline to assist UK citizens stranded abroad by border closures and flight cancellations.

Nigel Adams:

The FCO has an emergency hotline which is manned 24/7. We are increasing the capacity of our phone lines to manage the exceptionally high volumes of calls. We recommend that those seeking travel advice look at gov.uk and call only if they require urgent consular assistance.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Registration**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[32092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will compile a voluntary register of UK nationals overseas.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Our priority is to support those British nationals who need to return home immediately. Where there has been a breakdown in flights, we have issued instructions to posts to register their details.

■ **British Nationals Abroad: Repatriation**

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[32673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate has he made of the number of UK citizens living in countries which have closed their borders due to the covid-19 pandemic who are seeking repatriation.

Nigel Adams:

We are working intensively with the Governments of those countries that have closed their borders to people travelling to and from the UK, to enable airlines to bring back British people to the UK, if that is what they want. The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we are focused on supporting those around the world who are being affected by the restrictions being put in place. 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) on 0207 008 1500, or the nearest British embassy, High Commission or Consulate (www.gov.uk/world/embassies).

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[32259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to support less economically developed countries with tackling COVID-19.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: To prioritise international support, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has assessed which countries are most at risk of the importation of cases and how prepared they are for a potential outbreak. The UK assessment is that Covid-19 poses an immediate health risk to less economically developed countries as well as secondary health and socio-economic impacts. Diseases are global threats and to save lives around the world we need a strong international response. The UK has announced up to £241 million of UK aid funding to support the global efforts to combat the outbreak of Covid-19 and to support multilateral actors, including the WHO and the IMF, to mitigate the impacts for low- and middle-income countries.

■ Diplomatic Service: Telephone Services

Emily Thornberry: [\[32081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many full-time equivalent staff are employed by his Department to staff the public consular services hotline.

Nigel Adams:

Volumes of calls to our global consular contact centres are at unprecedented levels. Our staff in the consular contact centres are working around the clock to do the best they can for British people overseas. Given the dramatic increase in demand we are doubling the number of call handlers working to answer peoples' calls.

Emily Thornberry: [\[32083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the average waiting time is for people seeking to access advice on the FCO consular services hotline.

Nigel Adams:

Volumes of calls to our global consular contact centres are at unprecedented levels. Our staff in the consular contact centres are working around the clock to do the best they can for British people overseas. Given the dramatic increase in demand we are doubling the number of call handlers working to answer peoples' calls.

■ Embassies: Peru

Rebecca Long Bailey: [\[32281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, for what reasons (a) the British Embassy in Lima, Peru is closed and (b) remote working has not been fully implemented to protect British nationals in need of assistance in that country; and what

guidance his Department has provided to British nationals in that country on communicating with the British consulate.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: Due to a State of National Emergency announced on 16 March, and the subsequently strict travel restrictions, members of our Embassy in Lima are working remotely. The Embassy is not closed and we are working round the clock to make flights available this week for British nationals who wish to leave Peru, but who are currently unable to do so on commercial flights because of the travel restrictions that have been imposed. We are aware of approximately 1160 British Nationals in Peru who have expressed interest in flights back to the UK.

■ **Guatemala and Peru: Coronavirus**

Catherine West:

[\[32250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to repatriate British citizens from (a) Peru and (b) Guatemala due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, on 21 March about the impact of the ongoing State of National Emergency on UK nationals in Peru. He assured him that he would work together with the UK to make sure we could arrange flights home this week. Our Embassy is working closely with the Peruvian authorities to secure the appropriate permissions for those flights to land.

In Guatemala, our Embassy have worked with Guatemalan authorities to transport a number of British citizens to the Mexican border. As things stand, flights between Mexico and the UK are still operating.

■ **India: Visas**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[29812\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Indian Government's denial of visas to UK citizens for travel to India on those people who are denied visas; if he will amend his Department's travel advice to India to enable holidaymakers and other categories of travellers to claim against travel insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The global response to coronavirus is developing rapidly, with many countries imposing travel restrictions and closing borders and we have now taken the step to advise against all but essential travel globally, including India. Travellers should speak to their tour operator, airline, transport/accommodation provider and insurance company (as applicable) to discuss the options available to them in regards to claiming on their travel insurance.

■ Indonesia: Ahmadiyya**Louise Haigh:****[29307]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Indonesian counterpart on the status of displaced Ahmadi Muslims who have spent over a decade at the Wisma Transito refugee camp.

Nigel Adams:

In January 2018, Minister of State (Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth) Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon met Indonesian Ambassador Rizal Sukma where he raised our concerns. In October 2018, Lord Ahmad visited Jakarta in his capacity as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief (FORB). He met representatives of the Ahmadi Muslim community to discuss minority rights, underlining the UK's close interest in their welfare and protection of their rights. He also underlined UK support for FORB in Indonesia and raised concerns on the use of blasphemy laws. HMG officials regularly discuss minority rights with senior members of all six official faiths in Indonesia and meet with leaders of the Ahmadi community.

Freedom of Religion and Belief is a core aspect of the Embassy's work under the Human Rights strand. In December 2019, the British Embassy ran a workshop on media freedom in Jakarta. This included a discussion on reporting on FORB. Embassy officials regularly attend 'Friends of FORB' meetings, and in January of this year embassy officials met with an Ahmadi spokesperson.

■ Peru: Coronavirus**Emily Thornberry:****[32085]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in Peru on the (a) state of emergency and (b) effect of that state of emergency on UK nationals in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, on 21 March about the impact of the ongoing State of National Emergency on UK nationals in Peru. He assured the Foreign Secretary that he would work together with the UK to make sure we could arrange flights home this week. Our Embassy is working closely with the Peruvian authorities to secure the appropriate permissions for those flights to land.

Rebecca Long Bailey:**[32275]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Peruvian counterpart on organising repatriation flights for British nationals in Peru that wish to return to the UK.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, on 21 March about the impact of the ongoing State of National Emergency on UK nationals in Peru. He assured him

that he would work together with the UK to make sure we could arrange flights home this week. Our Embassy is working closely with the Peruvian authorities to secure the appropriate permissions for those flights to land.

■ **Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights**

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[32643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Saudi Arabian counterpart on the human rights of women's rights activists in that country.

James Cleverly:

We remain concerned about the continued detention of women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia, and about the allegations that women's rights activists have been subject to torture during their detention in Saudi Arabia. We have consistently called for them to have access to legal representation, raised concerns about the use of solitary confinement and allegations of torture, and have pressed for due process. During his visit to Riyadh on 4 and 5 March, the Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the continued detention of women's rights activists. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and raise these cases.

■ **Travel: Coronavirus**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[32222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps is he taking to support organisations that have planned (a) school and (b) community group trips abroad that have been cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak to claim refunds.

Nigel Adams:

Since 17 March, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has advised against all but essential travel globally. Travellers should speak to their tour operator and check their terms and conditions of their travel insurance. They should contact their travel insurance company for advice about making a claim.

■ **Viral Diseases: International Cooperation**

Emily Thornberry:

[\[32095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to his international counterparts on the development and use of a global early warning system for virus outbreaks to ensure immediate action in response to a reported threat.

Nigel Adams:

We will work closely with international partners in the coming months to review lessons learned from the outbreak of Covid-19. Currently, we are working together with our international counterparts to resolve the health and economic risks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and to set the stage for a strong recovery of sustainable

economic growth and prosperity. 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.

■ Zimbabwe: Humanitarian Situation

Ruth Jones:

[\[30822\]](#)

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

James Duddridge:

The UK is seriously concerned about the challenging humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. Humanitarian needs are rising, due to the combination of poor and erratic rains and a deteriorating economic situation. Recent analysis shows that without support 5.5 million people in rural areas and 2.2 million in urban areas will not have access to the food they need. In response to these needs, the Department for International Development has committed £49 million through a new Zimbabwe Humanitarian and Resilience Programme to support people who do not have access to the food they need.

Our Embassy in Harare continues to monitor developments closely, encouraging the Government of Zimbabwe to implement the Staff Monitored Programme (which runs until March this year) agreed with the International Monetary Fund. Our Ambassador discussed the humanitarian crisis facing the country and reinforced the need for comprehensive political and economic reform and the protection of the poorest during her meeting with Vice President Chiwenga on 9 December 2019. On 11 March the Zimbabwean Finance Minister announced a set of measures intended to stabilize the exchange rate and inflation. Whilst we welcome the measures, which are in line with the recent IMF recommendations, we will monitor closely how the measures are now implemented.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion: Counselling

Fiona Bruce:

[\[32129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the counselling women receive whilst considering an abortion is independent.

Helen Whately:

Guidance from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists sets out that healthcare staff caring for women requesting abortion should identify those who require more support in the decision-making process and pathways to additional support, including counselling and social services, should be available. For abortions provided by independent sector providers must meet the Required Standard

Operating Procedures (RSOPs) set out in the Department's Procedures for the Approval of Independent Sector Places for the Termination of Pregnancy (Abortion).

The RSOPs require that all women requesting an abortion should be offered the opportunity to discuss their options and choices with a trained counsellor and this offer should be regularly repeated. A trained pregnancy counsellor is someone trained to Diploma level or equivalent. Counselling must be non-directive and non-judgemental and should not create barriers or delays. Counsellors should undergo continuous professional development and training similar to other professionals.

■ **Abortion: Disability**

Fiona Bruce:

[\[32127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of opinion polls which indicate the majority of UK citizens oppose disability-selective abortion.

Helen Whately:

No specific assessment has been made of the implications for policies of opinion polls which indicate the majority of UK citizens oppose disability-selective abortion.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Labelling**

Mary Glendon:

[\[29908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is taking steps to ensure that labels on alcoholic drinks inform consumers of the Chief Medical Officer's advice not to drink more than 14 units a week.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has worked with the alcohol industry to ensure that alcohol labels reflect the United Kingdom Chief Medical Officer's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines for drinks produced after 1 September 2019. The industry has committed to comply with this requirement. We will keep progress with compliance under review.

■ **Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse**

Mary Glendon:

[\[29927\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to reduce the number of alcohol-related (a) cancers and (b) deaths.

Jo Churchill:

The Government is committed to tackling health harms from alcohol and supporting the most vulnerable at risk from alcohol misuse. We are introducing measures including the NHS Long Term Plan to reduce hospital admissions, along with ambitions and commitments to improve cancer outcomes and services in England. We will encourage people to moderate their drinking as outlined in the Prevention Green Paper through low and no alcohol products. The United Kingdom's Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking guidelines highlight that the risk of developing a

range of health problems, including cancer, increases the more you drink on a regular basis. The new drinking guidelines are included in a range of public health messaging on the 'One You' service.

■ **Autism: Mental Health Services**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[31453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to develop an adapted Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme people with autism.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are no current plans to develop an adapted Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme for autistic people. Therapy is available, via self-referral or referral from a professional, to all adults experiencing a common mental health disorder.

IAPT provides evidence based psychological therapies as recommended in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for the treatment of depression and anxiety. NICE guidelines will be followed where there are adjustments required to therapy delivery for particular groups of people, including autistic people.

Reasonable adjustments that may be required to make it suitable for autistic people might include, for example, the method of delivery or duration of the intervention.

■ **Chickenpox: Lost Working Days**

Chris Green:

[\[30154\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of working days that are lost each year as a result of parents caring for a child with chickenpox.

Chris Green:

[\[30156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the average cost to families of parents and carers taking time off work to care for children with chickenpox; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which provides the Government with expert advice on the provision of vaccination and immunisation services, does not routinely include non-health-related assessments such as these when considering evidence towards their recommendations.

Our chickenpox (varicella) immunisation programme, following advice from the JCVI, is targeted at those who are in close contact with people who are at high risk from chickenpox, such as siblings of a leukaemic child, or a child whose parent is undergoing chemotherapy. The JCVI does not currently recommend universal varicella vaccine as part of the routine childhood programme.

■ Cocaine

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

[29265]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to run a public information campaign to tackle the consumption of so-called ethically sourced cocaine.

Jo Churchill:

All illicit drugs are harmful, and there is no safe way to take them. The Government does not condone the illicit supply of drugs. Public Health England coordinate public information campaigns on drug consumption.

■ Coronavirus

Jeremy Hunt:

[27983]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 cases the Government estimates there will be in England at any one time at the peak of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 16 March 2020]: The Government relies on modelling work undertaken by several academic groups, who report to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) through its various subgroups. SAGE will continue to publish the evidence that it considers.

From modelling and current data on the outbreak, it is likely that the number of confirmed United Kingdom cases will rise, but it is not possible to estimate how many individuals will be infected currently. This will be dependent on the implementation of and adherence to public health measures, and the success of those measures in suppressing transmission of the virus and the numbers of cases of infection.

■ Coronavirus: Cancer

Andrew Gwynne:

[30697]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that vulnerable people (a) living with cancer and (b) who have recently had chemotherapy can obtain the information and support they need in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The National Health Service will contact patients that are at high risk of getting seriously ill with COVID-19 from Monday 23 March 2020. This will include patients with certain types of cancer, and those that are receiving chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

NHS England and NHS Improvement suggest that patients read the advice given on the NHS website at the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Further advice can be found on the MacMillan website at the following link:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/get-help/physical-help/cancer-and-coronavirus>

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Catherine West: [30864]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government is assessing steps other countries are taking to control and treat covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The Government is working closely with others, globally, to share knowledge and inform decisions. The G7 met recently and issued a statement on the COVID-19 outbreak, which stressed the value of real-time information-sharing to ensure access to the best and latest intelligence, prevention strategies and mitigation measures.

Countries will pool epidemiologic and other data to better understand and fight the virus.

■ Coronavirus: Drugs

Sam Tarry: [30918]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the NHS has an adequate supply of antiviral and immune therapy drugs to treat patients; and what the timescale is for the supply of those drugs to be sufficient to meet demand.

Jo Churchill:

The Department and Public Health England hold, or have contracts with suppliers for, stockpiles of a wide range of essential medicines. The Department is working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to help ensure patients can access the medicines they need.

■ Coronavirus: General Practitioners

Jessica Morden: [31460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has plans to extend patient access to GP surgeries via (a) dial-in telephone lines, (b) skype and (c) other teleconferencing facilities to facilitate the remote working of GPs during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: NHSX and NHS England and NHS Improvement are supporting the rapid acceleration of the Digital First programme to ensure general practitioner (GP) practices in England have the ability to deliver total triage using online consultation and video consultations. At the same time we are ensuring every GP practice has an uncapped ability to send and receive text messages for a range

of purposes e.g. reminders, invitations to video consultations, and ensuring that GP practices have sufficient telephone capacity to take and make telephone calls with patients.

In terms of general practice staff we are making sure that every GP practice has the capability to support remote working for staff including equipment, secure communications, smartcard access, software and access to support.

■ Coronavirus: Health Services

Andrew Lewer:

[30091]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) people with motor neurone disease and (b) other vulnerable groups can access the healthcare they need during the covid-19 outbreak; and what support will be available to family members who have had to (a) stop working and (b) withdraw children from school in order to provide care and avoid passing on the infection to vulnerable family members.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.

If vulnerable individuals receive support from health and social care organisations, for example, if care is provided through the local authority or health care system, this will continue as normal. Health providers will take additional precautions to ensure individuals are protected.

If you think you fall into one of the categories of extremely vulnerable people listed on the following link, you will receive a letter or phone call from your GP and you are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks from the day you receive your letter:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

The Government is committed to supporting the millions of families that will be affected over the coming months.

The Chancellor committed £1 billion to support the financial security of vulnerable people, through a half billion boost to the welfare system, and a half billion pound Hardship Fund for Local authorities. The Chancellor has also announced that for those in difficulty due to coronavirus, mortgage lenders will offer at least a three month mortgage holiday and will work with trade unions and business groups to develop new forms of employment support.

■ Coronavirus: Homelessness

Fleur Anderson:

[30073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to (a) the homeless community to prevent the spread of covid-19 and (b) homeless shelters to set up self-isolation facilities.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The Government recognises the challenges faced by those who are homeless or sleeping rough during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department is working closely with NHS England, Public Health England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the sector to minimise the risk for vulnerable people and those currently unable to self-isolate.

Public Health England has published guidance for hostels or day centre providers of services for people experiencing rough sleeping.

As an initial first step the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has announced £3.2 million in emergency funding for local authorities to help rough sleepers and those at risk of sleeping rough to self-isolate. This funding will assist local authorities with providing accommodation and support to vulnerable people who are at risk of, or who have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Midwives

Daniel Zeichner:

[31527]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of the Nursing and Midwifery Council on relaxing the requirements for International English Language Testing System evidence forms during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the independent regulator of nurses and midwives in the United Kingdom, and nursing associates in England. It sets the standards that registrants must meet to demonstrate that they are capable of practising safely and effectively. This includes assessing that an applicant can speak, read, listen and write English to the required standards.

There are currently no plans to relax the requirements for English language competence set by the NMC for overseas candidates applying to join the register.

■ Coronavirus: Palliative Care

Caroline Lucas:

[30733]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standards on care of dying adults in the last days of life and the guidance in the June 2014 One Chance to Get it Right report, what plans he has for palliative care provision during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Ensuring the continued provision of high-quality personalised palliative and end of life care, as laid out in National Institute for Health and Care Excellence quality standards and the 2014 One Chance to Get it Right report, is a key aspect of the national response to COVID-19.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, clinicians and people with lived experience to limit disruption to current service provision and patient experience, whilst also planning for any additional capacity that is required.

■ Coronavirus: Pharmacy**Robert Halfon:****[30748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the prices of (a) hand sanitiser, (b) paracetamol and (c) other medical supplies in chemists and pharmacies do not increase as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society do not encourage or support profiteering or taking advantage of the current coronavirus outbreak. The Competition and Markets Authority are monitoring the situation and will look into reports of profiteering and take action to regulate prices. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.rpharms.com/coronavirus/>

■ Coronavirus: Schools**Sarah Owen:****[29985]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has in place to ensure that schools in (a) Luton and (b) the UK are adequately supported and protected in the event of a large scale outbreak of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: We have launched a public information campaign to help the public understand the risks of the virus and how they can protect themselves, including publishing a series of guidance documents on how to handle suspected cases in different sectors of the economy, including schools. We will keep this under review and publish more guidance as necessary.

More information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

From 20 March, parents have been asked to keep their children at home wherever possible. Schools, and all childcare providers, are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children – children who are vulnerable, and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. More information on this can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

■ **Coronavirus: Sleeping Rough**

Sir Desmond Swayne: [29813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide public information and advice on covid-19 to rough sleepers.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The Government recognises the challenges faced by those who are homeless or sleeping rough during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department is working closely with NHS England, Public Health England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the sector to minimise the risk for vulnerable people and those currently unable to self-isolate.

Public Health England has published guidance for hostels or day centre providers of services for people experiencing rough sleeping which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-services-for-people-experiencing-rough-sleeping/covid-19-guidance-for-hostel-or-day-centre-providers-of-services-for-people-experiencing-rough-sleeping>

■ **Coronavirus: Tocilizumab**

Sarah Owen: [29988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the decision by the Chinese Government to approve the drug Actemra for treating complications arising from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The Department is considering carefully all available evidence around the potential of different medicines for use in treating COVID-19.

Clinical trials are being developed to assess the benefits of a number of different medicines in treating COVID-19. Further medicines may be trialled should evidence indicate to the Department this would be an appropriate course of action.

The Department, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, Public Health England and the National Health Service are working together to ensure that trials can begin as soon as possible. The first trial in the United Kingdom in hospitalised patients should begin later this week.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

James Murray:

[31540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to recognise the marketing authorisation by the European Medicines Agency of any coronavirus (2019-nCoV) vaccine to ensure there is no risk of delay in the UK acquiring the vaccine in comparison to countries in the EU.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: As of 31 January 2020, the United Kingdom is in the Transition Period. During this time the UK will continue to follow EU legislation which includes European Medicines Agency processes and decisions until 31 December 2020. As such any European Union centrally authorised medicines, including any COVID-19 vaccine, would also be authorised in the UK.

The UK is a world leader in preparing for and managing public health incidents and on 3 March the Government published its action plan to tackle the spread of coronavirus.

Both the EU and the UK are committed to agreeing a future partnership by the end of 2020 and are working to achieve this. The Government is working to ensure that UK patients can access the best and most innovative medicines, whatever the result of negotiations with the EU on our future relationship. It is in the interests of both the UK and the EU to agree a future partnership that keeps goods flowing, services being provided and business being done.

■ Defibrillators

Christian Matheson:

[29229]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made in the creation of a register of defibrillators throughout the UK.

Jo Churchill:

The NHS Long Term Plan recognises the importance of fast and effective action to help save the lives of people suffering a cardiac arrest.

The British Heart Foundation, in partnership with the Resuscitation Council UK (RCUK), the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives and the National Health Service, have set up the Circuit: the national defibrillator network. This is now live in five ambulance services: the West Midlands, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the East Midlands. The Circuit supports the ambulance services to identify the nearest defibrillator at the time of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. It will also lead to a national dataset which when combined with other relevant national datasets will inform national policy and support research.

■ Dental Services: Protective Clothing**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:** [31564]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the shortage of face masks on dental practices.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: We are aware of the interruption to the supply chain of personal protective equipment, in particular face masks for the safe delivery of dental care.

We have been working with the four main dental wholesalers. Face masks have been released from the pandemic flu stock to relieve some of the current pressure and stock is available.

■ Drugs: Coronavirus**Fleur Anderson:** [32737]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure supply of generic drugs and repeat prescriptions of (a) paracetamol, (b) thyroxine, (c) warfarin and (d) insulin during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The country is well prepared to deal with any impacts of COVID-19 and we have stockpiles of generic drugs, in the event of any supply issues or significant increases in demand.

The Department is working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to help ensure patients can access the medicines they need, and precautions are in place to reduce the likelihood of future shortages.

The steps being taken to protect United Kingdom supplies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak were set out in the Department's press statement issued on 11 February 2020. This statement can be read at the following link:

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

■ East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust: Finance**Gareth Thomas:** [27487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 February 2020 to Question 1157, for what purpose the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust has identified a requirement for £2.5 million capital funds; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust has identified a requirement for £2.5 million capital funds to fund the replacement of a linear accelerator at the Mount

Vernon Cancer Centre. This cost includes both the cost of the linear accelerator itself and associated enabling and refurbishment works required.

■ Electronic Cigarettes

Paul Blomfield: [31497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of (a) the number of people and (b) the number of people under the age of 18 who have taken up vaping who did not previously smoke cigarettes.

Paul Blomfield: [31498]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of vaping on the health of people who have not previously smoked cigarettes.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Public Health England publishes annual independent updates on the prevalence of vaping among adults and young people in England.

The latest report found that less than 1% of adults who have never smoked are current vapers (defined as any current use). Among young people under 18, less than 1% of those who have never smoked are current vapers (defined as weekly or less than weekly).

No assessment has been made of the effect of vaping on the health of people who have never smoked in England.

‘Vaping in England: an evidence update including mental health and pregnancy, March 2020: a report commissioned by Public Health England’, is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaping-in-england-evidence-update-march-2020>

■ Foetuses: Pain

Fiona Bruce: [32128]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has plans to review their guidelines on foetal pain.

Helen Whately:

There is currently no plan for the Department to review the guidelines on foetal pain.

The Department does not set clinical practice. It is for clinicians to determine whether it is appropriate to provide fetal pain relief. To support clinical practice, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has considered the issue of fetal pain and awareness in its guidelines on ‘The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion and Fetal Awareness: Review of Research and Recommendations for Practice’, which can be viewed online at the following link:

https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/abortion-guideline_web_1.pdf

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/rcogfetalawarenesswpr0610.pdf>

■ Food: Testing

Rebecca Long Bailey: [28674]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reinstating support to local authorities for food sampling.

Jo Churchill:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the central competent authority for food safety and has a statutory function to protect health and consumers interests for food and drink. Local authorities are responsible for the day to day delivery of controls and to carry out appropriate enforcement activity. Food sampling is just one of a wide range of different approaches that local authorities use to ensure compliance. It is the local authorities responsibility to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to deliver these controls.

The FSA recognises the essential role of sampling in maintaining food standards and providing confidence in the food we eat. As part of this, the FSA is developing a sampling strategy, creating an intelligence led approach to delivering sampling to ensure it is effectively targeted to safeguard public health.

■ Housing: Health

Alex Cunningham: [29945]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate his Department has made of the cost to the NHS of (a) cold and energy inefficient homes and (b) unhealthy housing.

Alex Cunningham: [29946]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has conducted research on the effect of cold and energy inefficient homes on the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

In a 2016 report, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) estimated that the cost to the National Health Service of excess cold in the poorest 15% of housing stock in England is approximately £848 million per year. It estimated that investment to improve the thermal performance of these homes would cost £6 billion. They also estimated that poor housing in England generated first year NHS treatment costs of £1.4 billion annually. The wider cost to society (including medical costs, lost education and employment opportunities) of poor housing was £18.6 billion.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is leading a project looking at the health impacts of living in cold homes.

The Fuel Poverty Strategy for England includes a vulnerability principle and Government has consulted on updating this principle so that it focuses specifically on households that are most at risk to the impact of living in a cold home. This intends to ensure that energy efficiency schemes can support those in the greatest need.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has issued guidance which covers reducing the health risks, including preventable deaths, associated with living in a cold home, available to view at the following link:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

Public Health England has produced online training for frontline health and social care practitioners to help them direct people living in a cold home that may be affecting their health to local sources of assistance, available at the following link:

<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/cold-homes/>

■ **Lung Diseases: North West**

Conor McGinn:

[30893]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people with a respiratory disease diagnosis live in (a) St Helens, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Data on the total number of people with a respiratory disease diagnosis are not available. The Quality Outcomes Framework collects data on the number of patients recorded on general practice registers with chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) or asthma.

■ **Medical Equipment: Certification**

Chris Green:

[30174]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff members within the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency are reviewing re-certification applications to comply with the Medical Devices Regulation.

Chris Green:

[30178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all medical device businesses are re-certified so that they comply with the Medical Device Regulation before the May 2020 deadline.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The new Medical Device Regulation (MDR), which will become United Kingdom law from 26 May 2020 as part of the European Union Withdrawal Act 2019, substantially strengthens the regulatory framework for medical devices and notified bodies and manufacturers are having to make significant changes to meet the enhanced requirements.

The Government recognises the importance of having competent notified bodies in place to ensure continuity of supply of products to the UK market. Therefore, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has been engaging with UK industry and notified bodies on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are prepared for the implementation of the MDR.

There are also transitional provisions in place which enable existing CE marked devices to remain valid for sale until the date of expiry of that certificate. This means in practice that all devices on the UK market do not require immediate re-certification.

The MHRA will publish further guidance on how we intend to support businesses who may struggle to obtain certification under the MDR and to ensure continuity of supply of medical devices to UK patients.

■ Medical Equipment: Screening

Justin Madders: [\[29231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government has plans to implement EU regulatory changes in respect of in vitro diagnostic medical devices regulation; and if he will make a statement.

Justin Madders: [\[29232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the Government's policy is on the (a) recognition and (b) enforcement of CE Marking requirements for (i) medical devices and (ii) in vitro diagnostics; whether the Government has plans to implement the in vitro diagnostic medical devices regulation; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The United Kingdom has left the European Union and entered a transition period from 1 February to 31 December 2020. During this period the Government will forge new partnerships with the EU and the rest of world.

Both the EU and the UK are committed to agreeing a future partnership by the end of 2020 and are working to achieve this. The UK will continue to ensure fast access to devices for patients and maintain high standards of patient safety.

■ MMR Vaccine

Mr Gregory Campbell: [\[32069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps is he taking to improve take-up of the MMR vaccine for five year old children.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: To increase take-up of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, NHS England and NHS Improvement and Public Health England are working with key regional and local stakeholders, such as Directors of clinical quality, clinical commissioning groups and local authorities, to implement actions from Public Health England's 'Measles and rubella UK elimination strategy 2019'. The actions include notifications from Child Health Information Services to help

general practices identify children with due and overdue vaccinations and improving information to parents that emphasises the importance getting the MMR vaccination.

■ NHS

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[30707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his timescale is for the publication of the NHS People's Plan.

Helen Whately:

The National Health Service published the interim NHS People Plan on 3 June 2019. It sets out the long-term vision and immediate actions to meet the challenges of supply, reform, culture and leadership.

Publication of the final NHS People Plan has been deferred to later this year, allowing the NHS to devote maximum operational effort to COVID-19 readiness and response. The Government is working with the NHS to identify a package of support for NHS staff to help them during the COVID-19 response. This is likely to involve accelerating some of the elements of the NHS People Plan related to staff health and wellbeing.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing

Layla Moran:

[\[30113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what procurement guidance his Department provides to (a) NHS trusts and (b) other primary healthcare providers on ensuring the adequacy of supply of personal protective equipment in every hospital required to treat patients with covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: National Health Service trusts will access supplies using existing routes. As part of our normal emergency arrangements we already stockpile personal protective equipment.

Personal protective equipment was distributed to general practices across the country last week. The packs include facemasks, aprons and gloves.

■ NHS: Staff

Robert Halfon:

[\[30750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of trainee doctors accelerating or pausing their courses in order to assist with frontline support in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The General Medical Council (GMC) already has powers to register professionals in an emergency.

We are working closely with all the healthcare professional bodies to ensure they have plans in place to identify, contact and register key groups of staff which could enable them to assist with frontline support in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

As part of its planning and preparation, the General Medical Council (GMC) is preparing to contact those doctors with a United Kingdom address, who are fully qualified and experienced, of good standing, and who have given up their registration or licence to practise within the last three years, outlining the process they would need to follow and informing them of what they should do if they want to opt out.

In all around 15,000 doctors will be contacted.

■ Ovarian Cancer

Andrew Rosindell:

[27507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were diagnosed with ovarian cancer in England in the last 12 months.

Jo Churchill:

The latest complete year of cancer registration data is 2018. The number of ovarian cancers diagnosed in 2018 was 6,142. The 2018 cancer registration statistics are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cancer-registration-statistics-england-2018>

■ Pigmeat: Nitrates

Sir Greg Knight:

[31445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what processes are in place to monitor the levels of nitrates in bacon sold in the UK; if he will encourage producers to reduce nitrate levels in bacon; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Nitrites and nitrates are naturally present in vegetables such as spinach, lettuce, and celery, with only around 5% of dietary exposure coming from food additive use. Nitrates are important preservatives that work against microorganisms that can spoil food and cause foodborne disease, in particular *Clostridium Botulinum* which causes botulism.

Based on scientific evaluation, legal maximum safe limits for nitrates have been set. These levels are monitored through risk-based compliance checks carried out by local authorities, and any non-compliant products are addressed through a range of interventions, including withdrawal.

The Food Standards Agency works closely with the meat industry to ensure that nitrites and nitrates are used at the lowest possible levels to achieve their technological function, without jeopardising product safety.

■ Protective Clothing

Jeremy Hunt:

[31463]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) fluid protection face masks, (b) aprons and (c) pairs of latex gloves are held in the personal protective equipment stockpile.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The National Health Service has a stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE) including facemasks, respirators, protective eyewear, aprons and gloves. These are being ordered and delivered at speed daily so it is not possible to give a specific number as this is changing rapidly. The Department is confident that there is sufficient immediate stock. The central stockpiles held for European Union Exit and pandemic influenza have also been released for use. The Department is working with the NHS and others in the supply chain to ensure these are delivered to the frontline as soon as possible.

The Department is working with wholesalers to ensure a longer-term supply of all aspects of PPE.

■ Testicular Cancer**Andrew Rosindell:****[27519]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were diagnosed with testicular cancer in England in the last 12 months.

Jo Churchill:

The latest complete year of cancer registration data is 2018. The number of testicular cancers diagnosed in 2018 was 2,076. The 2018 cancer registration statistics are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cancer-registration-statistics-england-2018>

HOME OFFICE**■ Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse****Mary Glendon:****[29911]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to reduce alcohol-related violence.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government wants to ensure swift action to tackle alcohol-related offending. As set out in our manifesto, we will expand electronic tagging for criminals serving time outside jail, including the use of sobriety tags for those whose offending is fuelled by alcohol.

We have also focused on establishing effective partnerships and equipping authorities with the right powers to take effective actions against alcohol related-crime and harms in the night time economy.

■ Crimes of Violence: Young People**Alexander Stafford:****[30878]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide further details on the Centre of Excellence for Tackling Youth Violence announced in Budget 2020.

Victoria Atkins:

On 11 March, the Government announced an additional £5 million for the Youth Endowment Fund to support the creation of a Centre of Excellence for Tackling Youth Violence. This will create a single evidence hub on what works to divert young people away from criminal activity and improve the effectiveness of our wider investments in crime reduction, including the work of the Youth Endowment Fund and Violence Reduction Units.

In 2019, we set up the Youth Endowment Fund to help at-risk young people avoid becoming involved in crime and violence. A core part of the Youth Endowment Fund's mission is to test and independently evaluate interventions so that we know what works so we can better target future interventions.

Given the Government's ambition to reduce youth violence, it is vital that we understand what interventions work and this is effectively disseminated to policy makers. This funding will support the creation of a world-class knowledge base, to ensure evidence on prevention of serious violence is freely accessible and widely shared with policy makers, service commissioners, and front-line professionals, enabling them to design increasingly effective early interventions and support structures for children and young people in their local community.

Discussions on the development of the Centre of Excellence are underway between Home Office officials and the YEF.

■ Domestic Abuse: Children

Alexander Stafford: [\[30883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to strengthen support for children in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Alexander Stafford: [\[30884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the provision of support services available for children affected by domestic abuse.

Alexander Stafford: [\[30885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the definition of significant harm in the Children Act 1989.

Victoria Atkins:

The enhanced Domestic Abuse Bill, as re-introduced on 3 March, includes a new statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse, and their children, within safe accommodation. This new measure augmented those already in the Bill addressing the impact of domestic abuse on children. As provided for in clause 66(2)(b), the statutory guidance which will accompany the Bill will recognise the effect of domestic abuse on children. The guidance will outline the range of impacts domestic abuse can have on children, as

well as appropriate support and referral mechanisms. The Bill will also establish in law, the independent Domestic Abuse Commissioner who will be required to consider the impact of domestic abuse on children, and the services available to them.

In the Government's further response to the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (CP 214), also published on 3 March, we indicated that the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has agreed to undertake an in-depth exploration of the current community-based support landscape. The Government will then work with the Commissioner to understand the needs identified and develop options on how best to address them.

The Government's further response to the Joint Committee also addressed the Committee's recommendation that "the Government consider amending the relevant Children Act definition of harm to explicitly include the trauma caused to children by witnessing coercive control between adults in the household". As set out in the Government's further response, we consider that the existing definition of harm already allows for witnessing and experiencing coercive control as it includes "forms of ill treatment that are not physical" and "impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another". We have concluded that the most effective means of giving effect to the Committee's recommendation is to amend the statutory guidance, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Preet Kaur Gill:

[31581]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support children in domestic abuse households when schools close as a result of covid-19.

Victoria Atkins:

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime. We fully recognise the severe impact it has on children and young people, and that many of them may feel even more vulnerable if they are unable to attend school. Ensuring that vulnerable children remain protected is a top priority for government.

We want to prioritise supporting those most in need at this very difficult time, and we will therefore work with schools and local authorities to help identify the children who most need that support.

Local authorities have the key day-to-day responsibility for delivery of children's social care. Social workers will continue to work with vulnerable children during this period and to support these children to access provision.

■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[30798]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of her Department's package of measures to tackle county lines drugs gangs, announced on 1 October 2019.

Kit Malthouse:

We are investing £25 million this year and next to crack down on the county lines drugs gangs exploiting our children and terrorising our communities.

£5m of this investment is already in operational use, and a number of law enforcement operations resulting directly from it have taken place. For example, on 25 February a cross-force operation by forces including Merseyside Police and the British Transport Police saw 56 people arrested for drugs offences, and significant quantities of drugs, weapons and cash seized.

The Home Office has established a County Lines Task and Finish Group through which we work with operational partners to monitor progress.

■ Offences against Children

Alexander Stafford: [\[30880\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to tackle child sexual abuse.

Alexander Stafford: [\[30881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of Barnardo's recent campaign on the effect child sexual abuse.

Victoria Atkins:

The UK Government is committed to stamping out all forms of child sexual abuse.

We have made significant investments to improve our capabilities to tackle CSA offending, improve our safeguarding response and expand our support for victims and survivors, including through increased funding for support services across the country which victims and survivors can access throughout their lifetime. We have also invested in innovative approaches to tackling vulnerability among children and young people at-risk of exploitation and piloted innovative multi-agency support for those who have experienced sexual abuse.

The Home Office has also funded the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse to improve societal understanding of the scale and nature of child sexual abuse and the experiences of lesser heard communities.

However, we need to do more to drive a whole system response to child sexual abuse; this is why we have announced we will invest an additional £30 million to safeguard children from sexual abuse. Further, we will publish a first-of-its-kind national strategy to prevent and tackle all forms of child sexual abuse. We routinely engage with child protection charities and other experts including Barnardo's on protecting children from child sexual abuse. This has included engagement on development of the Strategy, including through a third sector stakeholder group, which will meet at regular intervals to feed into current and future policy development surrounding child sexual abuse.

■ Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme: Nottinghamshire

Alex Norris:

[\[31586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications from Nottinghamshire the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme (a) received, (b) shortlisted and (c) allocated funding to in the latest period for which figures are available.

Victoria Atkins:

Data on Places of Worship is collated by geographic region.

For the 2019/2020 round of the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme, 531 applications were received, of which 377 met the minimum requirements for consideration. Of those 377, 38 applications were from the East Midlands, and in total 2 were successful from the East Midlands.

Alex Norris:

[\[31587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what representations she has received from Nottinghamshire Police on the administration of the Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Office has received representations from Nottinghamshire Police, and will respond in due course.

■ Police

Mary Glendon:

[\[29912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to support police staff who are (a) abused and (b) injured by people intoxicated with alcohol.

Kit Malthouse:

It is absolutely unacceptable for police officers and staff to be assaulted when carrying out their duties, and we are determined to ensure that they have the support and protection they need.

The Government has invested in programmes which offer help directly to officers and staff. This includes £7.5 million to fund the development of the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS), which was launched in April 2019.

The NPWS has developed evidence-based guidance, advice, tools and resources which can be accessed by forces, as well as individual officers and staff. This helps Chief Constables in their duty to ensure the wellbeing of all officers and staff, by signposting to relevant services and additional support.

However, we want to go further, and have therefore accelerated work to introduce a Police Covenant, to recognise the service and sacrifice of our brave police officers and staff and to deliver the urgent practical support they need. The key areas of focus will be physical protection, health and wellbeing and support for families. On 26 February, we launched a public consultation into the scope and principle of the

Covenant. The consultation will run for 8 weeks, closing on 22 April, and will subsequently be put into law as part of the planned Police Powers and Protection Bill.

We have also committed to consult on doubling the maximum sentence for assaults on emergency workers and are working closely with the Ministry of Justice who are leading on this important work.

■ **Police Community Support Officers: Protective Clothing**

Greg Smith: [\[30065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the personal protective equipment provided to police community support offices in protecting them from physical attack.

Greg Smith: [\[30066\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to introduce new personal protective equipment for police community support officers to help protect them from physical attack.

Kit Malthouse:

Police Community Support Officers play an important role in policing our communities. Any assaults on our police are completely unacceptable and they should have the most appropriate protection when facing the physical violence that is sometimes directed against them.

The Government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory helps to develop and manage protective equipment standards, such as body armour, so that our police officers and staff are better protected.

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■ **Police: Staffordshire**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[30834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to allocate additional funding to the police in (a) Staffordshire and (b) Stoke-on-Trent.

Kit Malthouse:

The 2020/21 police funding settlement set out the biggest increase in funding for policing since 2010 with Staffordshire receiving an increase of £14.5m, provided they utilise their full precept flexibility.

Police forces will receive an additional £700 million for the recruitment of 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021 and Staffordshire has been allocated 90 officers for the first year, meaning more police on the streets to help tackle violent crime and keep our communities safe.

■ Riot Control Weapons: Civil Disorder

Tom Hunt:

[\[30844\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to purchase water cannons for use in public disorder situations.

Kit Malthouse:

There are no plans to introduce water cannon into UK policing. The Home Office works closely with the National Police Chiefs Council on police capability and the measures that can be used in response to public disorder.

■ Wrecks: Theft

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[30756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of thefts from shipwrecked vessels in UK territorial waters in each of the last five years.

Kit Malthouse:

This information is not collated centrally.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Buildings: Insulation

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[30779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 3 February 2020 to Question 8381 on Buildings, whether the Government plans to publish further guidance on (a) when an EWS1 form should be completed and (b) who should complete form.

Christopher Pincher:

The EWS1 form was developed by industry, led by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). The Department has not issued any guidance in relation to use of the EWS1 form, nor are there plans to do so. The Government is continuing to engage with industry, including RICS, on wider valuation issues around high rise residential buildings.

■ Estate Agents: Coronavirus

Sir David Evennett:

[\[30687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of (a) lettings and (b) estate agents on the effect of covid-19 on the property sector.

Christopher Pincher:

My Department has had initial discussions with letting and estate agents about the effect that coronavirus is having on their businesses and I expect these discussions to continue over the coming period.

■ **Housing: Construction****Alex Cunningham:**[\[30764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all new homes are built to the Lifetime Homes Standard.

Christopher Pincher:

We will consult shortly on various options to raise accessibility standards in new homes. This will include considering the use of M4(2), the standard in building regulations for accessible and adaptable homes, which is broadly equivalent to the Lifetime Homes standard. We also published planning guidance, in June 2019, to help councils meet accessible housing standards in England. This sets an expectation that planning policies on housing should make use of the optional technical standards in the Building Regulations for accessible and adaptable homes. The Government is also currently undertaking a full review of Part M, the regulation which now includes much of Lifetime Homes.

■ **Local Government Finance****Gareth Thomas:**[\[30673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure local authorities have adequate resources to support their most vulnerable residents.

Christopher Pincher:

The 2020-21 settlement for local government provided local authorities with access to the largest increase in spending power in a decade to help local authorities meet rising demand in supporting the most vulnerable people in society, such as those in need of social care. In total, local authorities will have access to almost £6 billion of dedicated funding across adult and children's social care in 2020-21.

The Government has also announced additional funding of £2.9 billion to support hospitals, councils and social care providers through the Covid-19 outbreak. Of this, £1.6 billion will go to local authorities to allow them to address increased pressures on services in their local areas, including those services that are vital for protecting vulnerable people.

In addition, we have confirmed £500 million of funding to provide additional council tax relief, and other support, for vulnerable households

The Government is also providing £3.2 million in initial emergency funding to help rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, self-isolate to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

■ Planning Permission: Coronavirus

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[32634]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the timescale for planning authorities to determine planning applications while restrictions are in place during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has put in place a package of measures that will help keep firms in business, and people in jobs and prevent Covid-19 from causing long-lasting economic harm. It is important that local planning authorities continue to provide the best service possible in these stretching times and prioritise decision-making to ensure the planning system continues to function, especially where this will support the local economy.

We are asking local planning authorities to take an innovative approach and explore every opportunity to use technology to ensure that discussions and consultations can go ahead. We would encourage councils to consider delegating committee decisions where appropriate. The Government has introduced legislation to allow council committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period which we expect will allow planning committees to continue.

■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas:

[30672]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that landlords cannot evict tenants who are self-isolating as a result of 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>.

Robert Halfon:

[30746]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to provide support to private renters for the payment of rent as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

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>.

Tulip Siddiq: [32279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect on (a) in-progress evictions and (b) households awaiting bailiffs when legislation on suspending evictions is introduced during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: The emergency legislation is not retrospective and does not apply to notices issued before the legislation comes into force.

The Lord Chief Justice issued guidance to judges on 19 March stating that applications to suspend warrants of possession should be prioritised, and that judges dealing with any possession claim during the crisis must have in mind the public health guidance and should not make an order that risks impacting on public health.

We have also asked bailiffs and landlords to review all upcoming evictions, taking into account the current coronavirus public health guidance.

We will also expect landlords to carefully consider existing cases and approach these sympathetically in light of the new challenges raised by the pandemic.

Tulip Siddiq: [32283]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to introduce a process to amend or override specified rents in Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreements if landlords and tenants agree a temporary reduction in rent in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: No change is being made to the basic contractual position of the tenant remaining liable for rent for the whole period of the fixed term of a tenancy agreement. However, depending on the contractual provisions of the tenancy agreement, during the fixed term of a tenancy a break clause in the tenancy agreement may be effected to bring that fixed term period to an end. A new tenancy could then be agreed between both landlord and tenant on different terms, including the specified amount of rent lawfully due.

If the fixed terms of an assured shorthold tenancy have expired, and the tenancy is a statutory periodic tenancy, the terms of the tenancy agreement can be modified where mutually agreed by a landlord and a tenant and confirmed in writing.

Any landlord wishing to modify a tenancy agreement with a tenant should seek legal advice in the first instance.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[32719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 17 March 2020 to Question 29300, what estimate he has made of the cumulative debt that will be accrued by renters over the next 3 months if a suspension of rent is not introduced for that period.

Christopher Pincher:

No such estimate has been made at this time.

Those tenants who can afford to pay should continue to do so. By legislating to prevent landlords starting proceedings to evict tenants for at least a three-month period, we are removing the risk of people losing their homes because they are unable to pay rent – without creating a system where landlords must shoulder the financial responsibility and risk.

At the end of this period, landlords and tenants who had struggled financially will be expected to work together to establish an affordable repayment plan, taking into account the tenants' individual circumstances.

■ **Private Rented Housing: Disabled Facilities Grants**

Alex Cunningham:

[\[30763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the Disabled Facilities Grant is more easily accessible for (a) older tenants and (b) landlords of those tenants in the private rented sector.

Luke Hall:

Anyone can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant, including older tenants living in private rented accommodation, subject to a means test and an assessment of need. Tenure should not impact a person's ability to access the home adaptations they need. The Government also funds Foundations, the national body for home improvement agencies. Foundations works closely with local authorities to promote best practice in the delivery of home adaptations, including providing information and advice to older people living in private rented accommodation and their landlords.

■ **Refuges: Domestic Violence**

Rachel Reeves:

[\[32681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 self-isolation on access to refuges for victims of domestic violence.

Luke Hall:

The Government will do everything it can to support refuge providers to keep these vital services open, up and running.

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 the national domestic abuse helpline and safe accommodation support services open and available.

Following these discussions, on 23 March my Department published guidance for providers of refuge and other types of safe accommodation with support for victims of domestic abuse and their children.

The guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-domestic-abuse-safe-accommodation-provision>.

This guidance is in line with current Public Health England advice and sets out guidelines for daily service operation, including where victims may need to self-isolate within refuges and other types of domestic abuse safe accommodation provision.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Abortion: Overseas Aid

Fiona Bruce:

[32130]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that funding from the public purse is not allocated to programmes that support sex-selective abortion overseas.

Wendy Morton:

The UK strongly opposes sex-selective abortion. We do not fund programmes which contribute directly or indirectly to sex-selective abortion. DFID has in place several measures to ensure the accountability of all UK aid, including our programmes that support access to safe abortion care. These include due diligence of all primary implementing partners, regular spot checks, a robust monitoring and evaluation system which includes beneficiary feedback and annual project reviews.

Sex-selective abortion is the result of deep-rooted discrimination against women and girls. The UK supports partner governments' efforts to prevent this discrimination through our programmes to promote gender equality, girls' and women's empowerment and rights.

■ Coronavirus: International Cooperation

Andrew Rosindell:

[29852]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment he has made of the potential merits on increasing the level of support provided to (a) the World Health Organization and (b) other international organisations to help limit the spread of covid-19.

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. UK aid will reduce the risk of the spread of the disease by supporting developing countries most at risk of coronavirus to quickly identify cases and care for patients. This support

demonstrates how UK aid is making the world a safer place by tackling diseases that do not respect borders.

The UK has committed up to £241 million of aid to support the global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. In addition to the UK's significant annual funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) of around £120 million, the UK has committed an additional £10 million to the WHO's Emergency Flash Appeal and additional funding for other international partners who are helping developing countries develop and deliver their own response to the virus. This includes funding for research and development of vaccines, diagnostics and treatments, medical and humanitarian expertise and supplies and a package of support to help developing countries respond to the economic impacts of the virus.

By reducing the global impact of the virus and preventing its spread, this support is firmly in the UK national interest, protecting both the UK public and the stability of the UK economy.

UK aid has a longstanding record of supporting countries across the globe to prepare for large disease outbreaks. We are working closely with our international partners, including the WHO, to support vulnerable countries ensuring they are better prepared. We are keeping further international funding under regular review.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Christian Matheson:

[30805]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to help strengthen the capacity of primary health care systems in low-income countries to respond to the spread of covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

The Department for International Development (DFID) recognises strong and resilient national health systems are vital to global health security and helping to protect the world from infectious diseases, including COVID-19.

Through our multilateral partnerships, and our regional and national programmes, we support low-income countries to make their health systems, including primary healthcare, stronger and more resilient, and able to prevent, detect and respond to health threats, such as COVID-19.

UK aid has a longstanding record of global support to countries to prepare for large disease outbreaks. DFID provides continued and additional support to the World Health Organization (WHO) and other UN agencies, using their leadership role, through providing technical assistance, setting norms and standards and tracking progress to help countries address key Health System Strengthening bottlenecks.

The Department of Health and Social Care's £21 million International Health Regulations (IHR) Strengthening Project builds capacity in six countries across Africa and Asia to enable them to observe the IHRs and better enable them to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease threats.

In addition to the UK's significant annual funding to the WHO of around £120 million, the UK has committed an additional £10 million to the WHO's Emergency Flash Appeal through to April and additional funding for other international partners who are helping developing countries develop and deliver their own response to the virus. We are pressing WHO and the UN to develop a follow-up consolidated appeal to address the COVID-19 health and priority secondary impacts developing countries.

■ **Gaza: Coronavirus**

Christian Matheson:

[\[30804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effect on the healthcare system in Gaza of the response to the spread of covid-19 in that region.

James Cleverly:

There are currently no known cases of COVID-19 in Gaza. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has delivered essential equipment such as lab testing kits and personal protective equipment and has used DFID-funded Trauma Stabilisation Tents to quarantine suspected COVID-19 patients at the Rafah border crossing. UN agencies are supporting further measures such as the establishment of a field hospital and the creation of a medical checkpoint at the Erez border crossing.

A widespread outbreak of the virus could overwhelm Gaza's already overburdened health system - especially given the lack of reliable access to clean water and energy in the strip. We continue to monitor the situation and are working closely with the UN and the international community to ensure agencies are ready to respond to an outbreak.

■ **Overseas Aid**

Chris Law:

[\[32169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how many projects and at what cost to the public purse have been assessed by (a) her and (b) her Chief Statistician as not meeting the definition of Official Development Assistance in each of the last five years.

Wendy Morton:

Spend reported as Official Development Assistance (ODA) must meet the criteria set by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee (DAC). DFID receives a small non-ODA allocation from HMT for the known areas of spend we have that fall outside of the scope of ODA.

DFID collates and checks UK ODA spend data in reporting to the OECD DAC and in our National Statistics publication 'Statistics on International Development'. The DAC Secretariat quality assures donors' ODA spend to ensure that it is reported correctly and qualifies under the ODA rules.

■ Overseas Aid: Charities

Patrick Grady:

[\[32690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with stakeholders participating in the Aid Match scheme on (a) the potential merits of extending the Aid Match fundraising period and (b) basing Aid Match funding on income projected or anticipated before any effect of restrictions as a result of covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

We are engaging directly with the seven charities who have UK Aid Match appeals live or due to launch, to discuss the potential impacts of Covid-19 on these appeals. If charities have had to postpone fundraising activities due to Covid-19, DFID has agreed that when these activities do take place we will continue to match the funds raised from these events, ensuring that through UK Aid Match we continue to give the UK public a say in how the aid budget is spent.

Whilst charities are asked to predict their anticipated income from a UK Aid Match appeal, the actual amount raised can vary widely and there is never a guarantee that anticipated income will be met. As such, whatever the circumstances, it would not be transparent to match fund projected figures.

■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

Patrick Grady:

[\[32691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with recipients of grant funding on the potential merits of extending project implementation timetables with full funding to take into account delays caused by restrictions imposed as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

DFID is engaging with supply partners to address the challenges posed by COVID-19 and has had initial discussions with many of our highest delivery impact supply partners regarding contingency planning and their concerns. We will work collaboratively with supply partners and take a flexible and reasonable approach to find pragmatic solutions to support continuation of delivery where appropriate.

■ Palestinians: Schools

Scott Benton:

[\[30195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions he has had with the Palestinian Authority on the removal and replacement of textbooks from schools in the Palestinian Territories as a result of reports of anti-Semitic and extremist content in those books.

James Cleverly:

The UK government is deeply concerned about allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. Ministers have regularly raised the issue of incitement in the education sector with the PA's Minister for Education, which the

Secretary of State did most recently in February this year. We are pleased that the PA are undertaking a review of their textbooks and updating them in time for the new academic year in September.

Chris Clarkson: [\[31567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent representations she has made to the Palestinian Authority on reports that 31 schools are named after Palestinian terrorists.

Chris Green: [\[31633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent representations she has made to the Palestinian Authority on reports that three schools are named after Nazi collaborators.

James Cleverly:

We have raised our concerns about school naming at senior levels within the Palestinian Authority (PA) and will continue to do so. Our partnership with the PA includes a commitment from the Palestinian leadership to adhere to the principle of non-violence and to tackle language and actions that could incite violence or hatred. We continue to assess that the PA's commitment to peace is in line with our Partnership Principles.

UK support to the PA contributes to the salaries of carefully vetted teachers and education workers in the West Bank through the Palestinian-European Socio-Economic Management Assistance mechanism, which screens recipients against international sanctions lists.

■ **Palestinians: Textbooks**

Jonathan Gullis: [\[30837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the compliance with Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the reported use of Palestinian Authority school textbooks containing antisemitic and extremist content.

James Cleverly:

The UK government is deeply concerned about the allegations of incitement in Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

The UK has been at the forefront of international action to get to the bottom of the allegations. We funded work to develop the methodology for an independent textbook Review sponsored by our European partners. We expect an interim report in June, with a full report later in the year. We have regular discussions with our European Partners on the Review.

Jack Lopresti:

[\[31486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions he has had with her Norwegian counterpart on that country's decision in 2019 to withhold funding to the Palestinian Authority if extremist content is not removed by the Palestinian Authority's from the school curriculum; and if she will make a statement.

James Cleverly:

The UK government is deeply concerned about the allegations of incitement in the Palestinian Authority's school textbooks. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns in a call to the Palestinian Authority's Education Minister just last month.

The UK has been at the forefront of international action to get to the bottom of the allegations. We funded work to develop the methodology for an independent textbook Review sponsored by our European partners. We expect an interim report in June, with a full report later in the year. The UK has regular discussions with our European partners on the Review. I have not had specific discussions with my Norwegian counterpart on this issue.

■ **UNRWA: Finance**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[32297\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the answer of 18 March 2020 to Question 27998, what criteria is used by UK officials to assess UNRWA's effectiveness in allocating resources on the basis of need.

James Cleverly:

UK officials are in regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) to ensure high quality aid delivery. This includes attendance at all of UNRWA's formal meetings, such as the sub and advisory commission meetings and budgetary briefings. UNRWA has provided substantial briefings on its budgeting and funding situation, which UK officials assess alongside the United Nations Board of Auditors report, which provides an external assessment of UNRWA's performance on financial matters.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ **Export Controls: Tees Valley**

Mike Hill:

[\[31619\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if her Department will take steps to help limit the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on international exports from (a) chemical and (b) material plants on Teesside.

Greg Hands:

We are in unprecedented circumstances. Government is working as a whole to ensure that issues facing business are identified, appropriate action is taken, and the latest government support is signposted.

JUSTICE■ **Crematoriums: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury: [30908]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the capacity of crematoriums to cope with demand as a result of covid-19.

Alex Chalk:

Government is putting in place a range of measures to ensure the UK is prepared to manage the impacts of a Covid-19 outbreak. Part of this planning is ensuring we are prepared for higher numbers of people dying over the period of the pandemic.

Ensuring the deceased are treated with dignity and respect whilst minimising the risks to public health is at the forefront of Government planning. Measures underway will increase capacity at a local level to manage additional demand.

The Government's Action Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-action-plan>) sets out planning principles that underpin the response to the Covid-19 outbreak. As part of this response, provisions have been included in the Coronavirus Bill which will ensure the sector can manage the impact of the pandemic.

■ **Crime: Victims**

Fleur Anderson: [32739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps are being taken to ensure that victims of crime will not have their case prejudiced by the delays in the Court system due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

It is essential that our justice system continues to operate despite these unprecedented circumstances. We have been working closely with our criminal justice partners to develop arrangements, which have been adapted and amended to take into account government advice, so that hearings to continue, where possible. This includes prioritising urgent hearings and increasing the capacity to conduct remote hearings.

We are also working with the judiciary to ensure that physical hearings can take place safely and in accordance with advice on social distancing and, if necessary, cases can be adjourned to maximise safety.

However, in this time of uncertainty, we know that victims will need extra support. That is why we are working closely with Police and Crime Commissioners and

nationally commissioned support services to ensure that contingency arrangements are in place to allow continuity of support services in all areas, with a special focus on supporting victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse.

■ Debt Collection: Regulation

Jane Hunt:

[\[30186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has for the regulation of enforcement agents by an independent body.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice is currently reviewing the implementation of reforms, contained in the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 and introduced in 2014, which govern how enforcement agents (bailiffs) enforce debt. We held a call for evidence to inform our review, which ran from November 2018 to February 2019.

In a Written Ministerial Statement made on 22 July 2019, the Department set out its initial response to the call for evidence. We said that we would consider further how regulation of the sector might be strengthened, but we are clear that any further regulation must be effective, proportionate and sustainable.

We will respond in full to the call for evidence in due course.

■ Domestic Abuse: Children

Dame Diana Johnson:

[\[29897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the Further Government Response to the Report from the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill published on 3 March 2020, what criteria he plans to use to measure the effect of each of the workstreams identified on domestic abuse in relationships between under-16 year olds; and what steps he is taking to help ensure that young people aged under 16 who experience peer level abuse can access the specialist support they require.

Alex Chalk:

We are clear that the impact of domestic abuse on young people, including teenage relationship abuse, needs to be properly recognised and that agencies know how best to respond. It is vital that children who have experienced abuse in a peer to peer relationship receive appropriate support and safeguarding.

In our [further response to the Joint Committee](#), published alongside the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill on 3 March 2020, we set out work underway across Government in this area. This includes excellent progress being made by the Department of Education on preparation for the rollout of new relationship education in schools in September 2020 and the consultation about proposed revisions to the statutory guidance for schools and colleges *Keeping Children Safe In Education*.

The majority of support services for victims of crime, including for children, are provided or commissioned by Police and Crime Commissioners, through grant funding provided by the Ministry of Justice. In addition, the Designate Domestic

Abuse Commissioner has committed to lead a review into the community-based domestic abuse support landscape to better understand the current support provision, including for children.

■ Domestic Abuse: Courts

Alexander Stafford: [\[30882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of new domestic abuse courts on the health and wellbeing of children.

Alex Chalk:

The pilot of integrated domestic abuse courts will be subject to a full evaluation, including in relation to its impact on children involved in family proceedings where domestic abuse is a factor. We have already announced in the Budget that £5 million has been allocated to this pilot over the coming financial year, and we will announce more detailed proposals shortly.

■ Legal Aid Scheme

Ruth Jones: [\[30821\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness, (b) accessibility of legal aid in England and Wales.

Alex Chalk:

In February 2019 we published the LASPO Post-Implementation Review to review the effectiveness and accessibility of legal aid in England and Wales. Alongside this, we published the Legal Support Action Plan which set out the government's vision for the future and a number of changes to improve access to legal aid in England and Wales. These include a comprehensive review of the legal aid means tests, improvements to the exceptional case funding scheme, the removal of the mandatory element of the Civil Legal Advice telephone gateway, and the launch of a campaign to raise awareness of legal support, including legal aid.

■ Offenders: Females

Philip Davies: [\[30716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what community-based pilot schemes for women-only offenders are in operation; what the reasons are for such schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Lucy Frazer:

There is currently one community based pilot scheme for women offenders only. This is the Women's Offender Management Complexity Pilot. The Pilot is operating in 2 Probation Delivery Units (PDUs) in Wales.

The rationale for this pilot is that existing Offender Management (OM) models have been derived from information about the whole offender population of which women

make up only a tiny proportion. They are therefore more representative of male offending patterns than female.

Learning from this Pilot is being shared with the Probation Reform Programme, to inform the future design of probation services, and the learning is also being tested for its relevance to the whole (ie male and female) caseload.

There are other community based pilots ongoing that are looking at the whole of the probation caseload, but that include cohorts of women. These are:

- The Bail Information Service pilots which will operate across seven locations in the North West (Liverpool, Bolton, Manchester x 2, Blackburn and Preston Magistrates Court as well as HMP Styal). This Pilot is for men and women. The Pilot sites will be promoting and providing a bail information service, with the aim of diverting suitable defendants from remand in custody.
- The Community Sentence Treatment Requirement (CSTR) Pilots - Through the Community Sentence Treatment Requirement (CSTR) Programme, health and justice partners are working together to improve access to timely and appropriate mental health and substance misuse services for the offenders who need them. The Programme aims to ensure greater use is made of mental health, alcohol and drug treatment requirements as part of community sentences, supporting efforts to reduce reoffending. The pilots are for men and women, operating from 12 sites including 5 women only sites.

It remains our intention to Pilot residential women's centres, as set out in our Female Offender Strategy.

■ Prison Accommodation

Dr Matthew Offord:

[30757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate his Department has made of the capacity of the prison estate in each of the next 12 months.

Lucy Frazer:

Prison numbers can fluctuate, which is why we have a robust set of plans in place to ensure we will always have enough places for offenders sent to custody by the courts.

Over the next 12 months, additional capacity will come in to use for a range of reasons. These reasons include new build prison accommodation, existing accommodation returning to use following the completion of essential maintenance or places coming into use following a change in function. Over the next 12 months around 260 further places are planned to come into use at HMP/YOI Berwyn as part of its staged ramp up to full capacity and around 220 further places are planned to come into use at HMP Haverigg following its change in function from a category C training prison to a category D open prison.

Places can also be taken out of use for a number of reasons. These include the recent operational closure of a 200 place open unit at HMP Hewell following a

deterioration in the standard and condition of the accommodation. Other decreases are the result of accommodation being taken out of use for essential maintenance/refurbishment.

We are also investing up to £2.5bn to provide 10,000 additional prison places to ensure we have the prison places we need to manage incoming demand. The new 10,000 additional places are on top of the 3,500 places we have already announced through the building of new prisons at Wellingborough and Glen Parva, and the opening of additional accommodation at HMP Stocken. Under our plans for the prison estate, additional capacity will be provided through our new prisons and the creation of purpose-built houseblocks to manage the projected population increase and transform the estate.

■ Prisons: Gender

Philip Davies:

[\[30717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will list the differences between the regimes in male and female prisons and the treatment of men and women in prison.

Lucy Frazer:

Each prison has its own regime. These are designed to meet the specific rehabilitation needs of that prison's population. The male estate constitutes seven different categories and the regimes in these prisons naturally differ from each other as well as from that present in the female estate.

■ Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974: Prosecutions

Luke Pollard:

[\[30783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, further to Answer of 12 March to Question 25734 on Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974: Prosecutions, in what location the listed offences took place.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published data up to December 2018. The number of prosecutions for offences under the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats and Other Mammals) Order 1974 for 2014 to 2018 can be found in the accompanying table for the last five years for which data have been published.

The Police Force Area in which the offences were dealt with have been provided in the table. Information for where offences were committed is not held centrally by the Ministry of Justice

Attachments:

1. Table fo PQ 30783 [PQ 30783 table.xlsx]

■ Theft: Prosecutions

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[30755\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for theft from British shipwreck in (a) UK territorial waters and (b) international waters in each of the last five years.

Chris Philp:

Data held centrally does not identify the location of theft, nor the nationality of the shipwreck. However, there have been no prosecutions relating specifically to the principal offence of theft from a wreck in the last five years.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Pregnant Women: Northern Ireland

Scott Benton:

[\[31570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how much has been spent on supporting pregnant women in Northern Ireland who have decided to keep their babies since 21 October 2019.

Mr Robin Walker:

Maternity and prenatal health is a devolved matter for Northern Ireland.

The Government recognises the importance of consulting with experts, counselling and other support services to support women and girls through any difficult decisions. This will be a matter for the Department of Health to take forward as part of its commissioning of abortion as a new healthcare service, once the regulations are laid in the UK Parliament shortly.

SCOTLAND

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Ben Everitt:

[\[901666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what recent assessment he has made of the value of trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Mr Alister Jack:

I refer the honourable Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the honourable Member for Stoke-on-Trent South.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[901669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, when he plans to next meet the First Minister of Scotland.

Mr Alister Jack:

I refer the honourable Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the honourable Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East.

TRANSPORT**■ Aviation: Antisocial Behaviour****Paul Maynard:**[\[30730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 13 March 2020 to Question 25060 on Disruptive Airline Passengers Working Group, what steps his Department has taken to reduce disruptive behaviour on planes.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government is supportive of industry's collaborative efforts and recognises the good work they have done in tackling the problem of disruptive passenger behaviour, both at airports and on-board aircraft. The Government continues to work in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Authority, airports and airlines to consider measures needed to continue addressing this issue.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus**Ms Angela Eagle:**[\[32638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ensuring that airline staff receive a salary when flights are grounded as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Since the Covid-19 outbreak the Department has been in frequent contact with aviation industry stakeholders to understand more about their position and the support they need. Last week Government announced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms continue to keep people in employment.

This will allow businesses to put workers on temporary leave and the Government will pay them cash grants of 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2500 per month, providing they keep the worker employed.

The Scheme will cover the cost of wages backdated to 1 March. It will be open initially for at least three months with the option to extend for longer if necessary.

There is no limit on the amount of funding available for the Scheme, and all UK-wide employers with a PAYE scheme will be eligible. Further guidance will be set out in due course.

■ Bus Services: Coronavirus

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[32637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether his Department plans to remove the off-peak travel limit on over-60 bus passes to allow elderly people who have been asked to self isolate due to covid-19 access supermarkets during the morning.

Rachel Maclean:

We are acutely aware of the issues around the time restrictions of the current concessionary travel scheme and are considering next steps as a matter of urgency.

The Government is very pleased to see that some local authorities and operators have already agreed to provide free morning travel to concessionary pass holders due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In addition, free or discounted travel before 9.30am is the most commonly offered discretionary concession, with 68 of the 89 Travel Concession Authorities in England outside London (predominantly local authorities) already offering free or discounted morning travel to older person's and/or disabled person's concessionary pass holders.

■ Electric Vehicles: Charging Points

Richard Fuller:

[\[32105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent estimate he has made of the number of electric vehicle charging points in (a) North East Bedfordshire constituency, (b) Bedford Borough Council local authority area and (c) Central Bedfordshire local authority area.

Rachel Maclean:

The figures requested are in the table below. Figures are accurate as of 1st January, 2020.

Area	PUBLIC CHARGING DEVICES ¹	GRANT AWARDS FOR PRIVATE CHARGING DEVICES ²
(a) North East Bedfordshire Constituency	12	37 2
(b) Bedford Borough Council Local Authority	34	39 1
(c) Central Bedfordshire Local Authority	37	71 1

1) Source: Zap-Map

2) Data on private charging devices comes from three Office for Low Emission Vehicle grant schemes: the Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS) for businesses; the Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) and its predecessor, the Domestic Recharge Scheme (DRS) for private domestic charging devices.

Richard Fuller:

[\[32106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to increase the funding of the On-Street Residential Grant Scheme, and how many grant applications for that scheme (a) have been approved since that scheme began and (b) were successfully made in Bedfordshire in each of the last two financial years.

Richard Fuller:

[\[32107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much funding will be available to the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Grant Scheme in the financial year 2020-21 and in each of the subsequent five financial years.

Rachel Maclean:

We have already doubled the funding available for the On-Street Residential Grant Scheme (ORCS) over the last two years (to £5m in August 19, up from £2.5m, and to £10m for 2020/21, up from £5m) to ensure that more local authorities and residents can benefit from the scheme.

We have approved 73 grant applications since the scheme began, including one successful application from Luton Borough Council in 2018/19. We have not received any other applications from local authorities within Bedfordshire.

The scheme has supported over 60 local authorities to deliver over 2,000 chargepoints for residents who do not have off-street parking. Uptake of the scheme

increased rapidly in 2019/20. In October, the Secretary of State wrote to all local authorities encouraging them to send their strategies for infrastructure deployment and to take advantage of ORCS funding.

We are currently consulting on bringing forward an end to the sale of new petrol, diesel and hybrid cars and vans from 2040 to 2035, or earlier if a faster transition appears feasible. This includes looking at the package of measures that are required to support an earlier date, such as support required for those who do not have off-street parking. Budgets for ORCS beyond 2020/21 have not yet been set, but responses to the consultation, especially from local authorities, will help to inform our understanding of what might be required.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Females

Mr Steve Baker:

[32277]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of steps taken by engineering companies involved in high speed 2 to ensure participation of women in engineering; and if he will make a statement.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Ltd is an award winning employer in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion and is recognised as a sector leader in relation to exemplar equality, diversity and inclusion practices. HS2 Ltd's engineering staff sit within the Construction and Infrastructure directorates. As of February 2020, women represented 27 and 29 percent of these directorates respectively, compared to averages of 13 and 17 percent in the wider construction and infrastructure sectors. (In February 2020, 37 percent of HS2 Ltd's total employees were women.)

HS2 Ltd sets stringent equality, diversity and inclusion requirements for the supply chain which are monitored at each stage of the procurement process and results are reported bi-annually. Currently, the representation of women on all major HS2 contracts exceeds industry averages. HS2 Ltd also publishes the EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) annual report which is available on the HS2 Ltd website (www.gov.uk/hs2).

■ Large Goods Vehicle Drivers: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[31565]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of postponing routine HGV medicals during the covid-19 outbreak.

Dr Luke Evans:

[31571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of granting an automatic six month extension for HGV licences to ensure continuity of goods transportation around the UK during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The department is considering the issues around the renewal of driving entitlement for HGV drivers and will take into account the developing situation and the need to balance the risks to road safety.

Public Transport: Coronavirus**Dan Jarvis:**[\[32685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has plans to introduce a public transport concession scheme for key workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

There are no current plans to introduce a concessionary travel scheme for key workers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

However, local authorities have the power to offer discretionary concessions, such as free or discounted travel for groups of people, such as key workers, based upon their assessment of local needs and funding priorities.

Railways: Coronavirus**Gareth Thomas:**[\[30670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the risk of covid-19 infection on the Southern Rail, West Midland Trains and Chiltern Railway services that operate in Harrow West constituency.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

To help tackle the spread of Covid-19, Southern Rail, West Midland Trains and Chiltern Railway, along with other rail operators and Network Rail are taking steps to keep our trains and stations clean. High-touch areas, such as hand rails and ticket machine screens on trains and at stations are being cleaned intensively, and staff are ensuring toilets are stocked with soap. We have also published health guidance for staff and the transport sector, in line with Public Health England protocols. As part of the Government's programme of enhanced engagement, 2,500 digital and printed posters have been displayed at railway stations. The rail industry is making sure their staff remain abreast the latest health advice, and are promoting best practice to the travelling public at stations and online, through websites and apps.

Roads: Safety**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[30818\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what information he holds on the effect of built-in infotainment systems on levels of vehicle safety; and whether he has issued guidance on the (a) development and (b) use of those systems.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department holds limited information currently on the safety of in-vehicle infotainment systems. The Department commissioned fundamental research in the

late 1990s with TRL Ltd that coincided with the rapid development of such systems, and satellite navigation devices.

This research formed the basis for wider activity across a number of countries and resulted in the “European Statement of Principles on Human Machine Interface”.

The Department is aware of the recently published report from IAM RoadSmart and will be reviewing it in detail. The Highway Code already warns drivers about the danger of driver distraction, reminds them of the importance of exercising proper control of their vehicle at all times and advises them to stop if they need to look at screen-based information .

TREASURY

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[31591\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his package of support to airlines and airports will also include support for businesses that rely on the normal operation of airports and airlines.

Steve Barclay:

A range of measures to support all businesses has been made available. These include the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, allowing businesses to benefit from loans of up to £5m, with the first 12 months of that finance interest free, and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help keep people in employment. This scheme means businesses 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, providing they keep the worker employed. They will receive the grant from HMRC, and all UK organisations can self-certify that it has furloughed employees. The scheme will cover the cost of wages backdated to March 1st.

■ Bank Services

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[30698\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Leader of the House on allocating parliamentary time for legislative proposals on dormant assets.

John Glen:

As you may be aware, the Government recently launched a consultation on expanding the dormant assets scheme beyond bank and building society accounts to include a wider range of financial assets. The Government is committed to this expansion, unlocking substantial sums of unclaimed assets for good causes while maintaining and improving consumer protection.

It is right and proper that the feedback from this consultation shapes any future dormant assets legislation. The Government will engage with the Leader of the House on the introduction of this legislation when appropriate.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[30699\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to review the purposes for which funds raised under the dormant assets scheme can be committed.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[30700\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will create a community wealth fund dedicated to improving outcomes for the most deprived neighbourhoods over the long term into which all new assets listed under the proposed expanded dormant assets scheme must be paid.

John Glen:

As you may be aware, the Government recently launched a consultation on expanding the dormant assets scheme beyond bank and building society accounts to include a wider range of financial assets. That consultation set out the way that money from dormant assets is distributed, in line with the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Act 2008.

The Act specifies that funds in England must be used for causes related to youth, financial capability and inclusion, or social investment. The scheme's focus on creating impact in these three areas was agreed through a public consultation at its inception. It enables the scheme to create a lasting legacy, driving systemic change to address entrenched social issues and protects this impact from being diluted.

The scheme is based on voluntary industry participation and enjoys widespread support from the banks and building societies who continue to contribute to it. The Government currently has no plans to change how the distribution of dormant assets funding functions. This includes the causes to which the funds are directed.

■ Beer: Excise Duties

Martyn Day:

[\[32708\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to support small independent breweries by (a) cancelling beer duty payments or (b) extending time to pay arrangements to include beer duty payments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

Time to Pay arrangements are already available to all brewers, which enable them to seek deferrals for beer duty and other taxes with no interest or late penalties due. HMRC's dedicated Covid-19 helpline can be reached by calling: 0800 0159 559.

This comes on top of the wider package of support announced by the Chancellor, worth over £350bn. Small brewers will be able to access interest-free loans, defer their VAT payments due on VAT returns for the period until the end of June and receive support worth up to 80% of their employees' wages.

■ Business: Coronavirus**Jonathan Reynolds:****[30759]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to support businesses operating as (a) co-operatives and (b) mutuals during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

This package includes a £10,000 cash grant to the smallest businesses, delivered by local authorities. Small businesses, including co-operatives, that pay little or no business rates and are eligible for small business rate relief or rural rate relief will be contacted by their local authority; they do not need to apply. The funding will be provided to local authorities in early April.

The package also includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), offering loans of up to £5 million for SMEs through the British Business Bank (BBB). Where co-operatives meet the eligibility conditions, including operating within an eligible industrial sector, they may be eligible for loans under CBILS. Final decision-making on whether a small business is eligible for CBILS is delegated to the accredited lender.

The Government recognises the value of co-operatives and mutuals, and officials will continue to engage with representatives from across the sector to understand the impact of the disruption caused by COVID-19.

Martyn Day:**[30843]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to cancel (a) business rates payments, (b) HMRC tax payments, (c) PAYE, (d) VAT and (e) corporation tax for six months for all hospitality and entertainment businesses.

Jesse Norman:

I refer the hon Member to the answer that I gave to PQ UIN 30831 on 23 March 2020.

Caroline Lucas:**[32668]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to require equipment leasing companies to give customers that are in financial difficulties as a result of the covid-19 outbreak a three month payment holiday; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government has introduced an unprecedented £350bn package of measures to support businesses access the finance they need during this difficult period, and announced significant measures to directly provide support for SMEs including grants, business rates relief and other tax measures.

Any customer who is concerned about their current financial situation should get in touch with their lender at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the best option for their them.

■ Business: Unpaid Taxes

Richard Fuller:

[\[30727\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance he had issued to HMRC on the (a) eligibility for and (b) operation of the Time To Pay service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are delivering an enhanced Time to Pay offer to fit the specific impacts of Covid-19. 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 circumstances, can cover all debts owed to HMRC. Taxpayers may be able to defer payments for as long as they need if they are unable to make a payment immediately. To this end, HMRC have set up a dedicated Covid-19 helpline to enable those eligible to get practical help and advice. This can be reached by calling: 0800 0159 559. HMRC will keep all operations under constant review as the situation develops.

■ Child Benefit: Coronavirus

Alan Brown:

[\[32698\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of paying an immediate increase in child benefit of £10 per week in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

Steve Barclay:

Child Benefit will be increased in line with inflation from April as planned.

The government continually analyses the COVID-19 outbreak and its policies to support people during this time. At Budget, and in his announcements last week, the Chancellor committed to a targeted, multi-billion-pound package of unprecedented support for individuals, families and businesses affected by the virus, prioritising measures which are targeted on the most vulnerable and can be delivered safely and swiftly.

At Budget these measures included widening the scope of Statutory Sick Pay and made accessing benefits easier for those affected by COVID-19. Last week the government introduced further measures to support those on low-incomes, including an up-to £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, a relaxation of earnings rules for self-employed Universal Credit claimants, and an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants to the 30th percentile of market rents.

■ Credit

Stuart Anderson:

[\[31644\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to enhance identification checks for commercial institutions reviewing credit applications to reduce fraud.

John Glen:

It is important that banks and other lenders identify their customers for their own commercial purposes and as part of the fight against financial crime. Firms are required by law to identify and verify their customers' identity when they establish a business relationship. Each firm will then have their own policies on identification, and on the circumstances in which other checks should be undertaken. Firms are assisted in making such policies through industry-produced guidance notes. The Government also issues good practice guidance on Identity Proofing and Verification of an Individual.

Given the unprecedented situation resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government is alert to the issue of fraud and so continues to work closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), industry, and the National Economic Crime Centre to ensure that businesses, individuals, and families are not the target of fraudulent activities.

■ Credit Rating: Coronavirus

Claire Hanna:

[\[31557\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to help people protect their (a) business and (b) personal credit ratings during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

Payment holidays can be a feature of business or consumer lending products or can be offered by lenders in exceptional circumstances outside of the customer's control. This covers a multitude of potential scenarios.. 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 businesses and consumers from harm during these unprecedented times.

The UK is well prepared to tackle COVID-19. 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.

■ Credit: Interest Rates

Gareth Thomas:

[\[32045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to prevent high interest being charged on loans to people in financial difficulties as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

On 17 March, the Government announced a package of measures totalling £350 billion aimed at supporting the financial wellbeing of British businesses, individuals, and families. The Government is committed to doing whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and, as part of this, is continually assessing all areas of the financial sector – including rates of interest on loans. The Government is working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the lending sector on this issue and stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary.

Economic Situation: Newport West**Ruth Jones:**[\[30829\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the local economy in Newport West constituency of the UK leaving the EU.

John Glen:

The UK wants a relationship with the EU based on friendly cooperation between sovereign equals, and centered on free trade. We are looking for a deal like those the EU has struck with countries such as Canada.

We recognise that leaving the EU will result in change - we are leaving the customs union and single market. But I can assure you of this Government's commitment to spreading prosperity to every region and nation in the UK. Alongside the Government's goals for British trade, we are levelling up opportunity across the UK, supporting enterprise, and investing in infrastructure and people, in all parts of the country.

We will continue to keep Parliament informed with appropriate analysis at appropriate times in a way that does not impede our ability to strike the best deal for the UK.

Employment: Coronavirus**Owen Thompson:**[\[32702\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) short-term and (b) long-term effect of job losses as a result of the covid-19 outbreak on the economy.

John Glen:

HM Treasury does not produce economic forecasts. The government is actively monitoring the Covid-19 outbreak and, in addition to taking the necessary steps to protect lives, is working urgently to protect our people and businesses and to minimise economic disruption as a result of coronavirus. For example, the recently announced Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will help firms continue to keep people in employment. The government will continue to monitor the situation and act as needed to protect jobs and the economy.

■ Entertainments and Exhibitions: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[31590\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support the events and exhibition industry in response to reductions in business levels as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

Last week, the Chancellor announced £330 billion of guarantees for businesses across the UK and emphasised his commitment to do whatever it takes to support industries through this challenging time. The events and exhibition industry will be eligible for the new Business Interruption Loan Scheme and will also be able to put workers on temporary leave. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will pay employees in the sector cash grants of 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2,500. This package will help support businesses with their cash flows, and support individuals' employment in the events and exhibitions sector.

■ Labour Turnover: Coronavirus

Chris Law:

[\[32193\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing financial incentives to increase the (a) recruitment, (b) retention and (c) availability of key workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

Key workers across the country have already demonstrated their courage and resolve by supporting the public during this difficult time. It is vital that public and other essential services have the workers they need going forward.

The Government is considering appropriate measures to ensure that the public continues to have access to essential services during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For public services, HM Treasury is working closely with departments to take appropriate action so that workforces have the staff they need. Departments will announce measures as soon as they have been agreed.

The Government is also amending pension rules where necessary to remove barriers to retired workers returning to work, including for the NHS, which have already been announced.

■ Licensed Premises: Coronavirus

Gill Furniss:

[\[30801\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide financial relief for pubs that are required to close as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has announced an unprecedented package of support for businesses across the economy, including the pubs sector. Alongside £330bn worth of

government-backed and guaranteed loans, firms eligible for small business rate relief or rural rate relief will be eligible for cash grants of up to £10,000, and firms in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with eligible properties with a rateable value below £51,000 will be eligible for cash grants of up to £25,000. In addition, a business rates holiday has been put in place for all eligible businesses in the retail and hospitality sectors.

■ **Loans: Interest Rates**

Rehman Chishti:

[30751]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to limit the rate of interest charged on long-term loans.

John Glen:

On 17 March, the Government announced a package of measures totalling £350 billion aimed at supporting the financial wellbeing of British businesses, individuals, and families. The Government is committed to doing whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and, as part of this, is continually assessing all areas of the financial sector – including rates of interest on long-term loans. The Government is working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the lending sector on this issue and stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary.

■ **Low Incomes: Coronavirus**

Ruth Jones:

[30826]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department plans to take to support people on low incomes in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the United Kingdom during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is continuously analysing the COVID-19 outbreak and its policies in order to support people better. The Government will make sure it protects, as far as possible, people's jobs and incomes across the United Kingdom.

At Budget, the Government widened the scope of Statutory Sick Pay and made accessing benefits easier for those affected by COVID-19. As a result of the COVID-19 Budget measures, the UK Government has already provided the Welsh Government with £1.6 billion.

Last week the Government introduced further measures to support those on low incomes, including a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, a relaxation of earnings rules for self-employed Universal Credit claimants, and an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants to the 30th percentile of market rents.

■ Low Pay

Alexander Stafford:

[\[30870\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to increase wages for low-paid workers.

Jesse Norman:

Low paid workers will continue to benefit from above-average pay rises, with the National Living Wage (NLW) set to reach two-thirds of median earnings and to be extended to workers aged 21 and over by 2024, providing economic conditions allow. This is projected to benefit nearly four million low-paid workers. The expert and independent Low Pay Commission (LPC) has been tasked with recommending the NLW rates in order to reach these targets.

The Government also announced at the end of 2019, following the recommendations of the LPC, that it will increase the NLW by 6.2% to £8.72 an hour on 1 April 2020. The 2020 rate will mean a full-time NLW worker's annual gross earnings will rise by over £930. Compared to the current NLW rate (£8.21), full-time NLW workers are projected to see a pay rise of over £4,000 by 2024.

■ Music: Non-domestic Rates

Alex Sobel:

[\[32272\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend business rate relief to the music industry including (a) festivals, (b) promoters and (c) agents.

Alison Thewliss:

[\[32689\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the business rates relief scheme to English Language Teaching centres for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has set out a package of measures to support businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19, including those businesses not eligible for the small business rate relief or the relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.

This support for business includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme for small and medium-sized businesses, a statutory sick pay relief package, the HMRC Time To Pay Scheme, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms continue to keep people in employment, and a new lending facility from the Bank of England for larger firms.

These measures provide a comprehensive, coordinated and coherent response to what is a serious and evolving economic situation. As the wider economic picture becomes clearer, the Government will do whatever it takes to get the nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and the Government stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary.

■ NHS: Finance

Alexander Stafford:

[\[30871\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of funding for the NHS.

Steve Barclay:

The NHS is the government's number one spending priority. As the NHS faces its worst public health crisis for a generation, this Government has been clear: the NHS will get whatever resources it needs to fight Covid-19. We have announced a £5 billion fund for public services which will enable the NHS to manage the extra pressure it faces during this time.

The Government has a strong record of repeatedly committed itself to ensuring that the front line of the NHS is financially supported. The NHS settlement, confirmed in January 2019, provided the largest cash increase in public services since the Second World War – an additional £34 billion per year by 2023-24. This is in addition to the Spring Budget which announced over £6 billion of funding to support the NHS to pay for 50,000 more nurses, 50 million more GP surgery appointments and 40 new hospital projects.

■ Off-payroll Working

Alexander Stafford:

[\[30875\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to help businesses with off-payroll working rules.

Jesse Norman:

On 17 March 2020, the Government announced that the reform to the off-payroll working rules that would have applied for people contracting their services to large or medium-sized organisations outside the public sector will be delayed for one year from 6 April 2020 until 6 April 2021.

This is part of the additional support for businesses and individuals to deal with the economic impacts of Covid-19. This means that the different rules that exist for inside and outside the public sector will continue to apply until 6 April 2021.

This announcement is a deferral of the introduction of the reforms, not a cancellation. The Government remains committed to introducing this policy to ensure that people working like employees, but through their own limited company, pay broadly the same tax as individuals who are employed directly.

HMRC will continue to work to ensure businesses have the right support to deliver the changes to the off-payroll working rules over the next 12 months.

■ Older People: Coronavirus

Fiona Bruce:

[\[32676\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that elderly people in self-isolation due to the outbreak of covid-19 are able to access cash for grocery shopping.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that cash will remain important to the daily lives of millions of people during the Covid-19 outbreak, particularly to those in vulnerable groups.

The UK has a resilient cash supply system and the cash industry has well developed contingency arrangements. The Government is working closely with the cash industry and regulators to ensure that people continue to be able to access their cash.

The banking and finance industry has committed to support all customers who are impacted. Customers who are impacted are advised to temporarily use alternatives where possible - such as digital banking, telephone banking or the Post Office - or contact their account provider.

■ Roadchef: Employee Benefit Trusts

Jessica Morden:

[\[32648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress has been made in resolving the dispute between HMRC and the Roadchef Employee Benefits Trust; and if he will bring forward legislative proposals in the Finance Bill to help resolve that dispute.

Jesse Norman:

The administration of the tax system is a matter for HM Revenue and Customs. It would not be appropriate for Treasury ministers to become involved in the administration of the tax system in specific cases.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[29890\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available to (a) single parents in employment and (b) other parents in the event that schools are closed as part of the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

The Secretary of State for Education has announced the closure of schools, colleges and early years settings as part of the country's ongoing response to coronavirus. However, parents whose work is critical to this response and who cannot keep their children safe at home are able to access educational provision.

The government is ensuring it is protecting, as far as possible, people's jobs and incomes during this outbreak. Last week, we announced further measures, including a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to support businesses who would otherwise

have laid off employees, and we are in turn encouraging employers to support their staff by looking at this and other support being made available to them before they take the decision to make staff redundant.

We also announced additional support with housing costs, including a mortgage holiday, higher support for low income renters, and a pause on tenant evictions, and support for low income households, including those on Universal Credit or Working Tax Credit. These measures will benefit many families, including single parents.

Guidance on the government's response to coronavirus, including for parents and employers, is available at gov.uk/coronavirus.

■ Small Businesses

Alexander Stafford:

[30873]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to encourage small businesses to expand.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is working to make Britain the best place to start and grow a business. The Government is supporting small businesses to access advice and guidance that will help them to expand, through the network of 38 Growth Hubs and the Business Support Helpline. At Spring Budget, the Government announced £10m in additional funding for the network so that businesses in every region can access high quality support.

The Government is also supporting small businesses to improve their productivity through industry-led initiatives such as Be the Business and innovative programmes such as Business Basics. Building on the findings of the Business Productivity Review, the Government also announced £56m for a set of programmes to improve business management and leadership capabilities, and to increase technology adoption.

The Government recognises that this is a turbulent time for business due to the impacts of Covid-19. The Prime Minister has said that the Government will take every step it can to ensure that businesses and workers are protected and the Government has announced an unprecedented package of measures to support them through this crisis.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones:

[30823]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support small businesses in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the UK in response to the outbreak of covid-19.

John Glen:

The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

The devolved administrations will receive over £5.2 billion from the UK Government to make sure they have the resources they need to support people, businesses and public services through COVID-19. In total we have provided the Welsh Government with £1.6 billion to date.

This funding is in addition to the UK-wide support in all four corners of the country, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

■ Social Enterprises: Coronavirus**Anneliese Dodds:****[32729]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department plans to provide for small charities and social enterprises during the covid-19 pandemic.

Steve Barclay:

Last week, the Chancellor announced £330 billion of guarantees for the economy, and charities and social enterprises are an important part of the system. Many charities and social enterprises will be eligible for the new Business Interruption Loan Scheme for loans of up to £5m, with no interest due for the first twelve months. Further, many charities are already eligible for 80% charitable rate relief, they will benefit from the new enhanced retail rate relief at 100%. Charities will also benefit from the new Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Further detail of government support is available at: www.businesssupport.gov.uk

■ Stocks and Shares: Overseas Companies**Gavin Robinson:****[32686]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he plans to take to prevent foreign companies and hedge funds benefiting from the fall in share prices of British companies by purchasing shares at a cheaper cost.

John Glen:

This question likely refers to the practise of short selling. We are working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to monitor the volatility in market prices over the past weeks as a result of the impacts of coronavirus (Covid-19).

On Monday 23 March, the FCA stated that aggregate net short selling activity reported to it had been low as a percentage of total market activity and had decreased in recent days. The FCA also stated that there is no evidence that short selling has been the driver of recent market falls. The FCA is continuing to monitor short selling activity closely.

Some European countries have introduced short selling bans, which the FCA has followed in respect of shares for which relevant European National Competent

Authorities (NCAs) are responsible. The FCA has not introduced such a ban in the UK and neither has any other major financial market outside the EU, including the United States. It is our view that there should be a high bar to imposing such a ban in the UK given the role short selling can play in the maintenance of open and liquid markets. This is, however, an evolving situation and we are continually evaluating our approach to ensure it is the right one for consumers.

Significant research has previously been done to examine whether bans on short selling, such as those enforced during the financial crisis in 2008, can be effective in stopping stock market falls. The evidence suggested that they were not – pricing continued to fall and so the volatility of the markets persisted.

■ Tax Avoidance: Coronavirus

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[\[30688\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with HMRC on the potential merits of introducing a six-month period of grace after April 2020 to ensure the effective implementation of the IR35 reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

On 17 March 2020, the Government announced that the reform to the off-payroll working rules that would have applied for people contracting their services to large or medium-sized organisations outside the public sector will be delayed for one year from 6 April 2020 until 6 April 2021.

This is part of additional support for businesses and individuals to deal with the economic impacts of Covid-19.

This announcement is a deferral of the introduction of the reforms, not a cancellation. The Government remains committed to introducing this policy to ensure that people working like employees, but through their own limited company, pay broadly the same tax as individuals who are employed directly.

■ Transport: Infrastructure

Alexander Stafford:

[\[30874\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps he is taking to improve local transport infrastructure.

Steve Barclay:

The Government is committed to improving the transport links that people rely on every day.

The Budget announced a new England-wide Potholes Fund that will provide £500 million a year, resulting in a 50% increase to local road maintenance budgets in 2020-21. Alongside this, the Budget also announced the development of 15 local road upgrades across the country.

It also confirmed over £1 billion worth of allocations to shovel-ready local transport upgrades across nine city regions through the Transforming Cities Fund, and the

intention is to agree long-term transport settlements with eight elected Mayors starting in 2022-23 worth £4.2bn.

These commitments build on the Prime Minister's announcement of £5 billion for buses and cycling.

■ **Transport: Stoke-on-Trent North**

Jonathan Gullis:

[30838]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to provide funding for improved transport links in (a) Stoke-on-Trent North (b) Kidsgrove and (c) Talke.

Steve Barclay:

Budget 2020 confirmed that Stoke-on-Trent will receive a share of £117 million of the wider Transforming Cities Fund, subject to further business case approval, which could fund a multi-modal transport hub at Stoke-on-Trent station. This builds on the £5.6m awarded to Stoke-on-Trent in March 2019 from Tranche 1 of the competition.

Budget also confirmed Stoke-on-Trent will be receiving a share of the £500m Potholes Fund in 2020-21, building on the £14 million provided to Stoke-on-Trent for local road maintenance since 2015.

The Department for Transport also confirmed on 18 March that it would be delivering £18.5 million investment in the Etruria Valley Link Road from the Local Growth Fund, improving links to Talke and Kidsgrove and providing up to 2,000 jobs and 200 homes.

■ **VAT: Energy**

Alex Cunningham:

[30762]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of removing VAT on energy efficiency products on encouraging the take up of those products.

Jesse Norman:

Although the standard rate of VAT of 20% applies on energy saving materials, the Government allows a reduced rate of 5% of VAT on:

- all installations of energy saving materials for recipients who are aged 60 or over or on certain benefits, for housing associations, and where the installations are in buildings used for relevant residential purposes, and;
- on all other installations of energy saving materials in residential accommodation where the cost of the materials does not exceed 60% of the total cost of the installation.

It should be noted that if the value of the energy-saving materials exceeds 60%, then only the labour cost element will qualify for the reduced rate (with the supply of the materials being taxed at the standard rate).

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Employment: Coronavirus****Damien Moore:**[\[30179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support is in place for workers who are paid on an hourly rate, in the event that they need to self-isolate in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

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.

■ Food Banks: Coronavirus**Emma Hardy:**[\[30794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has to provide emergency supplies to food banks facing shortages during the covid-19 outbreak.

Neil Coyle:[\[31524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has to allocate funding to foodbanks to help them support people affected by covid-19.

Gill Furniss:[\[32716\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to allocate emergency funding to food banks to provide support for claimants of social security benefits that need additional support.

Gill Furniss:[\[32717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will produce a national strategy to ensure that existing and new users of foodbanks will be fed by the food bank networks during the covid-19 pandemic.

Will Quince:

Food banks are independent charitable organisations and, as such, are best placed to decide on the most appropriate arrangements for supporting people who use them. As both the Prime Minister and the 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.

I also refer the honourable member to the response given by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in response to an oral question made on 19 March:

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-19/debates/EBB8F3D7-F9F4-4C5C-B913-86FD27851B5D/VulnerablePeopleFoodSupplies> ”

Additionally announcements were made at the Prime Minister's daily briefings on 21 and 22 March in relation to food supply.

■ **Jobcentres: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle:

[30912]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional resources she plans to allocate to job centres to ensure that those centres can support 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.

■ **Rents: Coronavirus**

Richard Fuller:

[30723]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she plans to take through the benefits system to support tenants to meet their rent payments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

Support for rented housing costs are available through Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. Discretionary Housing Payments are also available, these payments are very flexible and can be considered where, in the local authority's opinion, further financial assistance towards housing costs is required.

Last week, the Chancellor announced, in response to COVID-19, that for 2020/21, we will increase the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that they are set at the 30th percentile of market rents.

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**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[30148]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to introduce benefits for self-employed people whose work is reduced because of the covid-19 outbreak.

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.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**[\[30859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that written guidance is provided to jobcentre staff on claimants who (a) are self-isolating or (b) have a vulnerable member of their household, and therefore not able to meet work-related requirements.

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.

Owen Thompson:[\[32705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure her Department has adequate capacity to process new social security applications resulting from 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.

Fleur Anderson:[\[32738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will publish written guidance for jobcentre staff on benefit claimants who are self-isolating and therefore not able to meet work-related requirements including where there is a vulnerable member of the household other than the claimant.

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.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[30877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure safe and timely access to state pensions for older adults during the covid-19 outbreak.

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.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas:

[\[30668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department is providing to universal credit claimants infected by covid-19.

Gareth Thomas:

[\[30669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to shorten or bypass the universal credit assessment period for people who (a) need to self-isolate or (b) are out of work due to the covid-19 outbreak.

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.

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[30849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of removing the five-week wait for claimants to receive their first universal credit payment during the covid-19 outbreak.

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.

Alan Brown:

[\[32697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of paying the childcare costs elements of universal credit in advance rather than arrears as part of the coronavirus financial mitigation measures; and if she will make a statement.

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.

Alan Brown:[\[32699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make universal credit payable in advance for all new claimants in response to the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

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.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ **First meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee**

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS190\]](#)

HOME OFFICE

■ **Simplification of the Immigration Rules**

The Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Future Borders and Immigration (Kevin Foster): [\[HCWS186\]](#)

This government is committed to creating a firm and fair immigration system that prioritises the skills people have to offer, not where their passport comes from, and restores public trust by ensuring the immigration system truly works for this country.

The Immigration Rules form one of the foundations of our immigration system. So I am pleased today to publish our response to the Law Commission's report and recommendations on simplifying the Immigration Rules. I am extremely grateful to the Law Commission for their detailed and constructive work.

The first recommendation from the Law Commission is we should overhaul the Immigration Rules, consolidating and streamlining, based on the principles they have identified. I am pleased to announce we accept this recommendation. Our aim is to complete this overhaul by January 2021.

Simplified rules will be at the heart of Britain's new, global points-based immigration system.

For far too long, users have struggled to understand the confusing and complex Immigration Rules. They create barriers for employers who want to bring skilled workers to the UK; to colleges who want to encourage international students to come to the UK, and to the brightest and best migrants from around the world who want to make a contribution to the UK.

We will cut through the complexity and make the Rules clear, consistent and accessible, to encourage those who have the skills or talent to benefit the UK, and to crack down on illegal migration and remove those who abuse our hospitality by committing criminal offences.

In line with the Law Commission's recommendations, I have already established a Simplification of the Rules Review Committee to look at the drafting and structure of the Rules. The Committee will ensure the simplification principles put in place now continue

to apply in future, whilst providing ongoing support to continuously improve and adapt the Rules in our changing world.

The Law Commission made 41 recommendations for change. We accept 24 of the recommendations, and partially accept the other 17 recommendations. Where we have not fully accepted a recommendation that does not mean we disagree with the ambition behind the recommendations, it generally means we want to explore how it can be delivered in practice.

Simplification of the Immigration rules, the global points-based immigration system, and the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill which will end free movement, will deliver the biggest shake-up of the immigration system in a generation.

The Government's response has been published on gov.uk and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/simplifying-the-immigration-rules-a-response>.

A copy of the response will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

■ Financial Services Update

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): **[HCWS188]**

In preparation for leaving the European Union, HM Treasury made over 50 EU Exit Statutory Instruments under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to ensure the UK's financial services regulatory regime stood ready for all scenarios at exit day. This included introducing a range of temporary permissions and transitional regimes to minimise any disruption to firms and consumers as we leave the EU.

The UK has now left the EU and entered a Transition Period, which will last until 31 December 2020. The European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 ("EUWAA 2020") delayed those parts of the EU Exit Statutory Instruments that would have come into force immediately before, on, or after exit day so they instead come into force at the end of the Transition Period. As a result of further secondary legislation made under the EUWAA 2020, the temporary permissions and transitional regimes will also now apply at the end of the Transition Period.

While, in general, the same laws and rules will apply at the end of the Transition Period, HM Treasury recognises it will be important, irrespective of the agreement that is reached between the EU and UK, for the regulators to have the flexibility to smooth any adjustments to the UK's regulatory regime for financial services at the end of the Transition Period.

The department will therefore retain the regulators' "Temporary Transitional Power" (TTP), which was introduced via the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and shift its application such that it is available for use by the UK regulators for a period of two years from the end of the Transition Period.

The TTP will allow the Bank of England, the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority to phase-in changes to UK regulatory requirements so that firms can adjust to the UK's post-Transition Period regime in an orderly way, in line with the objectives already set by Parliament.

■ Oil and Gas Decommissioning Relief Deeds

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):

[\[HCWS189\]](#)

At Budget 2013, the government announced it would begin signing decommissioning relief deeds. These deeds represented a new contractual approach to provide oil and gas companies with certainty on the level of tax relief they will receive on future decommissioning costs.

Since October 2013, the government has entered into 96 decommissioning relief deeds.

Oil & Gas UK estimates that these deeds have so far unlocked approximately £8.1bn of capital, which can now be invested elsewhere.

The government committed to report to Parliament every year on progress with the decommissioning relief deeds. The report for financial year 2018-19 is provided below.

1. Number of decommissioning relief agreements entered into: the government entered into 5 decommissioning relief agreements in 2018-19.
2. Total number of decommissioning relief agreements in force at the end of that year: 92 decommissioning relief agreements were in force at the end of the year.
3. Number of payments made under any decommissioning relief agreements during that year, and the amount of each payment: one payment was made under a decommissioning relief agreement in 2018-19, for £43.2m^[1]. This was made in relation to the provision recognised by HM Treasury in 2015, as a result of a company defaulting on its decommissioning obligations.
4. Total number of payments that have been made under any decommissioning relief agreements as at the end of that year, and the total amount of those payments: four payments have been made under any decommissioning relief agreement as at the end of the 2018-19 financial year, totalling £94.0m.
5. Estimate of the maximum amount liable to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements: the government has not made any changes to the tax regime that would generate a liability to be paid under any decommissioning relief agreements. HM Treasury's 2019-20 accounts will recognise a provision of £285.9m in respect of decommissioning expenditure incurred as a result of a company defaulting on their decommissioning obligations^[2]. The majority of this is expected to be realised over the next four years.

[1] This figure takes into account a revision made to a claim in 2017-18 that was reported in a previous Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS1435).

[2] This figure takes into account payments made subsequent to the financial year covered by this Written Ministerial Statement.

■ Pensions Update

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS187\]](#)

The government is developing proposals to address the unlawful age discrimination identified by the Court of Appeal in the 2015 reforms to the Judicial and Firefighters' pension schemes.

On 15 July 2019, the government announced it would take steps to remove this discrimination retrospectively (HCWS1725). It confirmed that this would apply to pension scheme members with relevant service across all those public service pension schemes that were introduced in 2014 and 2015, regardless of whether individuals had made a claim. This is a complex undertaking, and it is important to get it right.

Since February 2020 relevant pension schemes have been conducting technical discussions with member and employer representatives to seek initial views on the government's high-level proposals for removing the discrimination.

I am grateful for the constructive engagement of trade unions, staff associations, public service employers and other stakeholders in these discussions. The government is considering the initial views of stakeholders and continuing to work through the details of the technical design elements of the proposals. Detailed proposals will be published later in the year and will be subject to public consultation. The government will welcome views on these proposals.

For the avoidance of doubt, members of public service pension schemes with relevant service will not need to make a claim in order for the eventual changes to apply to them.

I would like to reassure members that their pension entitlements are safe. The proposals the government is considering would allow relevant members to make a choice as to whether they accrued service in the legacy or reformed schemes for periods of relevant service, depending on what is better for them. The government will provide more detail later in the year, but if an individual's pension circumstances change as a result, the government may also need to consider whether previous tax years back to 2015-16 should be re-opened in relation to their pension.

The government will also set out its proposal to remove the discrimination for future service in the forthcoming consultation.

In January 2019, the government announced a pause to the cost control mechanism in public service pension schemes, due to uncertainty about benefit entitlements arising from the McCloud judgment. Alongside its proposals for addressing discrimination, the government will also provide an update on the cost control mechanism.