



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 27 March 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:39 P.M., 27 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

#### ■ **Animal Experiments**

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[31481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding to support new approach methodologies to replace animal experiments.

**Amanda Solloway:**

My rt. hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with ministerial colleagues, including my rt. hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer on a range of issues.

#### ■ **Artificial Intelligence: Carbon Emissions**

**Chi Onwurah:**

[\[31502\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the potential contribution of (a) machine learning and (b) artificial intelligence to the reduction of carbon emissions.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government commissioned Energy Innovation Needs Assessments (EINAs), published in November 2019, looked at the role of different technologies in the UK's future energy system. The EINAs highlighted that AI, machine learning and digital technologies are likely to play a key role in decarbonisation and the UK achieving Net Zero, and we are taking those findings into consideration when planning future innovation support.

#### ■ **Business: Loans**

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[30726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the (a) guidance and (b) eligibility criteria are for the covid-19 Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Paul Scully:**

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is now live.

Eligible businesses can apply for a loan or other form of finance through one of 40-plus providers accredited by the British Business Bank to offer the scheme. These include all the major UK banks.

The application process is typically online for smaller amounts and the lending decision is made by the provider concerned.

Full guidance, including eligibility criteria, is available on the British Business Bank website at [www.british-business-bank.co.uk/cbils](http://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/cbils).

**James Murray:**

[32741]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, under what conditions registered (a) charities and (b) societies will be able to apply for support through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme .

**Paul Scully:**

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* Both registered charities and societies are able to apply for support through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme so long as more than 50% of their income comes from trading.

The scheme was made live on 23rd March and all details can be found on the British Business Bank website at [www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/](http://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/)

## ■ Ceramics: Origin Marking

**Jonathan Gullis:**

[30840]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to promote origin marking on ceramic products.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Consumer law requires traders to provide consumers with information on the main characteristics of goods. This would not normally require the inclusion of origin markings for ceramic products.

Where goods have a country of origin mark, there is a requirement for it to be accurate and not misleading. The Government does not have plans to change these rules.

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

**Gareth Thomas:**

[32041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to ensure that employees are not placed under pressure to continue working to complete contracts for their employers when they should self-isolate or follow social distancing measures as a result of covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

Government is clear that we must support people in work to do the right thing.

We have already made plans to temporarily change the rules on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), ensuring that, for those that are eligible, SSP will be available from day 1 in the event of a severe outbreak of Covid-19. People who are eligible for SSP but unable to work because they are following Government advice, for example on self-isolation, are also entitled to SSP.

Those who aren't entitled to SSP, including those who are self-employed, may be able to claim Universal Credit and/or new-style Employment and Support Allowance.

If employees can work from home, we urge employers to enable them to do so. We must all play our part to reduce the spread of the virus.

In this unprecedented time, we would urge employers to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their workforce. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about these arrangements. If individuals need advice they should approach ACAS where they can get impartial advice about in work dispute.

## ■ Electricity and Heating: Carbon Emissions

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

**[32300]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent steps he has taken to decarbonise the (a) electricity and (b) heating sectors.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

In 2019, the Government set a legally binding-target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050. The Government has introduced many initiatives to decarbonise and increase the supply of renewable energy production in the UK and have already made great strides forward. Over 50% of our power now comes from low carbon sources and coal is all but being eliminated from the mix.

Earlier this month, the Government announced that onshore wind, solar and other established technologies, will be eligible for the next Contracts for Difference (CfD) allocation round in 2021. In March 2019, the Government published the Offshore Wind Sector Deal, which will build on the United Kingdom's global leadership in offshore wind by working with the Sector to increase productivity and develop new offshore wind technologies. The Sector Deal also commits to increasing diversity in the sector, with the ambition of increasing the percentage of women and people from BAME backgrounds employed in offshore wind.

The Government also announced an investment of £800 million to deploy the first carbon capture storage (CCS) cluster by the mid-2020s. We are supporting wider industrial decarbonisation by investing £500 million to support energy-intensive industries adopt low-carbon technologies, for which CCS will play a key part.

We also have an ambitious programme of work already underway to support heat decarbonisation. In the Budget we announced our intention to extend the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) for 12 months, ahead of the launch of a new Clean Heat Grant scheme. We also announced a third allocation of Tariff Guarantees for the Non-Domestic RHI to continue support for large-scale plants which require investment certainty to proceed. This will help ensure continuous support before launch of the new Green Gas support scheme

We are investing up to £320m, through grants and loans, to accelerate the growth of the UK heat networks market through the Heat Networks Investment Project and have launched the £16.5 million Electrification of Heat Demonstration Project, to demonstrate the feasibility of a large-scale transition to electrification of heat in Great Britain. We have announced spending of up to £121 million on hydrogen innovation and working with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive programme of work to demonstrate the technical and practical feasibility of using hydrogen in place of natural gas for heating.

■ **Energy: Staff**

**Mike Hill:**

[\[31618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the maintenance of sufficient numbers of energy sector staff to ensure energy supplies in the event that the covid-19 outbreak escalates to peak levels of infection.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

BEIS is maintaining daily contact with the energy sector. All critical energy operators have existing pandemic influenza contingency plans, which they have put into action to respond to Covid-19. BEIS and critical operators are working together to ensure they can maintain sufficient staff to continue to deliver essential services.

■ **Fraud: Coronavirus**

**Gill Furniss:**

[\[30799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to prevent elderly and vulnerable people being targeted with scams related to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government is committed to protecting consumers from those who seek to profit from scams, and particularly those associated with Covid-19.

The Consumer Protection Partnership of consumer advice and enforcement agencies collects regular intelligence on scams as they emerge. Citizens Advice and the Chartered Trading Standards Institute issued advice and warnings on Covid-19 related scams earlier this month.

Consumers can access advice on how to spot a scam and how to report one through the Citizens Advice website. Citizens Advice refer cases onto enforcement agencies including local Trading Standards where appropriate.

■ **Home Energy and Lifestyle Management: Complaints**

**Alan Brown:**

[\[30032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Green Deal loan complaints the Green Deal Finance Company has received in respect of



Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd in each year since 2013, by (i) constituency and (ii) local authority area.

**Alan Brown:**

**[30033]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Official Report, 23 October 2018, column 53WH, whether the Green Deal Finance Company has written to the 4,581 consumers who were sold a Green Deal by Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS) on the sales practices of that company.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Department does not hold information on the number of complaints the Green Deal Finance Company has received in respect of Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS).

The Department also does not hold information on whether the Green Deal Finance Company has written to the 4,581 HELMS consumers on the practices of that company.

The Green Deal Finance Company are a private company, and as such do not routinely share data around complaints, or their approach to providing redress to consumers with the Department.

**Alan Brown:**

**[30034]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the (a) criteria and (b) calculations were for offers of a (i) reduction and (ii) cancellation made by (A) the Green Deal Finance Company and (B) his Department to customers who have made a complaint on green deal mis-selling by Home Energy and Lifestyle Management Ltd (HELMS).

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Each complaint is considered individually by the Secretary of State in line with the Green Deal Framework Regulations.

The Secretary of State has the power to reduce or cancel loans where there has been a breach of the relevant rules, and he is satisfied that the consumer has suffered, or is likely to suffer, a substantive loss. One of the requirements in the Regulations is to impose a sanction that is proportionate to the breach it is imposed upon. Further information on the legislative requirements is available in the Sanctions guidance, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-green-deal-sanctions-and-appeals>

Details of any proposed sanction, including reasons for intended decision and associated calculations, are made available in intention notices issued to affected parties. Any proposed sanction by the Secretary of State, intends to bring the consumer closest to the position they would have been in had the identified breaches not occurred. The sanction will vary depending on the nature of individual cases.

The Green Deal Finance Company are a private company, and as such do not routinely share data around complaints, or their approach to providing redress to consumers with the Department.

■ **Housing: Energy**

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[30760]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the provision of financial support for the installation of energy efficiency measures in homes of people with ill health.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

BEIS, the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England are working in collaboration to tackle 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 Energy Company Obligation (ECO), the main domestic energy efficiency scheme in Great Britain, is worth £640m per year and is focused on low income and vulnerable households, including those in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Carers Allowance.

Additionally, under ECO measures can be installed in the homes of people referred by their local authority, with ill health being an eligibility criterion many use.

**Alex Cunningham:**

**[30765]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to (a) support over 60s who live in fuel-poor households and (b) improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Improving energy efficiency is the best long-term solution to tackle fuel poverty.

More than one quarter of fuel poor households in England include a resident over 60. Government is taking steps to ensure low income, vulnerable households, including older people, are protected from living in a cold home.

The Energy Company Obligation Scheme provides support for low income and vulnerable households. Since ECO launched it has delivered energy efficiency measures to more than 2 million households. ECO, or a successor scheme, will continue to drive at least £640 million investment per year in home energy efficiency until 2028.

The Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards now require landlords spend up to £3500 improving their properties to energy efficiency Band E before renting them out. We

intend to consult later this year on a long-term trajectory for improving Private Rented Sector homes to Band C.

In addition to receiving energy efficiency support, pensioners receive financial support to ensure they can keep their homes warm. Winter Fuel Payments provide pensioners with between £100 and £300 to keep their homes warm during the winter. Those on Pension Credit also receive a £140 Warm Home Discount rebate.

Our 2020 Fuel Poverty Strategy will detail our future plans to tackle fuel poverty.

## ■ **Insoolvency: Coronavirus**

**Martyn Day:**

[\[32707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will suspend wrongful trading laws during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* The Government recognises the difficulties faced by directors in making decisions about the future viability of their companies in these times of extreme uncertainty, and that the wrongful trading provisions impact on those decisions. The Government is urgently considering a range of measures which aim to help businesses wherever possible where the Covid-19 outbreak is the cause of their financial difficulties.

## ■ **Labour Turnover: Coronavirus**

**Chris Law:**

[\[32194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to improve (a) recruitment and (b) retention of key workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The Government defines key workers as those whose work are critical to the Coronavirus response. This includes those who work in the health and social care sectors, as well as in education and childcare, transport, food and delivery, utilities, communications, public safety, and the Government.

To assist retention, schools will provide essential support to the most vulnerable children and the children of those identified as key workers.

In addition, the Department of Health and Social Care is enhancing the capacity and flexible deployment of staff across essential services, for example:

- By allowing the temporary registration of recently retired NHS staff and social workers.
- By allowing retired staff to return to the NHS without a negative impact on their pension.
- By providing additional indemnity cover to key workers.

By protecting the employment rights of NHS volunteers.

## ■ Nuclear Power Stations

**Mike Hill:** [\[31611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure the future of (a) Hartlepool and (b) other nuclear power stations.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

Nuclear energy currently provides around 20% of the UK's electricity needs, powering homes and businesses in this country for over 60 years. It will continue to have an important role to play in the UK's energy future as we transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The UK's existing fleet of eight nuclear power stations are owned and operated by EDF Energy, and we expect EDF to generate electricity from these stations for as long as it is economically viable and safe to do so.

Hartlepool is currently expected to operate until 2024. When EDF's nuclear power stations come to the end of their generating life, they will need to be decommissioned, which will continue to provide jobs at the sites.

New nuclear projects in the UK are developer-led and it is for developers to decide whether or not to pursue building a nuclear power plant at a specific site.

## ■ Package Holidays: Regulation

**Daniel Zeichner:** [\[30860\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of temporarily suspending the application of the Package Travel Regulations for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Paul Scully:**

Under existing consumer law, consumers are able to choose a voucher or credit note should they wish. We are engaging with the package travel sector and others to assess the impact of the covid-19 outbreak. We recognise the extremely difficult circumstances businesses are currently facing, which is why on 17 March the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced an unprecedented package of support for businesses, in addition to the £30bn support announced in the budget.

## ■ Pop Festivals: Repayments

**Alex Sobel:** [\[32271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will bring forward legislative proposals to extend the period of time that refunds must be paid to consumers for concerts and festivals in the event of cancellation.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government does not have plans to change the rules around entitlement to refunds, which help protect consumers. Under existing consumer law, consumers are

able to choose a voucher or credit note that is valid for a longer period of time, should they wish and if it is offered by the business.

However, we recognise the extremely difficult circumstances businesses are currently facing, which is why on 17 March the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a wide range of support for businesses, in addition to £30bn of support announced in the budget.

## ■ Prices: Coronavirus

### Wes Streeting:

[32195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to penalise (a) businesses and (b) individuals engaged in (i) price gouging and (ii) profiteering during the covid-19 pandemic.

### Paul Scully:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The Government is clear that excessive price increases exploiting the covid-19 outbreak are unacceptable. We are speaking with retailers daily and the Competition and Markets Authority has established a taskforce to tackle the issue. It has approached traders already to stop excessive price increases. Consumers and businesses should report any issues directly to the taskforce online. The Government is monitoring this situation closely and will take further action if it is necessary.

## ■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

### Richard Fuller:

[30725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on sole traders; and what steps he is taking to support sole traders with reduced income during the covid-19 outbreak.

### Nadhim Zahawi:

In order to help UK businesses during the Coronavirus outbreak, we have made an unprecedented level of support available in the form of cash grants and business loans.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), delivered by the British Business Bank, is now available for eligible smaller businesses including unincorporated businesses, such as partnerships and sole traders. Decision-making on whether a business is eligible to access CBILS will be fully delegated to the 40+ accredited lenders. The Scheme covers overdrafts, loans, asset finance, and invoice finance. Full guidance, including eligibility criteria, will be published at: [www.british-business-bank.co.uk/cbils](http://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/cbils).

In addition, HMRC have set up a tax helpline on 0800 0159 559 to support and advise businesses and self-employed people concerned about missing tax commitments due to Coronavirus. Further detail on the Government's support package for businesses is at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/)

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[30732]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the level of need of solo self-employed people without access to human resources support during the covid-19 outbreak; what steps he is taking to support people in that position; and if he will make a statement.

**Paul Scully:**

Government is clear that we must support people in work to do the right thing during a Covid-19 outbreak. The Government has already made it easier for those who are sick or self-isolating to access support through Universal Credit and contributory Employment and Support Allowance. We want to make sure our welfare system works quickly and effectively to provide security for people. We are also supporting the self-employed through the tax system, with the next self-assessment payments deferred until the end of the year.

The Government recognises that those who are self-employed might not have HR support, but they can get advice on individual employment issues by calling Acas. They can also ring the BEIS Business Support Line for further advice on support for business.

HMRC have also set up a dedicated helpline for self-employed individuals in financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's Time To Pay service.

#### ■ Warm Home Discount Scheme

**Mick Whitley:**

**[31629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to increase the number of energy suppliers enrolled in the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The participation threshold for energy suppliers will be lowered from 200,000 domestic customer accounts in 19/20 to 150,000 customer accounts in 20/21, covering around 97% of the consumer energy market. Smaller suppliers can join the scheme voluntarily. We will consult on the future of the scheme, including on further reductions to supplier thresholds, in the first half of this year.

#### ■ Zero Hours Contracts: Wales

**Ruth Jones:**

**[31537]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department plans to take to support people on zero hour contracts in (a) Newport West, (b) Wales and (c) the UK as a result of the outbreak of covid-19.

**Paul Scully:**

The Chancellor has outlined an unprecedented package of measures to protect millions of people's jobs and incomes as part of the national effort in response to coronavirus.

If infected, many people who are on Zero-Hour Contracts will be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay. Those who are not eligible to receive sick pay are able to claim Universal Credit (UC) and/or new style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), where they qualify.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is being set up to help pay people's wages. Employers will be able to contact HMRC for a grant to cover 80% of the wages, up to a monthly cap of £2,500, for their workforce who remain on payroll but are temporarily not working during the coronavirus outbreak. This scheme aims to support all those employed through the PAYE system regardless of their employment contract, including those on zero-hour contracts.

Businesses and Employees can get advice on individual employment issues by visiting the Acas website.

**DEFENCE****■ Ministry of Defence: Moorland****John Spellar:**[\[33407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what his Department's policy is on the burning of moors in his Department's ownership.

**Jeremy Quin:**

Ministry of Defence infrastructure and estate policy is set out in JSP850. This policy states that Integrated Rural Management Plans (IRMPs), integrating military requirements with the natural and historic environment, must be in place for all protected landscapes.

Example IRMP objectives include instructions prohibiting the burning of sensitive areas and directions to conduct heather management through cutting and controlled burning.

Heather burning forms part of the Natural England management requirements where appropriate. The Department also adheres to this policy.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT****■ 5G: Staffordshire****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[30832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what representations he has received on a potential Staffordshire 5G connected region growth deal.



**Matt Warman:**

My department is in contact with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and its Cities and Local Growth Unit with regard to Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire's Local Industrial Strategy. The Government is committed to delivering world-class digital infrastructure across the country, including 5G and encourages all Local Enterprise Partnerships to consider opportunities for digital infrastructure deployment with their plans.

Government has allocated up to £200m to build the business for 5G through its 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme. This has accelerated 5G deployment with over 80 UK towns and cities now receiving 5G coverage - including Stoke-on-Trent.

The Government recently announced further funding via the Programme, a £30 million competition - 5G Create. This is an open competition aiming to attract bids from a variety of industries where the UK has a competitive advantage, encouraging dynamic business models and opening up new opportunities and markets. This includes our creative industries such as film, TV and video games, but also our rich variety of technology businesses in diverse sectors such as energy, water, health and social care, logistics and more.

**Betting****Mr Richard Holden:****[32743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether the Government plans to review the use of dormant betting accounts.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

The dormant assets scheme enables money from dormant bank and building society accounts to be used for good causes. The government has recently launched a consultation on expanding the scheme to include a wider range of assets in the insurance and pensions, investment and wealth management, and securities sectors. Dormant betting accounts are not currently being considered as part of the expansion. The consultation invites comment on the government's proposals, including the range of assets proposed for inclusion. The consultation closes on 16 April and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-expanding-the-dormant-assets-scheme>

**Casinos****Mr Richard Holden:****[32742]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, in which areas of the UK casinos are permitted under the Gambling Act 1968; how many casinos are permitted in each such area; and what the maximum size is of each such casino that is permitted.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Under the Gaming Act 1968, 186 casino licences were created in 53 permitted areas, generally the areas of former county boroughs with populations of over 125,000 at that time. These licences were preserved by transitional arrangements in the



Gambling Act 2005 and the majority of casinos in Great Britain still operate by virtue of one of these converted licences. The local authority in which each casino is located is now the licensing authority under section 2 of the 2005 Act. 144 of the licences are currently in use.

There is no maximum size, but 1968 Act casinos which have a gambling area of 200m<sup>2</sup> or more must offer a minimum non-gambling area equivalent to at least 10% of their total gambling area. The permitted areas, and the number of licences allocated to each, are as follows:

England

Birkenhead (1)

Birmingham (8)

Blackpool (4)

Bolton (2)

Bournemouth (3)

Bradford (3)

Brighton (3)

Bristol (5)

Coventry (4)

Derby (2)

Dudley (1)

Great Yarmouth (3)

Hove (1)

Huddersfield (2)

Kingston upon Hull (3)

Leeds (5)

Leicester (3)

Liverpool (7)

London (The area which is within the area specified in the licensing (Metropolitan Special Hours Area) Order 1961 - plus Westminster and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) (28)

Luton (3)

Lytham St Annes (1)

Manchester (9)

Margate (3)

Newcastle upon Tyne (3)

Northampton (4)  
Nottingham (6)  
Plymouth (2)  
Portsmouth (3)  
Ramsgate (1)  
Reading (3)  
Ryde (0)  
Salford (2)  
Sandown/Shanklin (0)  
Scarborough (2)  
Sheffield (5)  
Southampton (3)  
Southend-on-Sea (4)  
Southport (1)  
Stockport (2)  
Stoke-on-Trent (2)  
Sunderland (1)  
Teeside/Middlesborough (3)  
Torbay (1)  
Walsall (3)  
Warley (1)  
West Bromwich (1)  
Wolverhampton (3)  
Scotland  
Aberdeen (3)  
Dundee (2)  
Edinburgh (5)  
Glasgow (9)  
Wales  
Cardiff (3)  
Swansea (4)

## ■ Coastal Areas and Tourism: Coronavirus

**Scott Benton:**

[\[30206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of covid-19 on (a) the UK tourism industry and (b) coastal communities; and if he will make a statement.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We are aware that the COVID-19 outbreak is significantly impacting the tourism industry and connected communities, including those in coastal regions.

My Department regularly engages with stakeholders in the tourism and events sector and across Government on this developing issue. We will continue to monitor its impact on the sector and would urge businesses from all parts of the country to share information with VisitBritain via their Tourism Industry Emergency Response group.

The Chancellor has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency. This includes a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, tax relief and cash grant measures, plus £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses across the UK.

## ■ Coronavirus: Compensation

**Thangam Debbonaire:**

[\[30142\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that event organisers that have been required to cancel their event due to the covid-19 outbreak will receive compensation.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Government recognises that multiple aspects of the events sector are affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, including event organisers, conference centres and event suppliers.

We are taking a number of steps to make sure that the events sector is financially supported through the coronavirus crisis. My Department regularly engages with stakeholders in the sector and across Government on this developing issue. We will continue to monitor its impact on the sector and would urge events businesses to share information with VisitBritain via their Tourism Industry Emergency Response group.

The Chancellor has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency. This includes a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, tax relief and cash grant measures, plus £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses across the UK. I am also writing to the Chancellor to provide clarity guidance for the events sector on business rate relief.

**■ Creative Europe**

**Mhairi Black:** [\[32145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has for domestic alternatives to the Creative Europe Programme after the transition period.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The government has made the decision not to seek participation in Creative Europe in the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Domestic alternatives will be a consideration for the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

**■ Cultural Heritage: Coronavirus**

**Jim Shannon:** [\[33532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to support the heritage sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

Government is working closely with the heritage sector to ensure there is a continuous and clear dialogue. We are proactively seeking feedback from the sector on emerging issues which is helping to inform the Government's ongoing response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

**■ Culture: Coronavirus**

**Dan Jarvis:** [\[32183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the cultural sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

Last week, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced additional measures to support businesses and organisations that have been impacted by the pandemic. Details of which can be found below.

Government has been working round the clock to do whatever it takes to protect our people and businesses. That means that we are not only taking unprecedented action, but doing so at unprecedented speed, because we know that businesses and their employees need help now.

During the response to this outbreak, the Secretary of State and Minister for Digital and Culture have led a number of calls with representatives of the creative and cultural sectors, amongst other DCMS sectors, to understand the challenges that they are facing. There are plans for ongoing, regular contact with members and representatives of the cultural sector.

Officials are also continuing to engage with organisations regularly in order to best understand how Government can support the cultural and creative sectors and to discuss the practicalities and implications of policy measures. The Government has

announced a number of measures to support the cultural sector as they handle the significant implications of the Covid-19 virus. In particular:

- 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, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.
- £20bn of direct fiscal support for businesses in England through tax relief and cash grants to help business manage cash flow.
- A Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to March 1 and available for at least three months, with first grants to be paid within weeks.
- Deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June - representing a £30bn injection for employers.
- A package of temporary welfare measures, which when taken together with those announced at Budget provide over £6.5bn of additional support through the welfare system for people affected by COVID-19.
- This comes on top of compensation for statutory sick pay that the Chancellor announced in the Budget.
- Arts Council England have announced a £160m emergency response package, supported by Government funding, to complement the financial measures already announced by Government. It will help individuals and organisations focus on two things: sustaining their livelihoods and businesses, and where possible, developing creative responses to the Covid-19 crisis (e.g. participatory digital content for people self-isolating) to help buoy the public for its duration.
- Alongside this injection of additional cash, at least until 30 June this year National Portfolio Organisations, Music Education Hubs and Creative People and Places programmes will continue to receive funding, with funding conditions relaxed as needed. Where possible, ACE will also advance grant payments to assist with cashflow, to relieve immediate financial pressure for those in need.

## ■ Entertainments

**Andrew Rosindell:**

**[29848]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support he is providing to businesses in the events sector which are threatened with bankruptcy as a result of the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nigel Huddleston:**

We are aware that the COVID-19 outbreak is impacting businesses across many sectors and that the events industry has been significantly impacted. I recognise that multiple aspects of the sector are affected, including event organisers, conference centres and event suppliers.

I regularly engage with stakeholders in the tourism and events sector and across Government on this developing issue. I will continue to monitor its impact on the sector and would urge events businesses to share information with VisitBritain via their Tourism Industry Emergency Response group.

The Chancellor has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency. This includes a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, tax relief and cash grant measures, plus £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses across the UK. I am also writing to the Chancellor to provide clarity guidance for the events sector on business rate relief.

## ■ Internet: Safety

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[30014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how the Government plans to tackle online harms committed by publishers of news media and information websites.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The government is committed to a free and independent press. This is vital to a strong and fully functioning democracy where the powerful can be held to account without fear. For this reason, the government does not intervene in what the press can and cannot publish, including on their websites.

The Online Harms White Paper does not seek to prohibit press freedom. The regulator will not be responsible for policing truth and accuracy online. Where services are already well regulated, regulation will not be duplicated.

Officials are currently working with stakeholders to ensure online harms proposals protect journalistic content. Further details will be published in the full Government Response to the Online Harms White Paper.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[33651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of closing schools on levels of online harms to vulnerable and isolated children during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[33652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to tackle the effect of school closures on the level of online harms for vulnerable and isolated children during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Alexander Stafford:** [\[33653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has had discussions with charities on the effect of school closures on the level of online harms for vulnerable and isolated children during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[\[33654\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the effect of school closures on the level of online harms for vulnerable and isolated children and young people during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The measures required to tackle Covid-19 mean it is likely that more people will be going online in the weeks ahead, including school age children and vulnerable users. This may place some people at greater risk of experiencing harm online.

The government is committed to making the UK the safest place to be online. We are working with other government departments, technology companies, civil society and academia during this period to support users to understand and manage the risks and benefits of being online during this period.

#### ■ **Licensed Premises: Coronavirus**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[30888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department plans to take to support organisers of (a) small music venues, (b) festivals and (c) other live music events (i) directly and (ii) indirectly effected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The Chancellor announced additional measures worth £330 billion to support businesses. Measures include increasing the amount available to borrow through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme from £1.2 million to £5 million and ensuring businesses can access the first 12 months of that finance interest free. Measures that will have a direct impact on music venues and festivals include a 100% business rates holiday for 12 months, increasing grants to businesses eligible for Small Business Rate Relief from £3,000 to £10,000 and providing a further £25,000 grants to those with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000.

The Chancellor also confirmed that the advice for people to avoid the likes of pubs and venues will be sufficient for businesses to claim on their insurance where they have appropriate business interruption cover for pandemics in place.

#### ■ **Mass Media: Carbon Emissions**

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[30132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to encourage private media companies in Yorkshire and the Humber to become carbon neutral.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is responsible for energy, clean growth and climate change.

Private media companies are independent of the government, and their approach to the reduction of carbon emissions is a matter for these organisations.

### ■ Mass Media: Public Sector

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[30127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his department is taking to (a) protect and (b) expand public service media in the UK.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The Government is committed to supporting a modern public service broadcasting system that will meet the needs of UK audiences in the future and remain at the heart of our world class broadcasting sector.

Ofcom's PSB Review will play an important role in strengthening our understanding of how public service broadcasting, and the regulatory framework which supports it, can adapt to ensure its continued resilience in the changing technological environment. The Government has asked Ofcom to be bold and ambitious in its thinking.

Our public service broadcasting system, and the media more widely, is particularly vital during these challenging times. We welcome the media's initiatives in ensuring audiences are informed and entertained, and we are working with the sector to ensure that audiences' changing needs are met, including so that children have access to educational resources while schools are closed.

### ■ Third Sector: Coronavirus

**Mr Stephen Morgan:**

[\[32225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if the Government will classify people working in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors as critical workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The guidance published on GOV.UK specifies that 'charity workers delivering key frontline services' can be classified as critical workers during the covid-19 outbreak. However, the guidance also states that if children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

### ■ Voluntary Organisations: Coronavirus

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[30047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether additional funding will be made available to the voluntary and community sector to help them support communities more effectively during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

Last week the Minister for Civil Society held a roundtable discussion with over 45 charities to understand their concerns about covid-19. We are working with



colleagues across government to shape support available to mitigate risks in the coming weeks and months and deliver effectively for communities.

#### ■ Voluntary Work: Coronavirus

**Emma Hardy:**

[30797]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with (a) national charities and (b) other organisations on co-ordination of volunteers to help with the response to the covid-19 to ensure (i) elderly and (ii) vulnerable people are safeguarded.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

I have had several discussions with charities on how they can mobilise volunteers safely to support vulnerable groups. My officials are working with organisations to identify key sectoral partners, to lead efforts and mobilise volunteers. We are also working with colleagues across government to shape support available in the coming weeks and months to ensure that volunteers and vulnerable people they are helping are kept safe.

#### ■ Voluntary Work: Young People

**Stephen Farry:**

[30194]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the Government's policy is on negotiating future participation in the European Solidarity Corps.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

The UK's document setting out our Future Relationship with the European Union, which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-approach-to-the-future-relationship-with-the-eu>, states that the UK is ready to consider participation in certain EU programmes where it is in the UK's and the EU's interest that we do so. These programmes represent a real benefit to British people and industry. The Government will not be seeking participation in the next European Solidarity Corps programme from 2021-2027.

Under the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated with the EU, the UK will continue to participate fully in the current (2014-2020) ESC programme. This means that the projects successfully bid for during the current programmes until the end of the Transition period, will continue to receive funding for the full duration of the project, including those where funding runs beyond 2020 and the end of the transition period.

**EDUCATION****■ Assessments: Coronavirus****Catherine McKinnell:**[\[31512\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, if he will take steps to support exam boards that experience increases in requests for special consideration.

**Catherine West:**[\[31659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure that young people can sit (a) GCSE and (b) A-level examinations following the closing of schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* On 16 March, the Government announced that all exams due to take place in schools and colleges in England this summer would be cancelled as part of the fight to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The Department's 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 courses or apprenticeships in the autumn. For GCSE, A and AS level students, we will make sure they are awarded a grade which reflects their work. Our intention is that a grade will be awarded this summer based on the best available evidence, including any non-exam assessment that students have already completed. The qualifications regulator Ofqual is working urgently with the exam boards to set out proposals for how this process will work and more information will be provided as soon as possible. Given that exams will not be taking place, the normal special consideration arrangements will not apply to the awarding of grades this summer.

We recognise that some students may nevertheless feel disappointed that they haven't been able to sit their exams. If they do not believe the correct process has been followed in their case, they will be able to appeal on that basis. In addition, if they do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance, they will have the opportunity to sit an exam, once schools and colleges are open again. The existing special consideration arrangements will apply to any students who experience exceptional circumstances when sitting those exams: as we expect that many fewer students will be sitting the exams than in a normal exam series we are confident that the exam boards' existing systems will be able to cope with the likely volume of such requests.

**■ Children: Coronavirus****Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[31582\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential adequacy of the support available to vulnerable children in the event that schools close as a result of covid-19.

**Vicky Ford:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* Supporting vulnerable children is a priority at this time. That is why, on Wednesday 18 March, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Education announced that schools will remain open for vulnerable children alongside the children of critical workers. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with education, health and care plans. Guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities in England on maintaining provision for vulnerable children can be found at:

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

We recognise that local authorities and other safeguarding partners are under increased pressure during this period. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are considering all options to ensure that they are able to continue to keep children safe throughout this period. This includes HM Treasury creating an emergency response fund, initially set at £5 billion, to fund pressures in the NHS, support local authorities to manage pressures on social care and support vulnerable people, and help deal with pressures on other public services.

Special and special residential schools and colleges should be supported to remain open, wherever that is possible, to provide vital services and support to children with complex needs and their families.

**■ Homework****Dr Matthew Offord:****[32151]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if his Department will issue guidance to schools on the setting of homework by teachers after the schools shut on Friday 20 March 2020.

**Dr Matthew Offord:****[32152]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will issue guidance to schools on the use of school homework apps to enable pupils to study during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

We recognise that many schools have already shared resources for children who are at home.

The Department is working with the BBC and other partners to provide advice and support directly to parents, including online resources they can access for their children at home.

**■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus****Tulip Siddiq:****[28679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support the Government plans to make available to nursery schools in England to manage the effects of covid-19.

**Damien Moore:**

**[30181]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to provide financial support to private nurseries in the event that they are required to close during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

Childcare providers are making a vital contribution in our fight against Covid-19. The Department for Education has confirmed that it will not claw back funding from local authorities for any periods of closures where settings are closed on medical advice or if children are not able to attend due to Covid-19. The government expects local authorities to follow the department's position, and continue early years entitlements funding for childminders, pre-schools and nurseries. This should also apply to those infant and primary schools that deliver the early years entitlements. This will minimise short-term disruptions to early years providers' finances and allow the system to recover more quickly.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has also announced a package of support for businesses that will include many early years and childcare providers. This includes business rates relief, a range of loans and grants and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme means that for employees who are not working but kept on payroll, the government will contribute 80% of each worker's wages of up to £2,500, backdated to 1 March 2020. Providers can access this scheme while continuing to be paid the early entitlements funding via local authorities.

The department continues to work alongside Public Health England and with early years sector representatives to ensure that measures taken are in the best interests of the health of our nation whilst minimising the impact on individual childcare settings.

The latest guidance for schools and other educational settings can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Marco Longhi:**

**[30029]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking with the Department for Health and Social Care to prevent the spread of covid-19 amongst vulnerable students in schools.

**Nick Gibb:**

COVID-19 is clearly an unprecedented situation and preventing its spread is the Government's and Department's highest priority.

We are working closely with colleagues across Government to ensure that all appropriate arrangements, and support, are in place for all Department for Education

sectors – from the early years and childcare to schools and children's social care, and for vulnerable groups including children with long-term medical conditions.

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

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

**[32054]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to make provisions for children who have a special educational need but have not yet received a formal diagnosis to continue attending school.

**Vicky Ford:**

COVID-19 is clearly an unprecedented situation and the department's highest priority.

We are working closely with colleagues across government to ensure that all appropriate arrangements, and support, are in place for all of the department's sectors – from early years and childcare to schools and children's social care, and 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 when schools closed on Friday 20 March. 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: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>.

The government has also published guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities in England on maintaining educational provision, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>.

## ■ Students: Coronavirus

**Mr Barry Sheerman:**

**[31438]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) international and (b) British students on the covid-19 outbreak and the disruption that outbreak has caused to tuition.

**Michelle Donelan:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* The department is acutely aware of the stress and anxiety the current climate will be causing all students – international and British alike. This is why we have been doing all we can to ensure students, both in the UK and overseas, have as much information as possible to help them make informed decisions at this challenging time.

Health advice for both international and British students in the UK is the same; they should continue to monitor Public Health England guidance, and adhere to the latest social distancing guidance for recommendations on how to reduce social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Many universities and other higher education providers are already taking necessary steps to keep their staff and students safe and, where possible, continue providing education. For many students, this now means avoiding face-to-face tuition and participating in online learning instead – we understand that the majority of universities have now moved learning online, with others following suit.

If international students have specific questions about their visa status, the Home Office has established a dedicated Coronavirus Immigration helpline: 0800 678 1767.

**Royston Smith:****[31638]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to provide support for disadvantaged students that may find it difficult to study at home during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department is ensuring that the most vulnerable children, including those who have a social worker or an Education, Health and Care Plan, are able to continue attending school during the COVID-19 outbreak, as school is a well-recognised protective factor.

We recognise that many schools have already started sharing resources for students who are at home and are grateful for this. We are working with the BBC and other partners to provide advice and support directly to schools, parents and carers including online resources parents can access for their children at home.

**Royston Smith:****[31639]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to provide support for (a) GCSE and (b) A-Level students that are required to self-isolate as a result of having covid-19 symptoms.

**Nick Gibb:**

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced to the House on 18 March, the Government has taken the difficult decision to cancel all examinations due to take place in schools and colleges in England this summer, as part of the fight to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The Department's 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 ensure they are awarded a grade which reflects their work. A calculated grade will be awarded this summer based on the best available evidence, including any non-examination assessment that students have already completed. The qualifications regulator, Ofqual, is working urgently with examination boards to set out proposals for how this process will work and more information will be provided as soon as possible.

We recognise that many schools have already shared resources for children who are at home and are grateful for this.

The Department is working with the BBC and other partners to provide advice and support directly to parents, including online resources they can access for their children at home.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Food: Delivery Services

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[30122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that people that are (a) elderly, (b) vulnerable and (c) required to self-isolate receive food deliveries.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are working closely across Government, with representatives of the food supply chain and with local authorities and charities to ensure that people who need to stay at home will have continued access to food.

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. We welcome the actions that industry is taking, including hiring more staff, including prioritising delivery slots for those that need them most.

The Government is working to ensure that up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus will have access to the food they need. A new Local Support System will make sure those individuals self-isolating at home and who are without a support network of friends and family will receive basic groceries. The Government is working



with a partnership of the groceries industry, local government, local resilience forums and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can start to be delivered as soon as possible to those who need it.

■ **Houseboats: Coronavirus**

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[32113]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to support people living on the waterways during the covid-19 outbreak; what plans he has to lift the current requirements for boaters vessels to not stay moored in one place longer than two weeks; and if he will make a statement.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is clear that the single most important action we can all take in fighting coronavirus is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives. We have announced a range of measures to support people and communities, including: a £500 million fund for households experiencing financial hardship; a coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a Government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month; deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms; and £330 billion of Government-backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses. We have also made significant changes to the operation of statutory sick pay, universal credit, and employment and support allowance to ensure that people have quicker and more generous access to a support system, and we have taken further immediate steps to give businesses access cash to pay their rent, salaries or suppliers.

The Government is continuously reviewing decisions to reflect the rapidly changing environment in response to Covid-19. Responsibility for inland waterways, including their operation, development or restoration, rests with the bodies that own them and with the relevant navigation authority. The two largest navigation authorities, the Canal and River Trust and the Environment Agency, are following Government guidance.

Boaters should limit movement to all but essential travel to access services and continue to follow Government guidance. The Canal and River Trust is suspending the requirement to move every 14 days; the suspension will be kept under review in line with revised Government guidance. The Environment Agency and other navigation authorities will also be updating their guidance and mooring conditions for boaters to reflect and enable only essential travel, and will be reviewing this position on an ongoing basis in line with Government guidance on movement. Those who are unable to move as a result of self-isolation or other virus-related impacts are asked to contact the relevant navigation authority directly to discuss their circumstances on a case by case basis. The Government will continue to review the situation.



## ■ Livestock: Animal Housing

**Theresa Villiers:** [33446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to restrict the use of cages in farming.

**Theresa Villiers:** [33447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to support the use of free farrowing systems in pig farming.

**Theresa Villiers:** [33450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to place restrictions on the use of enriched cages in farming.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government cares very much about the welfare of animals and is examining the evidence around the use of cages for farm animals and considering the options.

We have been clear it is our ambition that farrowing crates should no longer be used for sows. Indeed, the new pig welfare code clearly states that “the aim is for farrowing crates to no longer be necessary and for any new system to protect the welfare of the sow, as well as her piglets”. I am pleased to confirm the UK is already ahead of most pig producing countries in terms of non-confinement farrowing, with around 40% of our pigs housed outside and not farrowed with crates.

The Government is examining the future use of cages for all laying hens and I welcome the commitment from our major retailers, with positive support from our egg producers, to stop retailing eggs from enriched colony cage production systems by 2025. I am pleased to state that the UK already has a much larger free range sector by far than any EU country, with over 50% of our hens kept in free range systems.

## ■ Public Health: Plumbing

**Mike Amesbury:** [32224]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if people carrying out essential drain and plumbing work can be classed as key workers to maintain public health.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The list of key workers published on the GOV.UK website includes those providing essential roles in the water sector (including sewerage).

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision)

Guidance for tradespeople carrying out repairs and maintenance in people's homes can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance).

**■ Seafood: USA****James Gray:** [\[31429\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that data obtained in respect of marine mammal bycatch monitoring meets the requirements of the US Marine Mammal Protection Act Import Provision Rule.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We have a long-term UK bycatch monitoring programme that uses dedicated observers to focus monitoring efforts on fisheries that pose a high risk of cetacean bycatch. The data from this programme have been used to complete our response to the US National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration to fulfil requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).

We continue to engage with the United States to discuss the details of the UK's approach to cetacean bycatch monitoring and management and to ensure that we meet the requirements of the MMPA Import Provision Rule.

**■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus****Royston Smith:** [\[30899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with supermarket representatives on dedicated shopping times for pensioners during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Royston Smith:** [\[30900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the decision of supermarkets to offer dedicated shopping times for pensioners during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are working closely across Government, with representatives of the food supply chain and with local authorities and charities to ensure that everyone will have continued access to food.

To help industry respond to this unprecedented demand we have introduced new measures to keep the 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, for example by sharing distribution depots and delivery vans.

Supermarkets are recruiting more staff and limiting shopping hours so they have more time to restock. Some supermarkets are also prioritising delivery slots for those that need them most, including the elderly. They are working hard to deliver a crucial service to us all and have also issued a rallying call for everyone to play their part in

the national effort to this response by looking out for their friends, family and neighbours. We will continue to work with industry to discuss any additional support government can provide.

The Government is working to ensure that up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus will have access to the food they need. A new Local Support System will make sure those individuals self-isolating at home and who are without a support network of friends and family will receive basic food and essential supplies. The Government is working with a partnership of the food industry, local government, local resilience forums and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can start to be delivered as soon as possible to those who need it.

**Tim Farron:**

**[32102]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with supermarket retailers on providing delivery services to people without access to online shopping during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government has well-established ways of working with the food industry during disruption to supply situations. Our retailers already have highly resilient supply chains and they are working around the clock to ensure people have the food and products they need.

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, for example by sharing distribution depots and delivery vans.

We are in close contact with representatives across the food supply chain and civil society to discuss further ways to help with their preparations, in particular to look at supporting those who have to stay at home, including people without access to online shopping. Supermarkets are recruiting more staff and limiting shopping hours so they have more time to restock. They are working hard to deliver a crucial service for us all and have also issued a rallying call for everyone to play their part in the national effort to this response by looking out for their friends, family and neighbours.

The Government is working to ensure that up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus will have access to the food they need. A new Local Support System will make sure those individuals self-isolating at home and who are without a support network of friends and family will receive basic groceries. The Government is working with a partnership of the groceries industry, local Government, local resilience forums and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can start to be delivered as soon as possible to those who need it.

**Catherine West:**

[\[32230\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure carers are able to get the food that they need in supermarkets.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The Government has well-established ways of working with the food industry during disruption to supply situations. Our retailers already have highly resilient supply chains and they are working around the clock to ensure people have the food and products they need. Industry has adapted quickly to these changes in demands, and we welcome the actions they are taking to support groups including NHS staff and the elderly.

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.

**Ms Angela Eagle:**

[\[32639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with supermarkets on providing adequate home delivery shopping slots for people who are (a) self isolating or (b) have covid-19.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are working closely across Government, with representatives of the food supply chain and with local authorities and charities to ensure that the elderly, vulnerable groups, and people who need to stay at home will have continued access to food.

To help industry respond to this unprecedented demand we have introduced new measures to support food deliveries. 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, for example by sharing distribution depots and delivery vans. We welcome the actions that industry is taking, including hiring more staff, including prioritising delivery slots for those that need them most.

The Government is working to ensure that up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus will have access to the food they need. A new Local Support System will make sure those individuals self-isolating at home and who are without a support

network of friends and family will receive basic food and essential supplies. The Government is working with a partnership of the food industry, local government, local resilience forums and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can start to be delivered as soon as possible to those who need it.

## ■ Supermarkets: Opening Hours

**John Cryer:**

[\[29816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions the Government has had with major supermarkets on covid-19 and on specific opening hours for (a) over 70s, (b) parents of children with severe asthma, (c) cystic fibrosis and (d) other vulnerable groups.

**Victoria Prentis:**

We are working closely across Government, with representatives of the food supply chain and with local authorities and charities to ensure that everyone including the elderly and vulnerable groups such as those with severe health conditions will have continued access to food.

We are in close contact with representatives across the food supply chain and civil society to discuss further ways to help with their preparations. Supermarkets are recruiting more staff, prioritising delivery slots for those who need them most, and limiting shopping hours so they have more time to restock. They are working hard to deliver a crucial service to us all and have also issued a rallying call for everyone to play their part in the national effort to this response by looking out for their friends, family and neighbours. We will continue to work with industry to discuss any additional support the Government can provide. Retailers are prioritising delivery slots for those who need them most.

The Government is working to ensure that up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus will have access to the food they need. A new Local Support System will make sure those individuals self-isolating at home and who are without a support network of friends and family will receive basic groceries. The Government is working with a partnership of the groceries industry, local government, local resilience forums and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can start to be delivered as soon as possible to those who need it.

## ■ Wood-burning Stoves

**Alberto Costa:**

[\[31623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support consumers moving from wood-burning stoves to more environmentally friendly alternatives.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government has a range of support mechanisms in place. There are Government initiatives for those living in fuel poverty burning solid fuels. The Energy

Company Obligation is a requirement on larger energy suppliers to reduce heating costs through the installation of energy efficiency measures and new heating systems. It includes the installation of central heating in homes which have not had it before. Additionally, there is a minimum requirement to deliver measures in rural areas and incentives to deliver to homes off the gas grid. The Private Rented Sector Regulation 2019 also requires landlords to improve the energy performance of F&G rated properties they let out. Looking ahead, the Government is planning to publish a Heat and Buildings Strategy later this year, which will set out the immediate actions we will take for reducing emissions from buildings.

In addition, we recently announced proposals to introduce legislation for cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels. This will introduce restrictions on the sale of wet wood for domestic burning so that it can only be purchased in volumes over 2m<sup>3</sup>. Burning a dry log which has below 20% moisture can reduce emissions by 50% compared with a log which has not been dried. It is also much more cost effective to burn on a heat output basis, and leaves less tar and soot in the appliance and chimney. Therefore dry wood will still be available for sale under these proposals.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### ■ Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

**Kate Green:**

[R] [\[31501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking under the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative to protect women from religious minority communities who are specifically vulnerable to sexual violence.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK is fully committed to supporting survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and follows a survivor-centred approach. This includes working closely with survivor networks and organisations, including those from religious minority communities, to ensure their perspectives inform PSVI policy and programming. For example, strengthening support for the faith and belief leaders' Declaration of Humanity to tackle stigma faced by survivors and prevent sexual violence in conflict

### ■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

**Marsha De Cordova:**

[\[30094\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to repatriate British nationals who are stranded abroad as a result of covid-19.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Consular teams are continuing to support British people who are experiencing disruption. If people want to return to the UK we encourage them to get in touch with their airline as soon as possible while flights remain available. 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.

We are also in close touch with air carriers. We encourage affected British nationals to contact their airline and insurer as a first step. We are providing direct support to individuals through our contact centre and consular teams, but call volumes are high. In the light of the rapidly changing situation, we urge all travellers to sign up for our travel advice alert service. We will keep the situation under review and remain in contact with the airline operators and authorities overseas to facilitate return travel.

**Ellie Reeves:**

[\[32153\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what (a) financial and (b) other support the Government plans to provide to UK nationals overseas to enable them to return to the UK.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* Our consular team is working around the clock to provide support, advice and information. We are working closely with local authorities, commercial airlines and other diplomatic missions to enable British people to get home. If British people are in need of urgent assistance, they should call our Embassies and High Commissions, which will automatically connect them to our consular contact centres, where our staff can provide further advice. Given the dramatic increase in demand we are doubling the number of call handlers working to answer peoples' calls. 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.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[32219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of calls being answered by and (b) average cost of calls to his Department's hotline for British nationals that are attempting to return home from overseas.

**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. We have already reinforced our contact centres and given the dramatic increase in demand we will increase our capacity further. Those calling are charged the cost of a local rate call.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Vaccination**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[32078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the (a) UN and (b) EU on global efforts to develop a vaccine for covid-19.



**Emily Thornberry:**

**[32096]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will take steps to develop joint mechanisms to guide co-ordinated global efforts on the (a) development, testing and roll-out of potential cures and vaccines for viruses and the (b) establishment of a dedicated body responsible for that work.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are in discussions with a number of our international counterparts on how we can best coordinate our Covid-19 response, including research into vaccine development. The British Government will continue to work closely with like-minded partners to ensure an effective, science-led response.

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[32079]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his US counterpart on ensuring that any vaccine developed for covid-19 is shared as widely as possible across the world.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK is in regular contact at the highest levels with our US partners on our joint response to the global pandemic, including discussions on how we can best coordinate our COVID-19 response and research into vaccine development. The Foreign Secretary will be speaking to my opposites in the G7 this week on this matter. An effective vaccine will be vital to the long-term control of the outbreak. To date the UK has invested £40 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), specifically for COVID-19 vaccine development, alongside our existing support to their research. The British Government will continue to work closely with like-minded partners, including the US, to ensure that any vaccine candidates are affordable and accessible to all countries across the world.

The UK priority remains an effective, science-led response, supporting 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.

#### ■ Diplomatic Service: Telephone Services

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[32082]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many additional staff have been seconded from other roles in 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.



## ■ India: Coronavirus

**Emily Thornberry:**

**[32087]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in India on facilitating the repatriation of UK nationals from that country.

**Nigel Adams:**

We are working closely with local authorities, commercial airlines, and the Government of India to enable British people affected by ongoing measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to get home. The Government of India announced that scheduled international commercial passenger aircraft would not be allowed to land in India from March 22 for one week. We are urgently clarifying this situation. Our consular teams are working around the clock to provide support, advice, and information.

## ■ India: Politics and Government

**Ruth Jones:**

**[30825]**

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

**Nigel Adams:**

As the world's largest and one of the world's oldest democracies, India and the UK have a broad and deep relationship. The Prime Minister discussed the strength of that relationship in a phone call with Prime Minister Modi on 12 March, in which they committed to deepening bilateral cooperation on a range of areas including trade, cultural relations, defence, and technology.

## ■ International Seabed Authority

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

**[29903]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing the (a) governance, (b) accountability and (c) competency for (i) contract reviews, (ii) inspections, (iii) audits, (iv) environmental monitoring, (v) enforcement and (vi) other regulatory activities of the International Seabed Authority.

**James Duddridge:**

The functions and structure of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) are laid out in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The work of the ISA is overseen by the Council and Assembly of the ISA. The UK is a member of both organs. UNCLOS provides for a periodic review of the ISA, the most recent of which was completed in 2017. In the Council and Assembly the UK supports the importance of the ISA having adequate resources and expertise to carry out these functions, in particular in anticipation of a future move from exploration to exploitation.

**■ Israel: Coronavirus****Emily Thornberry:****[32093]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in Israel on the plans that that country has in place to repatriate Israeli nationals from overseas; and whether the UK can learn lessons from that approach.

**James Cleverly:**

We have not had discussions on this issue. We are working closely with local authorities, commercial airlines and other diplomatic missions to enable British people to get home. Our consular team is working around the clock to provide support, advice and information. The situation is fast moving, and our advice at this time is for British nationals to secure safe accommodation and to speak to their tour operator, airline and insurance company to discuss the options available to them.

**■ Jordan: Coronavirus****Rebecca Long Bailey:****[33712]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Jordanian counterpart on arranging repatriation flights for British nationals that wish to return to the UK as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Cleverly:**

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* We are working closely with local authorities, commercial airlines and other diplomatic missions to enable British people to get home. Our consular team is working around the clock to provide support, advice and information. British travellers should contact their tour operator or airline as soon as possible if they want to return to the UK. We are working intensively with the Governments of those countries, including Jordan, 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.

In light of the rapidly changing situation, we urge all travellers to sign up for our travel advice alert service. British nationals in Jordan should keep up to date with our travel advice for Jordan, which they can find on: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/jordan/coronavirus>.

We have also published advice for British nationals who do not have immediate departure options available to them: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus#if-youre-abroad-and-you-want-to-return-to-the-uk>

**■ Middle East: Antisemitism****Siobhan Baillie:****[32290]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his (a) Jordanian, (b) Egyptian, (c) Saudia Arabian

counterparts and (d) the Palestinian Authority on the removal of reported antisemitic ideology from national curriculums.

**James Cleverly:**

The Government is committed to combatting the rise of anti-Semitism in all its forms and we have a regular, frank and open dialogue with international partners on this issue. The International Development Secretary reiterated our concerns about allegations of incitement in Palestinian textbooks in a call to the Palestinian Education Minister just last month, during which they discussed the Palestinian Authority's review of the content of Palestinian textbooks. The Foreign Secretary discussed freedom of religion or belief with the Saudi authorities during his visit to Riyadh on 4 and 5 March. Saudi Arabia has committed to several education reform programmes including the revision of textbooks. Although we do not believe that Jordan's curriculum contains materials which promote hatred in any form, we have a major programme in support of education in Jordan. My predecessor met the Jordanian Minister of Education in January. We have a regular, positive engagement with the Egyptian authorities on freedom of religion or belief. Our Honourary Consul in Alexandria attended a service at the Synagogue of Alexandria in February to mark its reopening after refurbishment.

■ **Morocco: Coronavirus**

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[31532\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Moroccan counterparts on ensuring the immediate safe return of British nationals from Moroccan airports unable to return to the UK as a result of most outbound flights from Morocco having been suspended due to the covid-19 outbreak.

**James Cleverly:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* 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. I spoke to the Moroccan Foreign Minister, Nasser Bourita, on 18 March to ask for additional flights to enter and leave Morocco. The British Embassy in Rabat has been working with tour operators and airlines to encourage them to offer additional flights, last week we facilitated 49 flights, taking 8,520 passengers to the UK. 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.

■ **Peru: Coronavirus**

**Kate Griffiths:**

[\[33624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Peruvian counterpart on supporting UK nationals in Cusco to reach Lima.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Foreign Secretary spoke with the Peruvian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, on 21 March. He assured us that he would work together with the UK to make sure we could arrange flights home this week, including providing the necessary assistance to those UK nationals in Cusco. Our Embassy is working closely with the Peruvian authorities to ensure that restrictions on movement in Peru do not prevent passengers from getting onto flights that they have booked.

**■ Republic of Ireland: Coronavirus****Emily Thornberry:**[\[32089\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Irish counterpart on co-ordinating the repatriation of UK and Irish nationals from throughout the world.

**Nigel Adams:**

The Foreign Secretary spoke with Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney on 20 March, and agreed the importance of our countries working together, closer than ever, to protect and support thousands of our citizens against COVID-19.

**■ Saudi Arabia: Women's Rights****Crispin Blunt:**[\[32026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the ongoing judicial proceedings against women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia; and whether UK officials have been granted access to attend the trial sessions.

**James Cleverly:**

We are concerned about the continued detention of women's rights activists in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia remains a Foreign and Commonwealth Office human rights priority country, particularly because of the use of the death penalty and restrictions on women's rights, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion or belief. We will continue to call for political detainees, including women's rights defenders, to be given adequate legal representation. We have pressed for due process and raised concerns over the use of solitary confinement and the use of torture. The UK attends trials of international importance in all countries where permitted. The UK, along with other embassies in Saudi Arabia, has requested and been denied access to each and every trial we have been aware of since October 2018, with the exception of the trials for those involved in the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. We regularly raise human rights issues with Saudi Arabia, most recently by the Foreign Secretary during his visit earlier this month.

## ■ Seabed: Mining

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[29901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the precautionary principle is applied to deep sea mining techniques that cannot be monitored from the surface.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK is using the precautionary principle in relation to deep sea mining and has agreed not to sponsor or support the issuing of any exploitation licences for deep sea mining projects until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impact on deep sea ecosystems and strong and enforceable environmental standards have been developed by the ISA and are in place.

The UK is calling for the precautionary principle to be included in the development of the Regulations, Standards and Guidelines for deep sea mining at the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

## ■ Syria: Coronavirus

**Stephen Farry:**

[\[32248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to international counterparts on tackling the transmission of covid-19 in refugee camps related to the conflict in Syria.

**James Cleverly:**

The Foreign Secretary's current priority is to support global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19; he recognises the scale of the threat posed by COVID-19 in Syria and in Syrian refugee camps. The International Development Secretary spoke with Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on 18 March, and agreed to work together to minimise the impact of this crisis on refugees. DFID is leading the humanitarian support for the UK's global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19, including for those in refugee camps. This includes a contribution of £10 million to the World Health Organisation to help prevent the spread of this outbreak. We will continue to monitor the situation in Syria and in Syrian refugee camps very closely.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Abortion

**Fiona Bruce:**

[\[32115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many abortions were performed after 24 weeks in (a) 2017, (b) 2018, and (c) 2019.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* Abortion statistics for 2017 and 2018 are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2018>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2017>

The number of legal abortions performed after 24 weeks in 2017 and 2018 is available in the attached table.

The Code of Practice outlined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 prohibits the pre-release of official statistics before the due date of publication. Data on the number of legal abortions performed after 24 weeks in 2019 is still being collected and requires full quality assurance prior to release. Data for 2019 will be published on 11 June at 9:30am.

**Attachments:**

1. [pq32115 table](#) [PQ32115 table.xlsx]

**Fiona Bruce:** **[32116]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many live births there were before the evacuation stage of an abortion in each of the last five years.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* This data is not held by the Department.

**Fiona Bruce:** **[32118]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the rate of abortion per 1,000 pregnancies among women aged 30 to 34 in (a) 2017, (b) 2018 and (c) 2019.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The rate of abortion per 1,000 pregnancies amongst women aged 30-34 is not held by the Department.

**Fiona Bruce:** **[32119]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the abortion rate was per 1,000 women aged 25 to 29 years old in (a) 2017, (b) 2018 and (c) 2019.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The abortion rate per 1,000 women aged 25 to 29 years in 2017 and 2018 is available in the attached table.

Abortion statistics for 2017 and 2018 are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2018>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2017>

The Code of Practice outlined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 prohibits the pre-release of official statistics before the due date of publication. Data

on the abortion rate per 1,000 women aged 25 to 29 years in 2019 is still being collected and requires full quality assurance prior to release. Data for 2019 will be published on the 11th June at 9:30am.

**Attachments:**

1. [pq32119 table](#) [PQ32119 table.xlsx]

**Fiona Bruce:** [32126]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many babies survived an abortion procedure in (a) 2015, (b) 2016, (c) 2017, (d) 2018 and (e) 2019.

**Helen Whately:**

This data is not held by the Department.

**Fiona Bruce:** [32132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department collected data on the frequency of each number of repeat abortions performed in England and Wales in 2018.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* Data on the number of repeat abortions performed in England and Wales in 2018 is available in the attached table.

Abortion statistics for 2018 are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2018>

**Attachments:**

1. [32132 table](#) [PQ32132 table.xlsx]

**Fiona Bruce:** [32134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many abortions were carried post 12 weeks gestation in (a) 2016, (b) 2017, (e) 2018 and (d) 2019, and in how many of those procedures painkillers were provided for the unborn child before the abortion.

**Helen Whately:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The number of legal abortions performed after 12 weeks gestation in 2016, 2017 and 2018 is available in the attached table.

Abortion statistics for 2016, 2017 and 2018 are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2018>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2017>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/report-on-abortion-statistics-in-england-and-wales-for-2016>



The Code of Practice outlined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 prohibits the pre-release of official statistics before the due date of publication. Data on the number of legal abortions performed after 12 weeks gestation in 2019 is still being collected and requires full quality assurance prior to release. Data for 2019 will be published on 11 June at 9:30am.

Data on how many of those procedures used painkillers is not held by the Department.

**Attachments:**

1. [32134 table](#) [PQ32134 table.xlsx]

■ **Abortion: Northern Ireland**

**Fiona Bruce:** [\[32124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been spent from the public purse on supporting women travelling from Northern Ireland to England and Wales for the purposes of abortion since 2018 .

**Helen Whately:**

The cost of supporting women travelling from Northern Ireland to England to access abortion services in 2018/19 was around £1.08 million. This includes the cost of the procedure and travel and accommodation. The cost of this scheme is met by the Government Equalities Office through funding provided by HM Treasury. The cost of the scheme for 2019/20 is not yet known.

■ **Blood: Donors**

**Dr Matthew Offord:** [\[31490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the blood stock across the National Blood Transfusion Service.

**Helen Whately:**

NHS Blood and Transplant which is accountable to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, is responsible for the provision of a safe, reliable, efficient supply of blood to hospitals in England.

NHS Blood and Transplant aims to retain six days' supply of blood at any one time. This is in addition to the stock held within hospitals, which is typically five – six days' stock. As at 23 March, NHS Blood and Transplant had eight days' supply of blood, including donations being processed.

The situation is being monitored daily and NHS Blood and Transplant is working closely with the Department, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Public Health England, hospitals and the United Kingdom blood services.

It is more vital than ever for those blood donors who are well, to keep donating so hospitals have the blood they need to treat very sick and vulnerable patients.



## ■ Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: Coronavirus

**Ms Angela Eagle:** [31444]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust on tackling covid-19.

**Edward Argar:**

The Government is doing everything it can to tackle the pandemic and mitigate its impact. The Department is supporting the National Health Service so that it can help those who need it the most.

The Chancellor has also set out a package of targeted measures which include a £5 billion emergency response fund to support the NHS and other public services. He has since reiterated that whatever resources the NHS needs, it will get.

The NHS works very closely with NHS foundation trusts across England to enact these measures.

## ■ Coronavirus

**Mr Philip Hollobone:** [29205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many of the (a) first 200, (b) second 200, (c) third 200 and (d) fourth 200 covid-19 cases in the UK by sample-date were (i) under five years, (ii) five -14 years, (iii) 15-29 years, (iv) 30-39 years, (v) 40-49 years, (vi) 50-59 years, (vii) 60-69 years, (viii) 70-79 years, (ix) 80-89 years and (x) 90 years or over.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Data on the COVID-19 cases in the United Kingdom are not available in the format requested.

Public Health England has published a COVID-19 tracking dashboard showing reported cases of coronavirus in the UK, including new cases, cases by upper tier local authority in England.

The dashboard can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-track-coronavirus-cases>

**Andy Slaughter:** [29935]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which strain of covid-19 is most prevalent in the UK at the present time.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* There is currently no concept of different strains. There are very few differences and a low genetic diversity in the COVID19 from across the world and the viruses recovered from the United Kingdom are typical of this.

■ **Coronavirus: Ambulance Services**

**Sarah Owen:** **[29990]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure the provision of emergency ambulance services to people who are self isolating.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The National Health Service has expert teams in every ambulance service and a number of specialist hospital units with highly trained staff and equipment ready to receive and care for patients with any highly infectious disease.

The NHS practises and prepares its response to disease outbreaks and follow tried and tested procedures, following the highest safety standards possible for the protection of NHS staff, patients and the public.

■ **Coronavirus: Ambulance Services and Paramedical Staff**

**Sarah Owen:** **[29984]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has in place to ensure paramedics and ambulance workers are adequately supported and protected in the event of a large scale outbreak of covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* All guidance is published on GOV.uk and standard operating procedures are published on NHS England and NHS Improvement's website. Guidance is also available to healthcare professionals on NHS England and NHS Improvement's website, with specific guidance for those in ambulance services. This includes information on personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as infection prevention and control guidance. More information can be found at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/872745/Infection\\_prevention\\_and\\_control\\_guidance\\_for\\_pandemic\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/872745/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf)

The United Kingdom maintains stockpiles of protective equipment for healthcare staff who may come into contact with patients with the virus.

These stocks are being monitored daily, with additional stocks being ordered where necessary.

■ **Coronavirus: China**

**Nadia Whittome:** **[29268]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to paragraph 3.9, bullet point 3 of Coronavirus: action plan, published on 3 March 2020, if he will authorise research into the security control of viruses under investigation at the Wuhan State Institute of Virology.

**Jo Churchill:**

We have no plans to authorise research into the security control of viruses under investigation at the Wuhan State Institute of Virology.

We are concentrating on the stages that we have set out in paragraph 3.9 of the COVID-19 action plan. These stages are: contain, delay, research and mitigate.

**■ Coronavirus: Cystic Fibrosis****Kerry McCarthy:****[31454]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure that people with cystic fibrosis requiring urgent hospital admissions for their condition are (a) prioritised and (b) more quickly tested for covid-19 infections.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* Planning for the impact of COVID-19 on the National Health Service includes considerations of how to ensure that those who require urgent hospital admission, as a result of an existing health condition, are managed appropriately alongside the expected increased admissions of patients with COVID-19. All patients admitted to hospital with symptoms that suggest possible COVID-19 are now tested on admission.

Minimising risk of infection is very important for those at particular risk of getting seriously ill if they contract COVID-19. Public Health England have released specific guidance for people considered at particularly high risk, including those with cystic fibrosis. NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to all those in at risk groups, in the week commencing Monday 23 March 2020, with specific advice about what to do to minimise the risk of infection. A link to the guidance is available at the following link:

<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>

**■ Coronavirus: Death****Sam Tarry:****[30198]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many fatalities the Government has estimated from its herd immunisation modelling of covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Herd immunity is not part of our action plan but is a natural by-product of an epidemic. Our aims are to save lives, protect the most vulnerable, and relieve pressure on the National Health Service.

We have now moved out of the contain phase and into delay, and we have experts working round the clock. Every measure that we have or will introduce will be based on the best scientific evidence.

Our awareness of the likely levels of immunity in the country over the coming months will ensure our planning and response is as accurate and effective as possible.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

**Preet Kaur Gill:** [29303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, if he will publish the behavioural science modelling advice that predicts fatigue in public obedience of guidance on action to restrict the spread of the virus.

**Yvette Cooper:** [29826]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the statement by the Chief Medical Officer on 9 March 2020 that, The risk is that if we go too early people will understandably get fatigued and we won't be able to sustain it over time, if he will publish the behavioural modelling underpinning the Government's approach to tackling the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies has published the scientific evidence supporting the Government response to COVID-19, including behavioural modelling, available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-supporting-the-uk-government-response>

**Gareth Thomas:** [32046]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to requisition (a) private hospitals and (b) testing centres to support efforts to control and respond to the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

As announced by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on Saturday 21 March, the National Health Service has struck a deal with private hospitals to acquire thousands of extra beds, ventilators and medical staff to fight the COVID-19 outbreak.

An extra 8,000 hospital beds across England, nearly 1,200 ventilators and almost 20,000 fully qualified staff will be available from next week.

From this week, we plan to increase testing to 10,000 a day (up from 5,000 a day last week). Within four weeks, Public Health England and the NHS expect to be conducting 25,000 tests a day – and we will continue to increase testing capacity, up to 250,000 a day.

## ■ Coronavirus: Health Services

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[28593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department plans to requisition privately-owned healthcare facilities in the event that more facilities are required for patients diagnosed with covid-19.

**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[28594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what powers he has to requisition privately-owned healthcare facilities in the event that more facilities are required for patients diagnosed with covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement have worked with the independent sector to increase capacity and resource within the National Health Service, adding around 8000 beds and 20,000 clinical staff. This will ensure that more facilities are available for patients diagnosed with COVID-19.

**Sir Alan Campbell:** [\[32059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether routine treatment will be stopped during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

National Health Service organisations were advised, in a letter to them from NHS England and NHS Improvement dated 17 March, that they should assume to need to postpone all non-urgent elective operations from 15 April at the latest, for a period of at least three months. NHS trusts also have full local discretion to wind down elective activity over the next 30 days as they see best, to free up staff for refresher training, beds for COVID-19 patients, and theatres/recovery facilities for adaptation work. Emergency admissions, cancer treatment and other clinically urgent care should continue unaffected.

## ■ Coronavirus: Hire Services

**Jack Lopresti:** [\[29949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether private rental companies who provide vehicles for the NHS and other essential public services will be able to continue to operate under the Government's covid-19 response scenarios; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The Government is committed to doing all it can to ensure that National Health Service workers are able to travel to work with minimal disruption. We also recognise the important role public services and private companies play in delivering key services.

At present the Government has no plans to put in place restrictions on public or private transport as part of our response to COVID-19. However, we continue to keep

all aspects of our response to the virus under review, guided by the best advice from our world-renowned team of clinicians, public health experts and scientists.

### ■ Coronavirus: Hospital Beds

**Munira Wilson:** [29987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to secure additional critical care beds to meet the demand created by the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* It is the Government's priority that the National Health Service has appropriate equipment to respond to COVID-19. This includes the provision of intensive care beds. The Department is working closely with NHS England and the devolved administrations to ensure this.

NHS England is looking at National Health Service organisations critical care capacity - including the use of independent sector providers where available. This includes making sure they have as much ventilation equipment as possible, as well as the trained and skilled personnel to use it.

Information on critical care bed capacity is published by NHS England and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/critical-care-capacity/>

### ■ Coronavirus: Infant Foods

**Alison Thewliss:** [30064]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure the maintenance of the supply of infant formula during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The Department is aware of some recent local food stockpiling issues and is in discussion with industry to ensure a continued supply of infant formula. Additionally, the British Specialist Nutrition Association Ltd who represent manufacturers of formula, have put out a note of reassurance to parents on both their website and via Twitter to allay concerns and to ask people to be considerate in the way they shop to ensure an adequate supply of formula remains available to all. This dialogue with the formula industry will remain active and we will continue to monitor the situation.

### ■ Coronavirus: Medical Equipment

**Mike Amesbury:** [30905]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many new ventilators have been manufactured in the UK since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

Work preparing the National Health Service has been ongoing and we have already nearly doubled ventilator capacity. New and existing suppliers are being asked to

build as many as they can. The Prime Minister has issued a call to United Kingdom industry to produce additional ventilators and the Department asked appropriate potential manufacturers on Friday 13 March to come forward with proposals for new ventilation machines. Around a dozen potential prototypes have now been presented to the Department which we are currently pursuing.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Mental Health Services**

**Stephanie Peacock:**

[\[32293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to relieve pressure on mental health services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* Mental health providers are looking at how they can maximise the use of digital and virtual channels to keep delivering support and manage the impact of self-isolation on staff and patients. For example, where it is not possible to carry out home visits (e.g. because a patient may be self-isolating due to symptoms of COVID-19), care contacts may need to take place on the phone or through video consultation.

NHSX guidance has been published to support their use. As well as tools such as Skype, WhatsApp and Facetime, there are also products designed specifically for health and mental health.

## ■ **Coronavirus: Pharmacy**

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[30906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of covid-19 on levels of demand on pharmacies.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[30907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional funding and other resources he is making available to pharmacies to help tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* We are working closely with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) and NHS England and NHS Improvement to ensure that community pharmacies get the support they need to help their communities stay well and to treat those with minor illness.

We are working to reprioritise the services commissioned by the National Health Service and offered by community pharmacy. Our aim is that the services most important in supporting patients at this time will continue and others will be suspended to increase capacity. We are also working with the General Pharmaceutical Council to increase the workforce available.



We have provided all community pharmacies with personal protective equipment and are issuing regular guidance. Where additional services are commissioned from community pharmacy to support patients, we will work with the PSNC to ensure that community pharmacy is fairly recompensed as well as supporting those businesses that may have to temporarily close.

## ■ Coronavirus: Pregnancy

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[28663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the effect of the coronavirus on unborn babies.

**Jo Churchill:**

Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement contributed to the development of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists guidance on COVID-19 infection and pregnancy.

The review found that there is no evidence to suggest an increased risk of miscarriage. There is also no evidence that the virus can pass to the developing baby during pregnancy. It is therefore considered unlikely that if the mother has the COVID-19 virus it will cause abnormalities in the baby.

The guidance is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.rcog.org.uk/coronavirus-pregnancy>

## ■ Coronavirus: Research

**Beth Winter:**

[30187]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has (a) undertaken and (b) commissioned research on the covid-19 pandemic which uses behavioural psychology modelling; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* The Government intends to publish the evidence being used by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies.

The COVID-19 Public Information Campaign has been developed with a blended team of specialist marketing and behavioural science experts together with advice from academic experts in Psychological Medicine. The Protection Motivation Theory has shaped thinking and the campaign has been robustly developed and tested with input and advice from the Behaviour Insights Team.

## ■ Health Professions: Coronavirus

**Sam Tarry:**

[30201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether immediate access to covid-19 testing will be made available to (a) vital staff and (b) primary care staff to avoid unnecessary self-isolation.

**Jo Churchill:**

Our first priority is to make sure that we use those tests on the people who need them most.

Public Health England has rolled its own test out to a number of National Health Service collaborators to increase daily testing capacity and it is evaluating commercial tests to allow the NHS to consider faster tests. On 17 March the Prime Minister announced that capacity would increase to 25,000 a day in two weeks

Testing of healthcare workers is happening already and will continue to expand as capacity increases.

**Intensive Care: Coronavirus****Ellie Reeves:**[\[30121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government will take to ensure babies and children of parents requiring intensive care treatment as a result of covid-19 are looked after.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* In many cases, other family members or friends of the parent(s) will provide temporary care. If there is no-one to look after the child, the local authority may need to take the child into temporary care.

**Intensive Care: Greater London****Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[32298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people admitted to NHS Trust intensive care units in London in each week since February 1 2020.

**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[32299\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of people admitted to NHS Trust intensive care units in the Midlands in each week since February 1 2020.

**Edward Argar:**

The number of people admitted to National Health Service trust intensive care units in London and the Midlands in each week since February 1 2020 is not available in the format requested.

NHS England and NHS Improvement collect and publish weekly sitreps data over winter from acute trusts with a type 1 accident and emergency department. This includes critical care bed numbers and occupancy rates:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/winter-daily-sitreps/winter-daily-sitrep-2019-20-data/>

The NHS is working hard to support critically ill patients during the COVID-19 epidemic. The Chancellor recently advised that the NHS will get the resources it needs to cope with a COVID-19 epidemic.

The NHS is currently scaling up intensive care beds and is working with independent sector providers to achieve this.

■ **Luton and Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust: Coronavirus**

**Sarah Owen:** **[29989]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with Luton and Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust on tackling covid-19.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* NHS England is in regular contact with all hospitals and has published regular updates to its guidance and advice.

NHS England published a letter, on 17 March, detailing the next steps, in response to the COVID-19, which builds on multiple actions already in train. The letter can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/next-steps-on-nhs-response-to-covid-19-letter-from-simon-stevens-and-amanda-pritchard/>

■ **Medical Equipment**

**Martyn Day:** **[30021]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase production and supply of medical ventilators; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Ventilator machines are usually linked to patients in Intensive Care Units/Critical Care/High Dependency Units, although some patients may have them at home or use Continuous Positive Airway Pressure machines to assist with their breathing.

We are scaling up intensive care beds. NHS England is looking at National Health Service organisations critical care capacity - including the availability of additional facilities of independent sector providers.

It is also making sure that they have as much ventilation equipment as possible and, crucially, the skilled and trained people to use it.

■ **Medical Equipment: Procurement**

**Fleur Anderson:** **[30075]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many ventilators the NHS (a) has and (b) plans on purchasing.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Ventilator machines are usually linked to patients in Intensive Care Units/Critical Care/High Dependency Units, although some patients may have them at home or use Continuous Positive Airway Pressure machines to assist with their breathing.

We are scaling up intensive care beds. NHS England is looking at National Health Service organisations critical care capacity - including the availability of additional facilities of independent sector providers.

It is also making sure that they have as much ventilation equipment as possible and, crucially, the skilled and trained people to use it.

Information on critical care bed capacity is published by NHS England and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/critical-care-capacity/>

Availability of an NHS critical care bed indicates the associated number of NHS staff with the appropriate skills and training are available to deliver the required treatment.

**Mike Amesbury:****[30904]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional ventilators his Department has been able to purchase to date.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* The National Health Service has world-renowned critical care facilities which includes access to around 5000 adult and 900 paediatric critical care ventilators, with further ventilators available outside of critical care facilities.

We are currently in the process of purchasing many more ventilators at scale. We are likely to need 20,000 more under a reasonable worst cases scenario and the Prime Minister has issued a call to United Kingdom industry to produce additional ventilators.

**■ NHS 111: Coronavirus****Dan Jarvis:****[31514]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the NHS 111 service response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* Around 500 additional call handlers have already been trained.

The National Health Service has been clear that investment will increase if demand continues to rise advising that people should only call 111 if they cannot get help online. The new NHS 111 online service provides people with the right advice which

frees up clinical call handlers time so that they are able to prioritise those experiencing symptoms.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[31627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure NHS 111 has the capacity to (a) handle increased calls and (b) reduce phone waiting times during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

Around 1,000 additional call handlers have already been trained.

The National Health Service has been clear that investment will increase if demand continues to rise advising that people should only call 111 if they cannot get help online. The new NHS 111 online service provides people with the right advice which frees up clinical call handlers time so that they are able to prioritise those experiencing symptoms.

#### ■ NHS: Protective Clothing

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[28587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the viability of reallocating funding to the production and distribution of additional personal protective equipment to treat patients suffering severe covid-19 symptoms in advance of the infection rate peak; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[28588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the viability of reallocating funding to the production and distribution of additional medical devices to treat patients suffering severe covid-19 symptoms in advance of the infection rate peak; and if he will make a statement.

**Jo Churchill:**

The Chancellor created a £5 billion contingency fund to ensure National Health Service and public services have the resources they need, including personal protective equipment and has been clear that the NHS will get whatever funding it needs to respond to the COVID-19.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking for organisations who can support in the supply of ventilators and ventilator components across the United Kingdom as part of the Government's response to COVID-19.

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[30048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what steps he is taking to ensure NHS staff have adequate supplies of protective equipment.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* It is the Government's priority that the National Health Service has appropriate equipment to respond to COVID-19, and the

Department are working closely with NHS England and the devolved administrations to ensure this.

The United Kingdom maintains stockpiles of protective equipment for healthcare staff who may come into contact with patients with the virus.

These stocks are being monitored daily, with additional stocks being ordered where necessary.

**Layla Moran:**

**[30114]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance his Department plans to provide to healthcare providers on the proper use and preparation of personal protective equipment during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Public Health England have produced written guidance and demonstration videos for all health and social care staff on the proper use and preparation of personal protective equipment. The written guidance and videos are available on GOV.UK at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control#PPE>

#### ■ **NHS: Sick Leave**

**Mr Kevan Jones:**

**[32642]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether NHS workers returning to work will be subject to an interview after seven days absence in line with routine process or whether that requirement will be relaxed during the covid-19 pandemic.

**Helen Whately:**

National Health Service employers are responsible for managing sickness absence in their organisation and it will be up to each individual employer to decide whether they continue with return to work interviews or decide to relax the process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department continues to commission NHS Employers to provide guidance, advice and resources for NHS trusts to manage sickness absence. A toolkit specifically designed to manage sickness absence can be found at the following link:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/retention-and-staff-experience/health-and-wellbeing/action-on-sickness-absence>

NHS organisations need to take a collaborative approach to supporting staff and this includes closer working with occupational health providers who can provide proactive support and guidance to staff who may be more vulnerable to COVID-19.

**■ North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust: Coronavirus****Mike Hill:** **[31620]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what funding the Government is making available to North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust to tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

The Chancellor has been clear that the National Health Service will get whatever funding it needs to respond to COVID-19. Through the Emergency Response Fund, HM Treasury stands ready to provide necessary funding to support our crucial frontline NHS and public services.

**■ Pharmacy: Hygiene****Taiwo Owatemi:** **[31576]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that pharmacies have adequate stocks of hand sanitiser to meet demand.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* The Department is working with wholesalers to ensure a longer-term supply of all aspects of personal protective equipment, including gloves, aprons, facemasks and hand sanitiser. For future personal protection equipment (PPE) requirements, health and social care providers should order PPE from their usual suppliers.

**■ Protective Clothing****Mr Ranil Jayawardena:** **[31568]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue guidance to workers that require face masks as part of their usual personal protective equipment on what steps to take in the event that suppliers of those masks are unable to restock.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* Guidance has been issued and is available at the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/872745/Infection\\_prevention\\_and\\_control\\_guidance\\_for\\_pandemic\\_coronavirus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/872745/Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_for_pandemic_coronavirus.pdf)

We have central stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE) and are also accessing the European Union Exit and pandemic influenza stockpiles which have been released for use. The Department is working with National Health Service and others in the supply chain to ensure these are delivered to the frontline as soon as possible.



Staff experiencing shortages have been asked to contact a supply disruption helpline centre by email or on a helpline.

The Department is working with wholesalers to ensure a longer-term supply of all aspects of personal protective equipment, including gloves, aprons, facemasks and hand sanitiser.

## ■ Public Health: Sign Language

**Alex Sobel:**

[\[30046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to provide accessible information on covid-19 to sign language users within the deaf community.

**Jo Churchill:**

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* Information published on GOV.UK is available in accessible formats including British Sign Language.

Media announcements are being broadcast with British Sign Language interpreters.

## ■ Ultrasonics

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[28574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care what progress NHS England has made on undertaking a public consultation on the development of a national commissioning policy for MR-guided focused ultrasound; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[28575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on providing patients with access to MR Guided Focused Ultrasound on the NHS in England; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Mike Penning:**

[\[28576\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress the Clinical Priorities Advisory Group of NHS England has made on assessing the availability of MR Guided Focused Ultrasound for NHS patients; and if he will make a statement.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

NHS England is in the process of developing a national clinical commissioning policy for MR-guided focused ultrasound for essential tremor. The policy will determine whether the intervention will or will not be routinely commissioned and contain criteria to guide clinical decision making about the patients able to benefit.

A draft policy was returned to the Specialised Commissioning Clinical Panel in November 2019 and is now progressing to stakeholder engagement and public consultation. After public consultation is completed, the policy proposal will be considered by the Clinical Priorities Advisory Group. If a decision is taken to commission the intervention, funding will be required to implement the policy. This will be considered alongside other proposals for new treatments for funding through a

relative prioritisation process which takes place twice a year, and is next due to take place in May 2020.

■ **University Hospital of Hartlepool: Coronavirus**

**Mike Hill:** **[31621]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to use University Hospital of Hartlepool as a resource to tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

**Edward Argar:**

NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked all hospitals and National Health Service facilities across the country take action to support and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions include but are not exhaustive of:

Maximising inpatient and critical care capacity; preparing for, and responding to, large numbers of inpatients requiring respiratory support; supporting their staff, and maximising staff availability; support the wider population measures newly announced by Government; stress-test their operational readiness and removing routine burdens. A copy of the communication to hospitals and NHS facilities can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/urgent-next-steps-on-nhs-response-to-covid-19-letter-simon-stevens.pdf>

## HOME OFFICE

■ **Asylum: Coronavirus**

**Chris Stephens:** **[30003]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking with respect to asylum seekers who cannot attend a meeting due to self-isolation as a result of covid-19.

**Chris Philp:**

At present Asylum Operations are looking to maintain services wherever possible and have put in place the appropriate measures to safeguard people against the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

Appointments may be affected, but we will continue to review the service impacts on a daily basis. As the national situation develops, Asylum Operations will take the measures necessary to support appointments, interviewing and decision making including the use of technology, whilst always protecting the needs of the most vulnerable.

## ■ Asylum: Finance

**Alex Sobel:**

**[32242]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether additional support will be provided to asylum seekers using ASPEN cards to ensure they have access to sufficient food and supplies during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

We take the welfare of our service users very seriously and we are considering a range of options to ensure that ensure service users have sufficient support during the COVID 10 outbreak, ensuring that we are adhering to Public Health England guidance.

## ■ Asylum: Saudi Arabia

**Crispin Blunt:**

**[32027]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Saudi citizens applied for asylum in the UK in (a) 2017, (b) 2018 and (c) 2019.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office publishes data on the number of asylum applications received by the UK in the chapter 'How many people do we grant asylum or protection to?' in the quarterly '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release)'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the number of asylum applications broken down by nationality are available in tables Asy\_D01 of the 'Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement datasets'.

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to the year ending December 2019.

Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'. [https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content\\_store\\_document\\_type=upcoming\\_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance](https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance)

## ■ Immigrants: Coronavirus

**Tim Farron:**

**[32103]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to protect migrants unable to attend (a) reporting appointments, (b) court dates and (c) interviews self-isolating during the covid-19 outbreak from being penalised.

**Chris Philp:**

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 16 March, and Public Health England (PHE) advice in relation to COVID-19, Home Office Immigration Enforcement are reviewing the frequency with which people need to report. While this goes ahead, we have temporarily deferred reporting.

We will continue to contact all those who report via SMS text message with details of their future reporting dates and will keep this under review in light of the ongoing situation.

**Immigration Controls: Languages****Caroline Lucas:**[\[29883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the UK's points-based immigration system policy statement, published 19 February 2020, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of including a foreign language competency as a tradeable characteristic.

**Kevin Foster:**

The new points-based system will be introduced from 1 January 2021.

The operation of the system will be kept under review and, as the policy statement published on 19 February makes clear, the Home Office will continue to refine it in light of experience and will consider adding further flexibility into the system including additional attributes which can be 'traded' against a lower salary.

**Visas: Commonwealth****Scott Benton:**[\[30193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing visa charges for Commonwealth UK armed forces personnel and their immediate families applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain after completing their service.

**Kevin Foster:**

The Home Office is listening carefully to those with concerns about how members of HM Forces can have the support of their families whilst serving our country.

We are continuing to assess the impact of immigration fees on members of the HM Forces in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence.

**Windrush Lessons Learned Review****Ms Diane Abbott:**[\[31423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she will publish the Windrush lessons learned review; and if she will make a statement.

**Priti Patel:**

I published the Windrush Lessons Learned Review and made a statement on 19 March 2020.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****■ Affordable Housing: Greater London****Dr Matthew Offord:****[32143]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many affordable homes have been constructed in London in each of the last three years.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Comprehensive estimates of all affordable housing delivered are published in the Department's Affordable Housing Supply Statistical Release at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/affordable-housing-supply-in-england-2018-to-2019>.

A breakdown of the affordable housing delivered in London, identifying new build, in each of the last three years, is available in live table 1011C.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>.

**■ Business Improvement Districts: Coronavirus****Emma Hardy:****[32284]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what financial support will be provided to Business Improvement Districts facing a reduction in income caused by businesses not paying business rates during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

We have announced a substantial package of support to businesses, and we are exploring other ways we can support them.

At present, businesses within a Business Improvement District (BID) will still need to pay into their BID to ensure the BID body can still provide vital support to their local business communities.

We know that a number of BIDs are currently in the process of issuing their bills to members, and we would hope that they can come to sensible arrangements on charging given the current circumstances.

The Coronavirus Act also includes new measures to support BIDs: we have introduced a delay to BID ballots due to take place between now and 31 December 2020 until March 2021. This will ensure that they are conducted in a safe and effective way.

**■ Law of Property Act 1925****Richard Fuller:****[32108]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 February 2020 to Question 14608, when he plans to introduce the legislation to repeal Section 121 of the Law of Property Act 1925.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is committed to promoting fairness and transparency for homeowners and ensuring that consumers are protected from abuse and poor service.

The Government is aware that homeowners could be subject to a possession order or the granting of a lease of their home by the rentcharge owner over rentcharge arrears. As part of our leasehold reform work we have committed to repeal Section 121 of the Law of Property Act 1925 to ensure homeowners are not subjected to unfair possession orders. This will be pursued when Parliamentary time allows.

The Government also intends to legislate to ensure that freehold homeowners who pay estate rentcharges have the right to challenge their reasonableness and to go to the tribunal to appoint a new management company if necessary.

■ **Local Government Finance: Coronavirus**

**Gareth Thomas:** **[31424]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will increase funding to all local authorities to provide financial support for people who struggle to meet increased food costs as a result of the effect of Covid-19; and if he will make statement.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

The Government has announced £1.6 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding is un-ringfenced and is intended to help local authorities address any pressures they are facing in response the Covid-19 pandemic, across all service areas. We will continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on local government and are taking steps to address and support individuals and local authorities.

We have also confirmed £500 million of funding to provide additional council tax relief, and other support, for vulnerable households.

Additionally, the Government is working with the food industry and local authorities to deliver free basic food parcels to those defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from Covid-19 and who do not have a network of friends and family to support them, while they self-isolate in their homes over the next 12 weeks.

Further details on people covered by this definition can be found here:

<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>

■ **Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus**

**Claire Hanna:** **[31556]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support private renters that cannot pay their rent as a result of being

unemployed or receiving Statutory Sick Pay or other social security benefits due to 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 has been brought 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 renter in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction during this time.

Tenants will continue to be liable for their rent, and those tenants who can afford to pay should continue to do so. The Government also announced unprecedented measures to support workers to stay in work during this period by paying up to 80 per cent of their wages, increasing the amount available to welfare claimants and raising the Local Housing Allowance rate to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile, supporting tenants who may have already been struggling with their rent. These significant financial measures will help to support tenants to continue to pay their living costs, including rental payments.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

**[31558]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to ensure that no one is evicted from rented accommodation while self-isolating 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 has been 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 renter 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>.

**Dr Luke Evans:**

**[31573]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to protect people renting residential properties during 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 has been 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 renter 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 Largan:** [31600]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to support private renters affected by covid-19.

**Christopher Pincher:**

On 18 March, we announced a radical package of measures to protect renters and landlords affected by coronavirus. Emergency legislation has been brought 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 renter in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [32280]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to amend the process for private renters to leave Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreements early if they can no longer afford to pay rent as a result of covid-19.

**Christopher Pincher:**

Depending on the contractual provisions of the tenancy agreement, during the fixed term a tenant can still exercise a break clause in the tenancy agreement or negotiate a surrendering of the tenancy with the landlord. There are no plans to amend the existing process for surrendering a tenancy or to make changes to the basic contractual position of the tenant remaining liable for the rent for the whole of the fixed term.

On 18 March, we announced a radical package of measures to protect renters and landlords affected by coronavirus. Emergency legislation has been brought 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 renter in private or social accommodation needs to be concerned about the threat of eviction during this time.

## ■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

**Gareth Thomas:** [32043]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, n what his timescale is for issuing guidance to local authorities on their role in (a) allocating and (B) disbursing the grants to small business during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mr Simon Clarke:**

On 20 March 2020 the Chancellor built on his 11 March Budget statement by announcing a comprehensive series of measures supporting wages, cash-flow for businesses and the welfare system. In England, this support includes small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

In addition, grant funding of up to £25,000 will be available for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount. Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of up to and including £15,000 will receive a grant of £10,000, while businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 will receive a grant of £25,000.

Funding will be administered by local authorities. The Business Secretary has sent a letter outlining these schemes to local authorities and guidance informing local authorities about the operation and delivery of the funding schemes is now available on the GOV.UK website at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding).

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### ■ Trade Agreements: Trade Unions

**Gareth Thomas:**

[33395]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans she has to enable UK trades unions to (a) have sight of and (b) comment on the text of negotiations on a trade agreement with the UK; and if she will make a statement.

**Conor Burns:**

This Government is committed to seeking views from the widest range of stakeholder groups to create an inclusive and transparent trade policy that works all parts of the UK. We must balance the need for transparency with ensuring that the United Kingdom's economic interests are protected in what are, after all, sensitive negotiations. We have established engagement mechanisms to ensure a broad range of stakeholders have the opportunity to inform the UK's trade policy. This includes the Strategic Trade Advisory Group and network of Expert Trade Advisory Groups that bring together a wide variety of stakeholders, from businesses to civil society organisations, to help inform our trade policy. Any further opportunities for engagement during negotiations will be set out in due course.

## JUSTICE

### ■ Administration of Justice: Coronavirus

**Catherine West:**

[31653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps she is taking to protect jurors and other members of the justice system during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Chris Philp:**

HMCTS is following the public health guidance to minimize the risk of COVID-19 to court staff and users and has set out its priorities for managing the response:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-courts-and-tribunals-planning-and-preparation>

This morning (23 March 2020), the [Lord Chief Justice has announced a temporary pause on new jury trials in the Crown Court](#) while measures are put in place to ensure that physical hearings can take place safely and in accordance with advice on social distancing.

## ■ Cemeteries

**Aaron Bell:** [32213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what economic assessment he has made of the effect of transferring closed burial grounds from the Church of England to local authorities.

**Aaron Bell:** [32214]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what funding is available for local authorities to maintain burial grounds.

**Aaron Bell:** [32215]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many closed churchyards have been transferred from the Church of England to local authorities in Staffordshire since 2010.

**Aaron Bell:** [32216]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the Burial Act 1854 and the financial effect of its provision on local authorities.

**Alex Chalk:**

Historically, the Church of England has made burial provision for local communities, and continues to do so. The transfer of responsibility for closed churchyards to local authorities returns the accountability for their maintenance to the community as a whole. Local authority spending priorities are a matter for local discretion.

Data on the transfer of responsibility for closed churchyards to local authorities is not held centrally.

The Law Commission's current Programme of Law Reform includes a project to consider streamlining and modernising the law governing the disposal of human remains, with a view to putting forward a legal framework for the future.

## ■ Crimes of Violence

**Philip Davies:** [32652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of (a) men and (b) women were found guilty after a trial in (i) Magistrates' Courts and (ii) Crown Courts for violence against the person offences in each of the last five years.

**Chris Philp:**

The Ministry of Justice publishes information on convictions in England and Wales, up to December 2018. This information, by sex, court and offence group, can be found in the Prosecutions and Convictions tool, available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/802307/prosecutions-and-convictions-tool-2018.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802307/prosecutions-and-convictions-tool-2018.xlsx)

- Filter 'Convicted/ Not convicted' to '01: Convicted'.
- Drag the 'Offence Group' variable from the rows field to the filters field and filter to '01: Violence against the person'.
- Drag the 'Court type' variable to the rows field.
- Drag the 'Sex' variable to the rows field (beneath 'Court type').

Proportions of males and females found guilty can be calculated by dividing the number of male or female offenders by the total (excluding those where sex is not known and companies, public bodies, etc).

**Homicide: Reoffenders****Philip Davies:****[32650]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of time served in prison was by (a) men and (b) women sentenced for attempted murder for those that were released from prison in each of the last five years.

**Chris Philp:**

The tables attached give the mean and median average period spent in custody by males and females sentenced to imprisonment for attempted murder and released from prison in 2014 to 2018 inclusive.

We have been clear that serious violent and sexual offenders must serve sentences that truly reflect the severity of the crime – helping to protect the public and giving victims confidence that justice has been served. We have therefore introduced legislation – the Release of Prisoners (Alteration of Relevant Proportion of Sentence) Order 2020 – which comes into force on 1 April 2020. From that date, anyone given a standard determinate sentence of 7 years or more for the most serious sexual or violent offences, including attempted murder, will be required to spend two-thirds – rather than half – of that sentence in prison.

**Attachments:**

1. [Table](#) [Copy of Copy of PQ 32650 reply\_final.xlsx]

**Legal Aid Scheme: Civil Proceedings and Low Pay****Ruth Jones:****[31554]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of legal aid available for (a) civil cases and (b) people on low incomes.

**Alex Chalk:**

Legal aid statistics are published quarterly, and include assessments of recent and long-term trends. These can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/legal-aid-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2019>

In February 2019 we published the Post-Implementation review of LASPO to review the effectiveness and accessibility of legal aid in England and Wales. Alongside the PIR, and to tackle the issues raised, we published a Legal Support Action Plan. This set out the government's vision for the future and set out a number of changes to legal aid and legal support designed to improve the accessibility of legal aid and legal support, particularly for those on low incomes. These changes include a comprehensive review of the legal aid means tests, improvements to the exceptional case funding scheme, the removal of 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: Prison Sentences****Philip Davies:****[32654]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of offenders in each police force area were convicted and sentenced to immediate custody that had previously committed (a) zero, (b) between one and four, (c) between five and nine, (d) between 10 and 15, (e) between 16 and 25, (f) between 26 and 50, (g) between 51 and 75, (h) between 76 and 100, (i) between 101 and 150, (j) between 151 and 200 and (k) 200 offences in each year since 2010.

**Philip Davies:****[32655]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of offenders that had (a) zero, (b) between one and 4, (c) between five and nine, (d) between 10 and 15, (e) between 16 and 25, (f) between 26 and 50, (g) between 51 and 75, (h) between 76 and 100, (i) between 101 and 150, (j) between 151 and 200 and (k) 200 or more previous offences on their record at the time of sentencing were given an immediate custodial sentence for their latest offence.

**Philip Davies:****[32665]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the highest number of life sentences given to an offender during their offending history is in each of the 30 years.

**Philip Davies:****[33458]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what was the (a) average and (b) highest number of previous offences for dangerous driving a person committed before being given an immediate custodial sentence for that offence in (i) England and Wales and (ii) West Yorkshire in each of the last five years.

**Philip Davies:**

**[33459]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what was the highest number of previous dangerous driving offences held by a person who was not given a sentence of immediate custody upon a further dangerous driving offence in (a) England and Wales and (b) West Yorkshire in each of the last five years; and what was the sentence for the most recent conviction for that offence in each case.

**Philip Davies:**

**[33470]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 24 February 2020 to Question 505, Suspended Sentences, on what dates each of the suspended sentences were given for each offender; what offences were committed on each occasion; and what was the (a) custodial period and (b) period of suspension for each of those sentences.

**Chris Philp:**

Obtaining the necessary information to answer these questions involves accessing the secure Police National Computer (PNC) system, which my relevant officials are unable to do at this time in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. I will write to the Hon Member in due course with the information requested, once my officials are able to safely access the PNC system, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

## ■ Prison Sentences

**Philip Davies:**

**[32651]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of sentences handed down by (a) Magistrates' Courts and (b) Crown Courts were suspended prison sentences in each of the last 5 years.

**Chris Philp:**

Information up to December 2018 on the number and proportion of suspended sentences imposed in England and Wales, broken down by court type, has been published in the 'Sentencing data tool' at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-december-2018>.

To obtain the information requested, in the Pivot Table Fields:

- Remove 'Offence Type' from the rows field and replace with 'Courts'.
- Drag the 'Sentence Outcome' variable into the rows field (beneath 'Courts').

The number of suspended sentences imposed at a specified court in a specified year will then be shown in the table. The proportion for each court can be calculated by dividing the number of suspended sentences imposed at a specified court in a specified year by the total number of sentences imposed at such a specified court in a specified year.

## ■ Prisoner Escapes

**Philip Davies:**

[\[33468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2020 to Question 1219, on Prisoner Escapes, how long each offender has been out of prison; and what the circumstances were that led to the escape in each case.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Escapes are rare but every security breach is treated seriously. Escaped prisoners recaptured by police face prosecution and face additional security measures on return to prison.

Please find below the information on the number of days prisoners have remained at large following an escape. Latest published data on escapes is available up to 2018-19, all prisoners who have escaped during this period have been recaptured.

FINANCIAL YEAR	ESCAPED FROM	DAYS AT LARGE
2016-17	Prison Establishment	0
2016-17	Prison Establishment	4
2016-17	Prison Establishment	2
2016-17	Prison Establishment	5
2016-17	HMPPS Escort	0
2016-17	HMPPS Escort	0
2016-17	HMPPS Escort	366
2016-17	Contractor Escort	0
2016-17	Contractor Escort	9
2016-17	Contractor Escort	0
2016-17	Contractor Escort	3
2016-17	Contractor Escort	2
2016-17	Contractor Escort	0
2016-17	Contractor Escort	0
2016-17	Contractor Escort	52
2017-18	Prison Establishment	2
2017-18	HMPPS Escort	1
2017-18	HMPPS Escort	0



FINANCIAL YEAR	ESCAPED FROM	DAYS AT LARGE
2017-18	HMPPS Escort	28
2017-18	Contractor Escort	12
2017-18	Contractor Escort	2
2017-18	Contractor Escort	3
2017-18	Contractor Escort	0
2017-18	Contractor Escort	0
2017-18	Contractor Escort	0
2017-18	Contractor Escort	1
2017-18	Contractor Escort	8
2017-18	Contractor Escort	0
2018-19	Prison Establishment	13
2018-19	HMPPS Escort	0
2018-19	HMPPS Escort	4
2018-19	Contractor Escort	0
2018-19	Contractor Escort	0
2018-19	Contractor Escort	6
2018-19	Contractor Escort	0
2018-19	Contractor Escort	0
2018-19	Contractor Escort	0

#### Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from the HMPPS Incident Reporting System.

Care is taken when processing and analysing the returns but the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although the figures are shown to the last individual the figures may not be accurate to that level.

We are unable to provide any further details of the circumstances of the escapes due to security reasons.

**Philip Davies:**

[\[33469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 25 February 2020 to Question 1219, on Prisoner Escapes, if he will make it his policy to release the names of absconders to (a) inform and (b) seek information from the public on those absconders' whereabouts.

**Lucy Frazer:**

When a prisoner absconds, police are immediately notified and are responsible for locating the offender. The majority of absconders are quickly recaptured and returned to custody where they face serious consequences. These include serving up to two additional years on conviction. Prisoners subject to parole decisions, will likely face even longer delays to their release.

We collaborate with the police in order to recapture those who abscond and prosecute in line with the Crime in Prison Referral Agreement. As part of that process the police decide whether releasing names is necessary to aid the investigation. We publish statistics annually on the number of prisoners who have absconded and those still at large as to inform the public.

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Philip Davies:**

[\[32653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many serving prisoners were out of prison on temporary licence in each day in the latest month for which figures are available; and what offences each of those prisoners had committed.

**Chris Philp:**

All offenders must meet strict criteria and pass a thorough risk assessment before being considered for release on temporary licence (ROTL). ROTL is proven to reduce reoffending, helping offenders build and maintain family ties as well as find work.

The attached table gives the number of prisoners on release on temporary licence (ROTL) on each day of September 2019, broken down by the relevant offence group for the principal offence for which they were sentenced to imprisonment.

### **Attachments:**

1. Table [Copy of Copy of PQ 32653 final.xlsx]

## ■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

**Dr Matthew Offord:**

[\[31487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to isolate (a) convicted and (b) remand prisoners on the prison estate in the event that those prisoners have symptoms of covid-19.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Prisons have existing, well-developed policies and procedures in place to manage outbreaks of infectious diseases. These policies and procedures are being built upon in response to the specific risks posed by COVID-19 and we have put in place robust

contingency plans, which are informed by Public Health authorities. HMPPS has introduced a procedure for the protective isolation of both convicted and remand prisoners when it is considered that they may be potentially infected with the virus, this has been communicated to all prison staff.

## ■ Prisons: Coronavirus

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[32286\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice on 18 March 2020, Official Report, column 335WH, whether the performance of different tasks in prisons during the covid-19 outbreak will be (a) fully risk-assessed before staff are asked to perform them and (b) voluntary.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[32288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Justice of 18 March 2020, Official Report, column 335, that some contingency planning may include the need to ask staff to work in a different place and potentially do different tasks, whether prison governors are authorised to ask staff not directly employed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to perform tasks outside of their normal work area of responsibility.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[32289\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Justice of 18 March 2020, Official Report, column 335, that some contingency planning may include the need to ask staff to work in a different place and potentially do different tasks, whether prison education staff will be expected to perform non-education tasks in prisons during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kenny MacAskill:** [\[32291\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral contribution of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, of 18 March 2020, Official Report, column 335WH, what plans he has to cancel education provision in prisons during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Lucy Frazer:**

In line with the latest Government advice, as of 24 March all non-essential activities in prisons involving groups of people should be stopped. This includes social visits, education, non-essential work, association, communal dining, periods of mass prisoner movement, religious services and access to the gymnasium.

In order to boost staff availability part of contingency planning may include the need to ask staff directly employed by HMPPS to work in a different place and potentially do different tasks, this includes redeploying operationally trained staff currently working in headquarters back into prisons. We are working closely with Trade Union colleagues to ensure that there is a suitable framework that provides clear guidance in respect of what would be an appropriate range of tasks, this will be fully risk

assessed before staff are asked to perform the tasks. The decisions on this will be made by Governors at establishments based on local needs.

## ■ Prisons: Crimes of Violence

**Philip Davies:** [33460]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2020 to Question 13458 on Prisons: Crimes of Violence, what the average number of additional days was for additional days punishments in each year from 2011 to 2018.

**Lucy Frazer:**

The prisoner discipline system upholds justice in prisons and ensures incidents of prison rule-breaking have consequences. Only Independent Adjudicators, who are District Judges or Deputy District Judges can make an award of additional days to a prisoner's custodial time left to serve.

The information requested can be found in the table attached.

### Attachments:

1. [Table](#) [Copy of Data for PQ 33460.xlsx]

**Philip Davies:** [33461]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 13 February 2020 to Question 13458 on Prisons: Crimes of Violence, what estimate he has made of the number of prison officer assaults that have been charged as assaults on an emergency worker since the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018.

**Lucy Frazer:**

It is not possible to identify the number of prison officer assaults that have been charged under the Assault on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018. This information would need to be requested from each prison who in turn will need to request information from their local police force to obtain this data which will require a high level of resource and will be at a disproportionate cost.

Convictions under the Assault on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 may be held on court record but to be able to identify these cases we would have to access individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost, as there will also be a need to sift through each case to identify whether the emergency worker was a prison officer as this piece of legislation covers other workers such as police officers, NHS workers, National Crime Agency officers etc.

## ■ Reoffenders: Prison Sentences

**Philip Davies:** [32656]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average length of time served in prison by (a) men and (b) women that had been given life sentences was for those that were released from prison in each of the last five years.

**Chris Philp:**

The attached tables show the mean and median average time served by men and women sentenced to life imprisonment who were released from custody in each of the last five years.

Public protection is our priority. It is for the independent Parole Board to review the detention of those prisoners serving life sentences who have completed their tariff period. The Board will direct the release of these prisoners only if it is satisfied that the levels of risk posed to the general public are reduced enough that the National Probation Service and its partner agencies can safely manage them in the community using the powers available to them.

**Attachments:**

1. Table [Copy of Copy of PQ 32656\_final.xlsx]

**■ Sentencing****Philip Davies:**[\[33471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many offences in (a) Magistrates Courts and (b) Crown Courts were marked as receiving no separate penalty in the latest year for which information is available.

**Chris Philp:**

Detailed information on the number of offences that were marked as receiving no separate penalty is not centrally held. This information may be held on court record but to be able to identify these cases we would have to access individual court records which would be of disproportionate cost.

**■ Terrorism: Prisoners' Release****Philip Davies:**[\[32663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many and what proportion of prisoners convicted of terrorist-related offences were released on temporary licence in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

**Lucy Frazer:**

No prisoners who are currently serving a custodial sentence for a terrorist-related offence were released on temporary licence (ROTL) in England and Wales between October 2018 and September 2019. This is the latest annual data available. No terrorist or terrorist-risk offenders are currently eligible to be released on temporary licence. This policy is under regular review.

ROTL enables offenders to participate in activities outside of prison, directly contributing to community resettlement, helping with their rehabilitation and development of a purposeful, law-abiding life. There is no entitlement to ROTL. It is discretionary and only allowed following a robust risk assessment of each offender.

**TRANSPORT****■ Air Traffic Control: Coronavirus****Karl Turner:**[\[31492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of amending the minimum monthly hour requirements for air traffic controllers to enable staff who have self-isolated as a result of the covid-19 outbreak to re-enter the workforce without a delay.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

The working time arrangements of air traffic controllers reflect the vital role they play in maintaining air safety. These arrangements are long standing and designed to ensure that controllers are physically and mentally fit to carry out their operational duties.

The current working time arrangements already provide some flexibility which could be used if deemed necessary. An air navigation service provider can seek an amendment to the working time arrangements for their unit from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) or in exceptional circumstances use its own discretion to modify them on a temporary basis.

**■ Airports: Coronavirus****Steve McCabe:**[\[31432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial support the Government is providing to (a) airports and (b) airport staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

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

**Karl Turner:**[\[31491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a (a) fast-tracked and (b) fee-free SIA Licence application scheme for airport security personnel to enable those staff to be re-deployed during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

My Department is looking at ways to best ensure how those aviation personnel who are temporarily displaced from their jobs in aviation may be able to return to their roles quickly and with the minimum of delay when operations start to be resumed.

As aviation security personnel are exempt from SIA licensing, my officials are speaking with the Home Office to see what options may be possible should aviation security personnel wish to pursue security roles elsewhere.

**Karl Turner:**

[\[31493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of relaxing the sixty day rule for airport security pass holders to allow pass holders that have not been in work as a result of the covid-19 outbreak to return without delay.

**Kelly Tolhurst:**

My Department and the Civil Aviation Authority are examining this issue amongst others, to ensure that when aviation operations resume, people can return to work as soon as possible.

## ■ Blue Badge Scheme

**Alberto Costa:**

[\[31624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to improve access to blue badge parking bays for people with disabilities.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Local authorities are responsible for the administration of the Blue Badge scheme and for the provision of disabled parking bays in their areas, ensuring for example that there are sufficient numbers and that they are located in the right places. Local authorities are also responsible for the enforcement of all parking regulations, including those regarding disabled parking bays on-street (the scheme only applies to on-street parking and not to off-street car parks). They will be making their own arrangements for business continuity to ensure appropriate on-street parking enforcement continues.

To support the role that local authorities play, the Department has issued non-statutory guidance to local authorities in England on how to administer the scheme. This includes advice on how to use the powers provided to them in legislation to enforce on-street parking bays.

**Richard Fuller:**

[\[32111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he plans to introduce changes to the Blue Badge parking scheme to provide eligibility for applicants with temporary disabilities or conditions.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department currently has no plans to extend eligibility to people with temporary disabilities or conditions. With around 2.3 million badges already on issue in England, a further widening of the criteria could place undue pressure on the scheme. It is important that the Blue Badge scheme remains sustainable and protects preferential parking facilities for those who rely upon them for their long-term independence.



**■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus****Dr Luke Evans:** [\[32202\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he will take to ensure the DVSA reinstates driving tests for those who seek to become key workers needing a driving licence during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has suspended most driver testing for up to three months to support government's efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. The DVSA will continue, as a major priority, to make tests available for those whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response or who work in critical sectors.

**■ Govia Thameslink Railway: Coronavirus****Caroline Lucas:** [\[32112\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make it his policy to fund the cost of providing season ticket refunds to season ticket holders on GTR during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Season ticket holders across all franchises are already entitled to claim a refund if they no longer need their season ticket. Affected passengers should contact their retailer for details of refunds available.

**■ Motor Vehicles: Testing****Alberto Costa:** [\[31630\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the covid-19 outbreak on MOT testing.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The effect of COVID-19 on vehicle testing has been under constant review as the situation has developed. As announced on 25th March, vehicle owners will be granted a 6-month exemption from MOT testing, enabling them to continue to travel to work where this absolutely cannot be done from home, or shop for necessities.

**TREASURY****■ Alcoholic Drinks: Excise Duties****Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:** [\[31550\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will cease charging (a) distilleries and (b) breweries duty on the alcohol that they produce in the event that they switch production and utilise that alcohol to make sanitiser.

**Jesse Norman:**

Alcohol produced for an approved medical, scientific or industrial purpose is already exempt from duty. Organisations wishing to produce alcohol for such a purpose will need to seek prior approval from HMRC.

In light of the current situation, HMRC are fast-tracking applications and temporarily relaxing controls. Licensed distillers and gin producers operating in excise warehouses may now use their stocks to produce hand sanitiser without HMRC approval, provided it is made to WHO standards or the alcohol used is denatured to prescribed formulations.

Further information can be found on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/producing-hand-sanitiser-and-gel-for-coronavirus-covid-19>

**■ Bank Cards: Coronavirus****Henry Smith:****[31475]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has made to credit and debit card companies and retail banks on raising the £30 limit on contactless payments to reduce physical interaction in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

Industry will increase the cap on the value of contactless transactions from 1 April, and shops will begin accepting payments up to £45.

The Treasury is working closely with industry and the financial regulators to ensure the steps they take are properly coordinated with Government's wider economic response to COVID-19.

**■ Bank Services: Coronavirus****Mr Laurence Robertson:****[33399]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will hold discussions with representatives of retail banks on not increasing interest levels on overdrafts during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**John Glen:**

The Treasury is working closely with industry and the financial regulators to ensure the steps they take are properly coordinated with Government's wider economic response to COVID-19.

Banks and building societies are ready and able to offer support to their customers who are impacted directly or indirectly by COVID-19. The Government encourages anyone concerned about their overdraft to contact their provider.

Last June, the FCA announced reforms to the overdraft market, including mandating that firms cannot charge more for unarranged overdrafts than arranged overdrafts, banning fixed daily and monthly charges, and a package of measures to improve the

transparency of pricing. Overall the FCA expects these changes to make overdrafts simpler, fairer, and easier to manage and will protect the millions of consumers that use overdrafts, particularly more vulnerable consumers. All providers have set their new charging structures ahead of the deadline in April.

The overdraft reforms will end high unarranged charges and the removal of fees means many occasional arranged borrowers will pay less even though their headline rate of borrowing may increase. Across the market, FCA analysis in January found that 7 out of 10 overdraft users will be better off or see no change when the new rules come into force in April.

In instances where consumers see an increased cost for their overdraft borrowing, the FCA expects firms to engage with customers with large overdraft balances and repeat users of overdrafts to make appropriate interventions. This includes customers who are impacted by COVID-19.

#### ■ Beer: Industry

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

[32064]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to guarantee wages of employees who work in the brewing industry and supply chain during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has announced a significant package of financial support for businesses and employees. Further details of this package are available at:

<http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk>.

#### ■ Beer: Non-domestic Rates

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

[32065]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the business rate relief scheme extends to breweries.

**Jesse Norman:**

MHCLG has published guidance for local authorities on eligibility for the business rates Expanded Retail Discount, which can be found online here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>

It is for the relevant local authority to make decisions on eligibility based on the guidance and their knowledge of the local area.

#### ■ Broadband: Northern Ireland

**Claire Hanna:**

[32746]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Project Stratum funding for Northern Ireland to provide digital broadband across rural areas is still in place.

**Steve Barclay:**

The Confidence and Supply financial annex committed the UK Government to providing £1 billion to Northern Ireland, including £150 million for broadband. To date, £763 million has been released. Any release of further funding would take place following Parliament's approval in the normal way through the Estimates process.

At the Budget, the Government also committed £5bn to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband to the most difficult-to-reach 20% of the country. This funding will have benefits across the UK, particularly in rural areas.

**Business: Coronavirus****Mike Hill:****[31614]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support large industrial businesses affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

**John Glen:**

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 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 1 March.

Further details of the significant package of financial support for businesses and employees are available at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk)

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[32276]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to support businesses that may be unable to afford rental payments on properties as a result of loss of income during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has already moved to support residential renters by ensuring landlords are unable to start eviction proceedings for at least a three-month period; this now applies to businesses renting commercial properties.

The Government is also providing £20 billion of business rates support and grant funding to help the most affected firms manage their cashflow through this period, including: giving retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England a 100% business rates holiday for the next 12 months; providing grants of £10,000 to small businesses eligible for Small Business Rate Relief, and; providing further £25,000 grants to retail, hospitality and leisure businesses operating from premises with a rateable value over £15,000 and below £51,000.

SMEs will also be able to access the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans of up to £5 million through the British Business Bank, backed by an 80% government guarantee.

For larger firms, there is a new lending facility from the Bank of England to help support liquidity, helping them bridge coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans.

Finally, the HMRC Time To Pay Scheme is in place for all businesses and self-employed people in financial distress to provide support with their tax affairs.

## ■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

**Emma Hardy:** **[31651]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support from the public purse is available for care providers employing over 250 employees to help those employers cover the cost of statutory sick pay as a result of the covid-19 outbreak for the next six months.

**Jesse Norman:**

At Budget, the Government announced a package of measures to support businesses more widely, including 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 12 months of that finance interest free, as Government will cover the first 12 months of interest payments out of public funds. For more information on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, please go to: [www.British-business-bank.co.uk/CBILS](http://www.British-business-bank.co.uk/CBILS).

The Coronavirus Act includes new legal powers enabling the Government to offer further financial support considered necessary to businesses.

All businesses facing short-term cash flow difficulties, of whatever size, are encouraged to engage with their existing finance providers in the first instance to see what assistance they might be able to provide.

## ■ Carers: Coronavirus

**Robert Langan:** **[31601]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support carers affected by covid-19.

**Jesse Norman:**

Carers who are directly affected by Covid-19 may be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay, which is now available to those in self-isolation and those caring for those in self-isolation. This also applies to unpaid carers, such as family members living in the same household as someone affected by Covid-19. Employees who earn over £118 per week from a single employer will be eligible for £94.25 per week, rising to £95.85 from 6 April. As announced at Budget, Statutory Sick Pay is now payable from day one of an absence rather than day four.

Anybody who is advised to self-isolate and therefore cannot work will be eligible for Contributory Employment and Support Allowance. This is now payable from the first day of sickness, rather than the eighth. Eligible claimants under 25 will be entitled to £57.90 per week, and over 25s £73.10 per week. This includes carers who have been advised to self-isolate because the person they care for is sick or self-isolating. A person can get ESA for as long as they are incapable of work, up to a year.

For unpaid carers who do not live in the same household, employers may provide assistance such as special leave. Some carers may also be eligible for benefits such as Carer's Allowance and Universal Credit. Full eligibility criteria can be found on GOV.UK.

The Government has announced that £1.6bn will be provided to local authorities to help them respond to coronavirus pressures across the services they deliver. This is not ringfenced and is intended to help councils address specific pressures that they face. It could be used to help providers deal with costs due to self-isolation and family caring responsibilities.

#### ■ **Charities and Tourism: VAT**

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[33534\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing VAT relief to support the charity and tourism sectors during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

On 20 March, the Government announced that all UK VAT registered businesses, which include charities and businesses in the tourism sector, can defer VAT payments due with their VAT returns between now and the end of June. No UK VAT registered business will have to make a VAT payment alongside their VAT return to HMRC in that period. They will have until the end of the financial year (March 31 2021) to repay.

This is in addition to the Chancellor's announcement on 17 March of a comprehensive support package worth £330 billion to protect businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak.

#### ■ **Corporation Tax: Coronavirus**

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[32099\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support businesses that do not have premises that are rateable but pay corporation tax during the covid-19 outbreak.

**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.

## ■ Day Care: Coronavirus

**Claire Hanna:**

[\[32744\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support he is making available to private childcare providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK is well prepared to tackle COVID-19. The Government has set out specific measures to support childcare providers:

- funding for the Government's early years entitlements will continue during any periods of nursery, preschool or childminder closures, or where children cannot attend due to COVID-19
- to support nurseries at this time, the Chancellor has also decided that they will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year from 1 April.

Childcare providers will also benefit from the wider measures the Chancellor has announced to support the people and businesses of the UK:

- a three-point plan announced at Budget providing £12 billion of support for public services, individuals and businesses whose finances are affected by the outbreak
- a package to provide additional support for businesses and individuals totalling £350bn
- a temporary but uncapped package to help firms keep people in employment.

The response to COVID-19 needs to be UK-wide and the Government has so far provided £5.3 billion of funding to the devolved administrations to support people, businesses and public services in response to Covid-19. This is in addition to the UK-wide measures that the people and businesses in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will benefit from.

## ■ Excise Duties: Coronavirus

**Dr Luke Evans:**

[\[32733\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an assessment of the feasibility of cancelling (a) beer duty and (b) VAT payments that are to be paid due at the end of March 2020 for (i) pubs, (ii) restaurants and (iii) other businesses in the hospitality industry.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Chancellor has announced an unprecedented package of support for pubs, restaurants and hospitality businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

A business rates holiday has been put in place for all eligible businesses in the retail and hospitality sectors.

In addition, all VAT registered businesses will be able to defer their VAT payments due on VAT returns for the period until the end of June, to be repaid by the end of the financial year, and access support worth up to 80% of their employees' wages.

## ■ Further Education: Finance

**Emma Hardy:**

[\[31645\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Education on providing (a) simple and (b) quick routes for colleges to (i) identify and (ii) secure cashflow support.

**Steve Barclay:**

Treasury Ministers remain in close contact with their counterparts at the Department for Education on the UK's COVID-19 response. The Government is committed to supporting the education sector as it faces this challenge.

We have confirmed that the Education & Skills Funding Agency will continue to pay grant-funded providers their scheduled monthly payments for the remainder of the year. Because of the activity-based funding model for apprenticeships, both the Treasury and Department for Education are exploring the impact of the current disruption with training providers. For colleges in significant difficulties, the existing support arrangements remain in place, including emergency funding.

We are working to develop more detailed operational guidance, which will be circulated as soon as possible. Colleges should speak to their ESFA territorial teams for further guidance on issues relating to funding.

## ■ Garages and Petrol Stations: Government Assistance

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy:**

[\[31585\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide assistance with (a) business rates, (b) VAT relief and (c) PAYE relief to independent motoring garages that (i) must temporarily close and (ii) have fewer customers as a result of self-isolation following the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has announced an unprecedented package of support for businesses and individuals affected by Covid-19, and remains committed to doing whatever it takes to support the economy as necessary.

At the Budget it announced that businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a rateable value of less than £51,000 would pay no business rates this

year. On 17 March the Government went further, and extended the business rates holiday so that all eligible businesses in retail, hospitality or leisure will pay no business rates for 12 months, irrespective of rateable value. Those eligible businesses will also have access to additional cash grants of up to £25,000. The smallest businesses, those eligible for Small Business Rate Relief, will receive a cash grant of £10,000.

Since then, the Government has announced that UK VAT registered businesses can defer VAT payments due with their VAT returns between now and the end of June. No UK VAT registered business will have to make a VAT payment alongside their VAT return to HMRC in that period. These businesses will have until the end of the financial year to repay.

Under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, employers 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 per month, providing they keep the worker employed. They will receive the grant from HMRC, and the scheme will be backdated to 1 March 2020.

For Income Tax Self-Assessment, payments due on 31 July 2020 will be deferred until 31 January 2021.

HMRC have also scaled up their Time to Pay service by setting up a new Covid-19 Helpline with more staff to support it. Time to Pay is available to all taxpayers in temporary financial distress and with outstanding tax liabilities. Taxpayers can contact the dedicated Covid-19 helpline to get practical help and advice on 0800 0159 559.

The Chancellor will continue to review and make further announcements as events unfold if required.

## ■ Markets: Non-domestic Rates

**Mick Whitley:**

**[31549]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department plans to allow public markets run by local authorities to apply for business rate relief in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**Jesse Norman:**

Guidance for local authorities on the application of this business rates holiday was published on 18 March and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>.

The Government has announced £1.6bn of additional funding to support local authorities in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. This funding is intended to help local authorities address the pressures that they are facing across services.

## ■ Non-domestic Rates

**Kate Osborne:**

[\[33672\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a pro-rata rate of business rate relief for all businesses with a rateable value above £51,000.

**Jesse Norman:**

All eligible retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will pay no business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April 2020. There will be no rateable value threshold on this relief, and both small and larger businesses will benefit. Local authorities will reflect this holiday in bills as soon as possible.

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors given the acute impacts of COVID-19 on those sectors. A range of measures to support all businesses has also been made available, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme for SMEs, and a new lending facility from the Bank of England to help support liquidity among larger firms.

## ■ Non-domestic Rates: Coronavirus

**Dawn Butler:**

[\[33435\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he make an assessment of the potential merits of extending business rate relief to (a) estate and (b) letting agencies during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Dawn Butler:**

[\[33437\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend business rate relief to include estate and letting agency offices during 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.

The Chancellor previously announced a 100% rates holiday for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in 2020-21. On 25 March the Government went further and removed some of the exclusions for this relief, so that eligible retail, leisure, and hospitality properties that will have to close as a result of the measures announced by the Prime Minister in his statement of 23 March, will now be eligible for the relief. This change will ensure that estate and lettings agents will now pay no business rates in 2020-21.

Support is also available to those not eligible for business rates relief; this 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.

**■ Off-payroll Working****Martyn Day:** [32706]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of deferring Loan Charge legislation in line with the decision announced on 17 March 2020 to defer the implementation of IR35 reforms.

**Jesse Norman:**

Those affected by the Loan Charge who were required to submit a Self-Assessment return for 2018-19 can defer sending their return until 30 September 2020, without having to pay late filing or late payment penalties, or interest for the period. HMRC will keep this situation under review over the coming months and will take a proportionate and reasonable approach to anyone who is unable to submit their return as a result of COVID-19.

**■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus****Robert Langan:** [31602]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support hairdressers affected by covid-19.

**Steve Barclay:**

The government has announced a significant package of financial support for businesses and employees. Further details of this package are available at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk)

**■ Personal Income: Coronavirus****Stephen Farry:** [31536]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a Government funded universal basic income as an emergency measure to protect incomes and livelihoods during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Mike Hill:** [31615]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of a universal basic income during the covid-19 crisis.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government is doing whatever it can to ensure that individuals, families and businesses are supported during the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Government is focusing on measures that can be implemented as quickly as possible. The Government also believes that using existing frameworks for those who need additional support is the quickest and most effective way to do so during the Covid-19 outbreak.

The Government announced at Budget and in recent days, a wide-ranging package of measures to support individuals, families and employees affected by Covid-19. These include:

- making Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) available for individuals diagnosed with Covid-19 or those unable to work because they are self-isolating in line with government guidance. This is in addition to the change announced by the Prime Minister that SSP will be payable from day one instead of day four for affected individuals.
- announcing a 3-month “mortgage holiday” for borrowers that are struggling financially with their repayments. This will allow affected borrowers to defer their repayments for up to three months while they get back on their feet.
- introducing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms continue to keep people in employment. Businesses can put workers on temporary leave and the Government will pay them cash grants to cover 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2,500 per month, providing they keep the worker employed.
- ensuring that those who are not eligible for SSP can now more easily make a claim for Universal Credit or Contributory Employment and Support Allowance.
- increasing the standard allowance in Universal Credit and the basic element of Working Tax Credit by up to £20 per week.
- a further temporary relaxation of earnings rules for self-employed Universal Credit claimants.
- increasing the Local Housing Allowance for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants to the 30 th percentile of market rents.

#### ■ **Primary Health Care: Non-domestic Rates**

**Sir David Amess:**

**[31420]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to include medical premises such as dental practices in the (a) business rate relief and (b) loan and grant scheme that has been announced to tackle the economic effect of covid-19.

**Jesse Norman:**

At present properties providing medical services, including dental practices, are not eligible for the business rates Expanded Retail Discount.

Information on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which launched on Monday 23 March, is available on the British Business Bank’s website. Medical premises may be eligible for small business grant funding of £10,000 where the property is eligible for small business rate relief.

The Government stands ready to provide further financial support to businesses and individuals as necessary.

#### ■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus**

**Caroline Lucas:**

**[32669]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to require (a) private and (b) Pub Co landlords to grant a three month business rents holiday to pubs that are in financial difficulties as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government has already moved to support residential renters by ensuring landlords are unable to start eviction proceedings for at least a three-month period; this now applies to businesses renting commercial properties.

The Government is also temporarily increasing the Business Rates retail discount in England to 100% for 2020-21 for all properties in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, including pubs, in response to Covid-19.

Finally, the HMRC Time To Pay Scheme is in place for all businesses and self-employed people in financial distress to provide support with their tax affairs.

**Public Sector: Off-payroll Working****Kate Griffiths:**[\[31551\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reducing IR35 rules for public sector workers.

**Jesse Norman:**

In April 2017, the Government changed the off-payroll working rules for those working in the public sector, shifting responsibility for determining employment status from the worker's own limited company to the organisation they work for. These existing rules continue to apply.

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, as well as engagers in 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. Public authorities will not need to implement the changes on status determination statements or implement status disagreement processes until April 2021.

Independent research by IFF Research and Frontier Economics showed the reform to the off-payroll working rules in the public sector had not resulted in significant disruption to the sector, or to its use of contingent labour. During the recent review into the implementation of the reform, public sector bodies reported that they continued to engage people with specialist skills and had adapted their business models to comply with the reform.

The Government will continue to listen to stakeholders and monitor and evaluate the operation of the rules.

**Redundancy: Coronavirus****Dan Jarvis:**[\[33541\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support workers who were made redundant following the outbreak of covid-19 but prior to the announcement of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Government will make sure it protects, as far as possible, people's jobs and incomes. To help firms continue to keep people in employment, the Government announced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which includes employees who were made redundant since 28 February 2020 if they are rehired by their employer. For those who will not be eligible for the scheme, the Government is strengthening the safety net. The Government has announced a package of temporary welfare measures which, together with those measures announced at the Budget, provides over £6.5 billion in additional support through the welfare system.

**■ Remote Working: Coronavirus****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[33581\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether workers who have been advised to work from home during the covid-19 outbreak are eligible to claim tax relief for (a) heating and lighting the room they work in and (b) the cost of business telephone calls.

**Jesse Norman:**

Employees who have been advised to work from home during the COVID-19 outbreak are eligible to claim tax relief for heating and lighting the room that they work in, and for the costs of business telephone calls. They can claim a fixed amount of £4 per week up to 5 April 2020, then £6 per week thereafter. This increase was announced at Budget. Alternatively, employees can claim relief on the actual amounts incurred, subject to being able to provide evidence, such as phone bills.

**■ Research: Coronavirus****Daniel Zeichner:**[\[31528\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) a financial assistance package for early-stage R&D companies in the (i) life sciences and (ii) other sectors that includes rapidly available grants for loss-making companies and (b) increasing the level of R&D tax-credits including in relation to the percentage of surrenderable loss repayable in cash during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Steve Barclay:**

The government is committed to supporting innovative businesses to grow, as part of the strategy to increase economy-wide investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

At the 2020 Budget, government announced it would increase public investment in R&D to £22bn by 2024-25. Detailed allocations of this funding will be set out in due course. Budget 2020 also announced the R&D Expenditure Credit rate would be increased to 13%, providing an additional £1bn over the next 5 years.

The government offers two R&D tax relief schemes which are internationally competitive. The government keeps all tax reliefs under review to ensure they remain well-targeted, and will continue to monitor whether further support for businesses is required through the tax system.



In response to the Covid-19 outbreak, the government has announced a significant package of financial support for businesses and employees. Further details of this package are available at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk)

■ **Small Businesses: Coronavirus**

**Tulip Siddiq:** [31606]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 1.103 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, whether the criteria for a sound borrowing proposal under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be the same as that under the Enterprise Finance Guarantee.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [31607]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 1.103 of the Budget 2020 Red Book, how a sound borrowing proposal under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be assessed in the event that social distancing as a result of covid-19 may continue indefinitely.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [31608]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Early Years providers which experience material deductions in revenue due to the covid-19 outbreak will be eligible for financial support under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [31609]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether new start-up businesses that have not made substantial revenue will be eligible for finance under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Tulip Siddiq:** [31610]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether supporting a business' immediate cash flow is considered to be a sound borrowing proposal under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

**Steve Barclay:**

Officials are working at pace to deliver the measures for small businesses as announced by the Chancellor. The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which will provide financing facilities for SMEs of up to £5 million, was launched on Monday 23 March.

Under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan (subject to a per-lender cap on claims) to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance to SMEs. Lenders will pay a small fee to access the scheme. The government will not charge businesses for this guarantee, and to provide additional support at this difficult time, will also cover the interest costs and fees for the first 12 months. Altogether, these features of the scheme will help borrowers by making external finance more affordable at this difficult time.

All viable UK-based businesses with a turnover of less than £45m will be eligible to apply for a loan under the scheme. This scheme is part of a comprehensive package of measures designed to support small businesses facing difficulties in this period of uncertainty, which also includes: a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; the deferring VAT and Income Tax payments; statutory sick pay relief package for SMEs; and a small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief.

Further detail of government support is available at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk)

### ■ **Third Sector: Coronavirus**

**Scott Benton:** [32154]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to provide financial support to third sector organisations in financial difficulties as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Scott Benton:** [32155]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to provide financial assistance to third sector organisations that experience an increase in demand following the closure of community-based services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Steve Barclay:**

Charities, social enterprises and other third sector organisations will benefit from the new Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The government has announced an unprecedented package of financial support that will also support charities and social enterprises, including small business grants. Many charities are already eligible for 80% charitable rate relief, they will benefit from the new enhanced retail rate relief at 100%. Further detail of government support is available at: [www.businesssupport.gov.uk](http://www.businesssupport.gov.uk)

### ■ **Wealth: Coastal Areas**

**Mike Hill:** [31612]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what additional funding is being made available to tackle wealth inequality in coastal communities throughout the UK.

**Steve Barclay:**

This Government will level up every region and nation of the UK, spreading opportunity and ensuring everyone benefits from growth. Coastal communities will benefit from the major investment announced at the Budget, including a share of £5bn to support the rollout of gigabit broadband and the next £5.2bn for flood and coastal defence. This builds on the £3.6bn Towns Fund where 36 coastal communities, including Hartlepool, are eligible for Town Deals as well as support through the Coastal Communities Fund.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ State Retirement Pensions

**Philip Davies:**

[\[33472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people aged 100 years old and over receive the state pension in each country outside the UK.

**Guy Opperman:**

The table below provides how many people aged 100 years old and over, who receive the State Pension in each country outside the UK.

	CASELOAD
Abroad not known	20
Alderney	-
Australia	340
Austria	-
Bangladesh	-
Barbados	10
Belgium	-
Benin	-
Bermuda	-
Brazil	-
Canada	190
Cayman Islands	-
Chile	-
Cyprus	10
Denmark	-
Djibouti	-
Equatorial Guinea	-
France	30
Germany	10
Greece	-

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	CASELOAD
Guernsey	10
Hong Kong	-
India	-
Israel	10
Italy	20
Jamaica	70
Jersey	10
Kenya	-
Latvia	-
Lithuania	-
Luxembourg	-
Monaco	-
Montserrat	-
New Zealand	150
Norway	-
Not known	20
Pakistan	20
Poland	-
Portugal	-
Republic of Ireland	100
Republic of Yemen	10
Sierra Leone	-
Somalia	-
South Africa	30
Spain	50
St Kitts and Nevis	-

	CASELOAD
St Lucia	-
St Vincent and The Grenadines	-
Sweden	-
Switzerland	-
Thailand	-
The Netherlands	-
Trinidad and Tobago	-
United Arab Emirates	-
USA	210
Zimbabwe	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,390</b>

*Source: DWP Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, August 2019.*

*Caseload figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.*

*Caseloads identified with '-' are negligible, but non-zero.*

*Caseloads exclude suspended cases.*

## ■ State Retirement Pensions: Coronavirus

**Caroline Lucas:**

[\[32667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will issue guidance to pensioners who collect their state pension payments in cash on how they can collect their pension safely in the event they need to self-isolate 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 everyone should be supported to do the right thing. We are urgently looking into ways to provide payments to those at home without access to mainstream banking during these unprecedented times and are working tirelessly to find solutions.

■ **Statutory Sick Pay**

**Nick Fletcher:**

**[32220]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will help companies by extending statutory sick pay to gardening leave so employees stay with the companies they work in.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID 19 and we have been clear in our intention that everyone should be supported to do the right thing.

■ **Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus**

**Nick Fletcher:**

**[R] [31616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending statutory sick pay to people who are not self-isolating due to covid-19 but their place of employment has no work as a result of that infection.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID 19 and we have been clear in our intention that everyone should be supported to do the right thing.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### ■ 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.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

**James Cleverly:**

There are currently **not two** 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.