



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 9 April 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:39 P.M., 09 April 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

CABINET OFFICE

■ Government Departments: Brexit

Stephen Farry:

[\[32247\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many civil servants are working on the (a) negotiations for and (b) planning of the future relationship with the EU, broken by down (a) department and (b) grade.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Task Force Europe team in No 10 consists of 48 civil servants (as at 20 March) across all civil service grades. The Unit works closely with colleagues from across Whitehall on negotiations on our future relationship with the EU.

■ Infected Blood Inquiry

Christian Matheson:

[\[15146\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to meet representatives of victims and families of the contaminated blood scandal on a framework for compensation, before the conclusion of the Infected Blood Inquiry.

Penny Mordaunt:

In January 2020, the then Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health met campaigners representing people infected and affected. A number of issues were raised, including support that would assist people outside of the inquiry process. Ministers have committed to looking at these issues carefully and to report back on where progress can be made.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Charities and Non-governmental Organisations: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[\[33533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to support liquidity in the charity and NGO sectors during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

DCMS recognises that, like those in the private sector, charities are under significant strain as a result of Covid-19. The measures already announced by the Government will support many charities to manage the financial challenges presented by the current emergency.

We are proactively engaging across the sector, to maintain a complete picture of the impact of coronavirus, and working to identify how government can help support the

sector through this time of financial instability. Further information will be released on gov.uk as and when it is available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

■ Office for Tackling Injustices

Yvette Cooper: [\[1870\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with reference to the Answer of 15 October 2019 to Question 748, what the timetable is for the establishment of an Office for Tackling Injustices; and if he will publish the structural and staffing arrangements for that Office.

Chloe Smith:

We are considering how best to take forward the work of the Office for Tackling Injustices in the light of the new Government's domestic priorities, and the urgent necessity to focus on the response to the Coronavirus crisis.

EDUCATION

■ Childminding: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford: [\[33647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support childminders' businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alexander Stafford: [\[33717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support childminders during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government has set out specific measures to support childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Funding for the government's early years entitlements will continue during any periods of nursery, preschool or childminder closures or when children cannot attend
- To support private nurseries at this time, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has also announced 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 of the Exchequer has announced to support the people and businesses of the UK:

- A three-point plan announced in the 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 £350 billion
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms continue to keep people in employment. This means that 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
- A scheme to help the UK's self-employed who are affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The new Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will enable those eligible to receive a cash grant worth 80% of their average monthly trading profit over the last three years. This covers 95% of people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment
- On 28 March, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Alok Sharma, announced that the government will also temporarily suspend the wrongful trading provisions to give company directors greater confidence to use their best endeavours to continue trading during this pandemic emergency, without the threat of personal liability should the company ultimately fall into insolvency

The government is also providing the following additional support:

- deferral of Self-Assessment income tax payments due in July 2020 and VAT payments due between 20 March 2020 and 30 June 2020
- grants for businesses that pay little or no business rates
- increased amounts of Universal Credit
- the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

The latest guidance from the department for early years and childcare providers can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

■ Children: Day Care

Fleur Anderson:

[31655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support will be available to the (a) childcare sector and (b) child minders in the event of school closures and enforced social distancing.

Vicky Ford:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor confirmed the government would continue to pay for free early years entitlement places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds even if settings were closed on the advice of the government, or children were not able to attend due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

We expect local authorities to continue early entitlements funding for all childminders, schools and nurseries.

Further, the government has announced a package of support for workers and businesses which will benefit childcare providers.

Childcare providers will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year. That means non-local authority providers of childcare (registered with Ofsted and providing early years foundation stage) will pay no business rates in 2020 to 2021, from 1 April. Local authorities will be working on this.

Nurseries in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief will benefit from small business grant funding of £10,000.

Some settings operate from shared spaces which may now benefit from a 100% rates relief. We strongly encourage those shared spaces to reflect any business rates saving in their rent charges.

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 Business Interruption Loan Scheme will now be interest-free for 12 months (rather than 6 months).

VAT payments due with VAT returns between now and end June 2020 will be deferred, UK VAT registered businesses will not need make those payments until the end of the financial year.

Working tax credit has been increased by £1000 a year.

The government has also announced a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element and an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents.

For the self-employed (including childminders) the minimum income floor will be temporarily relaxed, meaning Universal Credit can be accessed at a rate to match statutory sick pay.

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#funding>
and

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

Theresa Villiers:

[33451]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support nursery and childcare providers can receive as a result of the packages of economic support he has announced over the last two weeks.

Vicky Ford:

The government has set out specific measures to support childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Funding for the government's early years entitlements will continue during any periods of nursery, preschool or childminder closures or when children cannot attend
- To support private nurseries at this time, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has also announced 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 of the Exchequer has announced to support the people and businesses of the UK:

- A three-point plan announced in the 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 £350 billion
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms continue to keep people in employment. This means that 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
- A scheme to help the UK's self-employed who are affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The new Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will enable those eligible to receive a cash grant worth 80% of their average monthly trading profit over the last three years. This covers 95% of people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment
- On 28 March, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Alok Sharma, announced that the government will also temporarily suspend the wrongful trading provisions to give company directors greater confidence to use their best endeavours to continue trading during this pandemic emergency, without the threat of personal liability should the company ultimately fall into insolvency

The government is also providing the following additional support:

- deferral of Self-Assessment income tax payments due in July 2020 and VAT payments due between 20 March 2020 and 30 June 2020
- grants for businesses that pay little or no business rates
- increased amounts of Universal Credit
- the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

The latest guidance from the department for early years and childcare providers can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19->

[early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures.](#)

Steve Reed: **[33556]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what respite care his Department plans to provide for parents of children who would normally be cared for by older relatives who are being advised to self-isolate due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government is clear that every child who can be safely cared for at home should be, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. Early years and childcare settings are closed except for children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Local authorities are working to support childcare settings to ensure that there are sufficient places for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Guidance for early years and childcare providers is available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures)

■ Coronavirus: Schools

Royston Smith: **[31637]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has plans to provide mental health support to (a) students and (b) teachers that are suffering from stress as a result of exams and the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

On Wednesday 18 March, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education announced that schools, colleges and early years settings will be closed to everyone except children of key workers and vulnerable children, in order to contain the spread of coronavirus.

They also confirmed that assessments and exams will no longer go ahead this academic year. We are working urgently with Ofqual and the awarding organisations to ensure that students still get the qualifications that they have been working towards.

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

We are continually engaging with education unions to ensure the school workforce get the support they need in these challenging times.

■ Domestic Abuse and Refuges: Staff

Jess Phillips:

[32164]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will include (a) refuge workers and (b) domestic abuse professionals as key workers.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: Guidance on maintaining educational provision sets out that schools should continue to offer provision to the children of critical workers and vulnerable children following school closures to help tackle COVID-19. It includes a range of sectors which are considered critical, and whilst it does not specify organisations or roles, there is scope for sensible local decision making on work that is critical. Many parents working in sectors which are listed will still be able to look after their children at home. For those that cannot, in the first instance they should confirm with their employer if their role is critical and if they are able to work from home, to establish whether they meet the criteria for their children to attend school. We are asking individuals, employers and schools to make sensible judgments about the policy.

The guidance is available here:

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

■ Education: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[31437]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what (a) advice and (b) support he is providing to (i) further education and (ii) sixth form colleges on the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: We are providing a range of advice and support to further education (FE) and sixth form colleges on the Covid-19 outbreak. We recognise that this situation carries financial implications for many institutions, and we are working to mitigate the impact as much as we can.

To help manage this pressure, we can confirm that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to pay grant funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019/20 funding year.

ESFA allocations for 2020/21 were confirmed at the end of March, and payments will be made in line with the national profile which will be confirmed in the 2020/21 Funding Rules.

Officials in the ESFA FE territorial teams are in regular contact with colleges to update them and answer questions that they may have. In addition, through the FE Commissioner and his team and our pool of National Leaders of Governance, we have a range of experienced FE leaders and governors who are able to offer advice and support.

In addition, we know that colleges are looking at moving more learning on-line to allow students to continue with studies remotely. Jisc is providing practical advice to college staff and the Education and Training Foundation is running webinars for FE providers on how to make the most of online learning.

We are working hard to provide support to mitigate impact on the FE sector and we know that rules and funding arrangements will need to be adapted. We have set out more information in the operational guidance that is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision. We have also published apprenticeship guidance, which is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has also announced a series of wider measures to support employers and employees, recognising the significant impacts caused by COVID-19.

Royston Smith: **[31641]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made on the effect of noise distraction at home on the effectiveness of online classes for (a) primary and (b) secondary school students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has not conducted any assessment of the effect of noise disruption on the effectiveness of online classes.

■ Educational Institutions: Assessments

Emma Hardy: **[31553]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with Ofqual on provision of updated guidance to educational institutions on the summer 2020 (a) examinations and (b) final assessments.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: 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. Along with my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, I have been in regular communication with Ofqual to ensure that we provide timely advice to educational institutions on alternative arrangements.

The Department's priority for GCSE and A-level students is to ensure they can move on as planned to the next stage of their education, including starting college, sixth form courses or apprenticeships, in the autumn. We will ensure 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-examination assessment that students have already completed. On 3 April, Ofqual published

details for schools, colleges, parents and carers on how GCSEs and A Levels will be awarded:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/how-gcses-as-a-levels-will-be-awarded-in-summer-2020>.

The Department recognises that some students may nevertheless feel disappointed that they have not been able to sit their examinations. 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 examination, as soon as is reasonably possible after the beginning of the new academic year. Students will also have the option to sit their examinations in summer 2021.

There is a very wide range of vocational and technical qualifications, as well as other academic qualifications, for which students were expecting to sit examinations this summer. These are offered by a large number of awarding organisations and have differing assessment approaches. In many cases, students will already have completed modules or non-examination assessment which could provide evidence to award a grade. The Department is encouraging these organisations to show the maximum possible flexibility and pragmatism to ensure students are not disadvantaged. Ofqual is working urgently with the sector to explore options and will provide more details shortly.

■ **Free School Meals: Coronavirus**

Sir George Howarth:

[32051]

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

Vicky Ford:

While schools are closed to the majority of pupils, they are able to provide meals or vouchers to children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. More information can be found here:

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

In addition to this, we are working to consider options to support children who currently receive a free breakfast through the department's contract with Family Action and Magic Breakfast. Family Action with Magic Breakfast will liaise directly with the schools involved in the programme.

Christian Wakeford:

[32204]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the supermarket vouchers that his Department has announced will be offered to children eligible for free school meals during school closures will cover the costs of breakfast.

Vicky Ford:

While schools are closed to the majority of pupils, they are able to provide meals or vouchers to children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. More information can be found here:

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

In addition to this, we are working to consider options to support children who currently receive a free breakfast through the department's contract with Family Action and Magic Breakfast. Family Action with Magic Breakfast will liaise directly with the schools involved in the programme.

Angela Rayner:**[33575]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the free school meals voucher scheme will be made available; and whether there will be retrospective funding of vouchers in the event that the scheme is not available immediately after schools close due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Schools can access the national voucher scheme as of Tuesday 31 March. This scheme allows schools to order a single voucher to the value of £15 each week for every child eligible for benefits-related free school meals who is not attending school, set a weekly £15 rolling voucher, or combine funding where a family has more than one child eligible. Schools will not have to pay for these vouchers as the costs for this scheme will be picked up centrally by the Department for Education.

Schools can also continue with a local solution to supporting pupils eligible for free school meals.

We understand that other approaches may mean that schools incur additional expenses. Guidance is available on how we will compensate schools who incur these additional costs, including prior to the introduction of the national voucher scheme, in providing free school meals or vouchers to pupils affected by COVID-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020>.

Further guidance is available at the link below:

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

■ Grammar Schools: Kent**Rosie Duffield:****[32203]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of delaying the date of the 2020 Kent Test as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: Arrangements for the Kent 11 plus test, including the timing of the test, are a matter for Kent County Council to decide.

The Department recognises admission authorities may have concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on arrangements for selection tests for selective schools. We are keeping the situation under review and will provide advice to the sector in due course.

Nurseries: Coronavirus**Ms Angela Eagle:**[\[32055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to provide support for parents with children at nurseries that are closed but require fees to be paid that are (a) self-isolating, (b) diagnosed with covid-19, (c) temporarily on Statutory Sick Pay and (d) claiming employment and support allowance as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Theresa Villiers:[\[33452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether nurseries receiving support with the cost of employee salaries should stop or reduce charges to parents for services not being provided as a result of the closure of childcare and education settings.

Vicky Ford:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: We are working hard to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on all parts of our society, including individuals and business. Childcare providers will have individual agreements with parents and therefore we urge all childcare providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents, given the great uncertainty they will be facing too.

We acknowledge that in many cases, the insurance that early years providers have will not cover them for income lost during COVID-19-related closures. That is one of the reasons why we announced on 17 March that we will continue to pay funding to local authorities for the early years entitlements for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds and that funding would not be clawed back from local authorities due to closures or children being unable to attend.

We expect local authorities to follow the Department for Education's position and to continue paying childminders, schools and nurseries for the early years entitlements – even if providers have suspended delivery of those entitlements due to COVID-19. This protects a significant proportion of early years providers' income. In addition, the government has set out a range of support for businesses and workers to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on them. Many early years providers will qualify for this support.

This support being provided for individuals includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which means that for each employee not working but kept on payroll, the government will contribute 80% of their wages up to £2,500, backdated to 1 March 2020. Self-employed people may be eligible for taxable grants under the

government's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Self-employment Income Support Scheme. Further details of these schemes can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme>.

Details of further assistance and benefits available for individuals can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>.

We will be keeping under close review what further support businesses and workers may require.

Guidance on closures of childcare and early years settings is available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>.

Daniel Zeichner:

[32228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial assistance is being provided to nurseries advised to close due to the covid-19 outbreak; and what assurances he has received from insurers on providing cover to nurseries despite that infection not being a named disease at the time of cover.

Vicky Ford:

We are working hard to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on all parts of our society, including individuals and businesses.

Whilst individual insurance arrangements are a matter for providers to discuss with their insurers and we are unable to give legal advice on insurance cover, we understand that in many cases, the insurance that early years providers have will not cover them for income lost during COVID-19 related closures. That is one of the reasons why we announced on 17 March that we will continue to pay funding to local authorities for the early years entitlements for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds and that funding would not be clawed back from local authorities when children are unable to attend due to COVID-19.

We expect local authorities to follow the Department for Education's position and to continue paying all childminders, schools and nurseries, for the early years entitlements – even if providers have suspended delivery of those entitlements due to COVID-19. This protects a significant proportion of early years providers' income. The government also announced a 12 month business rates holiday for private nurseries and set out a range of wider support for businesses and workers to reduce the impact of COVID-19, which many early years providers will benefit from.

We will be keeping under close review what further support businesses and workers may require.

Guidance on closures of early years settings, including support for workers and businesses, is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures#funding>.

■ Pre-school Education: Finance

Tulip Siddiq:

[30813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding his Department has provided for (a) planned changes to the early years foundation stage and (b) the introduction of a baseline test at reception year.

Vicky Ford:

The proposed reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage are part of a wider programme of work to improve children's outcomes, particularly supporting children from all backgrounds to achieve the early language and literacy skills they need to thrive. The government will publish its response to the consultation on the reforms when possible. Alongside this, the government is investing in a range of initiatives to support quality early years provision, including £20 million to provide professional development for early years practitioners working in disadvantaged areas.

From September 2020, the administration of the Reception Baseline Assessment will form part of a school's statutory requirements. As with all national assessments, there is no specific funding for the assessment itself; the funding is included in the overarching funding for schools.

■ Pupils: Health

Paul Blomfield:

[31500]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on school pupils' performance and wellbeing of financial stress in their families.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The Government recognises that, for many complex reasons, economic disadvantage can have an adverse effect on pupil attainment and wellbeing.

Through the pupil premium, the Department has spent more than £18 billion since 2011, including £2.4 billion in 2019-20, to tackle educational inequality. We established the Education Endowment Fund with £137 million to research and promote the most effective ways of using pupil premium funding so that all schools can make a difference to the futures of their disadvantaged pupils. Since 2011, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has decreased at both ages 11 and 16.

The Department has taken a range of actions to help schools support the mental wellbeing of their pupils. This includes teaching pupils about mental wellbeing through the introduction of health education and improving collaboration with external agencies to ensure those pupils that need specialist support and treatment get it quickly. New Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) will be established in 20% to 25% of the country by 2023, supporting children and young people with mild to

moderate mental health issues, and helping those with more severe needs to access the right specialist services locally. MHSTs should be delivered in a way to take account of disadvantage and seek to reduce health inequalities. We will also fund training for senior mental health leads in every state funded school and college in England, providing the skills and knowledge required to put in place effective whole school and college approaches to promote and support good mental health. We also have several initiatives in place to further support schools to develop and implement whole school approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

■ Pupils: Hearing Impairment

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[32231\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure deaf pupils will be able to access online teaching resources when schools and Higher education institutions are closed.

Nick Gibb:

The Department recognises that many schools are already using online resources to enable children's education to continue. We are working with the BBC and others to provide advice and support directly to schools and parents. As part of this, we will ensure appropriate consideration is given to how accessibility and inclusion arrangements can be supported.

The Department also recognises the steps that universities are taking to meet the needs of their students, in line with Office for Students' expectations and Quality Assurance Agency's guidance around considering the needs of students with disabilities.

■ Schools: Community Relations

Nickie Aiken:

[\[29294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to promote community cohesion in (a) local authority schools, (b) free schools and (c) academies; and if he will make a statement.

Nick Gibb:

Schools are at the heart of our communities and they have a crucial role to play in promoting integration and bringing families from all walks of life together. All schools must promote community cohesion; and are required to actively promote our shared values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. These values are an important part in ensuring our children and young people understand how, as citizens, they can play a positive role in shaping cohesive and integrated communities; and providing them with the skills, and knowledge that will prepare them for life in a modern, diverse Britain.

Promotion of these values is part of Ofsted's inspection framework, and the Department has published guidance to schools on promoting these important values

as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In 2016, the Department also launched the Educate Against Hate website, through which we continue to provide free resources for teachers and school leaders to support their promotion of these values. This includes the Department's Respectful School Communities toolkit; a self-review and signposting tool to support schools to develop a whole-school approach which promotes respect and discipline, helping to combat bullying, harassment and prejudice of any kind.

The Department is also introducing compulsory relationships education for all primary aged pupils, relationships and sex education for all secondary aged pupils, and health education for all pupils in state funded schools from September 2020. These subjects are designed to give pupils the knowledge they need to lead happy, safe and healthy lives and to foster respect for other people and for difference.

As part of our commitments in the Government's Integrated Communities Action Plan, the Department has also funded an expanded national school linking programme, which seeks to encourage meaningful social mixing between different types of schools, and foster understanding of those with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs. In the last year, The Linking Network has worked with over 540 schools, leading to over 22,500 pupils taking part in activities to support integration and community cohesion.

As part of this same package, the Department has also strengthened expectations for all new free schools on the promotion of community cohesion and integration, to make sure they are doing all that they can to ensure children and young people are able to participate fully in life in modern Britain. To support this, the Department has introduced updated application criteria, and as part of our assessment process are considering the potential impact on integration and community cohesion, including the intake of neighbouring schools, before approving a new school.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[\[30741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to protect school staff required to work during advised covid-19 social distancing from infection with that disease.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: All of those who work in our schools, colleges, nurseries and other registered childcare settings rightly take their place next to our NHS staff and other critical workers as central to our efforts as a country in battling COVID-19 and we recognise their contribution.

It is important to underline the fact that schools, colleges, nurseries and all other registered childcare settings remain safe places for children and staff. The fewer children making the journey to school and the fewer children in school, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

On 24 March, guidance on implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings was made available to staff working in settings providing childcare for the most vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. This seeks to support staff working in schools and other childcare settings to operate in the safest way possible, focusing on measures they can put in place to help limit the risk of the virus spreading further within local communities. This guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Catherine McKinnell:

[31510]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, if he will issue guidance on precautions that pregnant school and college staff should take.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Our school and college leaders are central to the country's response to this current crisis.

School and college staff who are pregnant should follow the central guidance from Public Health England (PHE). The guidance states that anyone who is pregnant should be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. The Government would expect all employers to support any staff who are pregnant and at risk. The guidance from PHE is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>.

Social distancing guidance for educational settings has been published, and states that staff at an increased risk of serious illness as a result of COVID-19, such as those that are pregnant, should work from home where possible, and education and childcare settings should endeavour to support this. This additional guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Stephanie Peacock:

[31598]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in the devolved Administrations on school closures as a result of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, held several conversations with his counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland regarding school closures. Cooperation with devolved administrations is ongoing.

Steve Reed:

[33560]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if children living in temporary accommodation will be able to continue attending school.

Vicky Ford:

From Monday 23 March, all schools and childcare settings are closed except to vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Where the work of a parent or guardian is critical to our response to COVID-19, children should only be sent to school and/or a childcare provider where they cannot be cared for safely at home.

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care plans. Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need or otherwise meet the definition in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Leaders of educational settings and designated safeguarding leads know who their most vulnerable children are and will have the flexibility to offer a place to those on the edges of receiving children's social care support.

Angela Rayner:**[33574]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, will covid-19 testing be available for school staff who present with symptoms.

Nick Gibb:

We are extremely grateful for the work schools, childcare providers and local authorities have been doing since our announcement on the closure of schools and other educational and childcare settings. We are committed to ensuring that school staff are issued with the right guidance and support to keep them safe. We are in regular contact with the teacher and head teacher unions.

Currently the NHS is rightly prioritising COVID-19 tests for those caring for hospital patients with pneumonia or acute respiratory illness while continuing to investigate outbreaks. Most adults in good health who develop symptoms will fully recover and the Chief Medical Officer has advised that it is not necessary for them to be tested. However, school staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should, just as anyone displaying symptoms, self-isolate for at least seven days to reduce the spread in the community. The Government's latest stay at home guidance can be found here:

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

On 18 March, the Government made an announcement with regard to increasing the number of people tested for COVID-19 to 25,000 hospital patients a day, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/testing-for-coronavirus-covid-19-will-increase-to-25-000-a-day>.

On 27 March, the Government launched a new drive on coronavirus tests for frontline NHS staff and more information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-drive-on-coronavirus-tests-for-frontline-nhs-staff>.

Our health service and care staff are key in our fight against the virus. Frontline NHS staff who have symptoms of coronavirus or who have a family member with symptoms will be the first tested for coronavirus as the testing programme is developed. More on this developing programme can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-drive-on-coronavirus-tests-for-frontline-nhs-staff>.

We are working closely with other Government departments to secure tests for other critical workers, including in our education system.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Angela Rayner:

[33571]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his Department's plans are for children who were in the process of applying for an Education, Health and Care plan at the time schools were closed due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The welfare of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and their parents or carers is a high priority for the government, especially during this period of uncertainty. We are working closely with colleagues across government to ensure that 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.

If the local authority has not yet issued an education, health and care (EHC) plan for a child, then they will not automatically be identified in the group of children considered to be vulnerable. However, educational settings and local authorities have discretion to undertake a risk assessment and offer support to children who are in the process of obtaining an EHC plan, and any other children they consider vulnerable, if that is needed.

If a child already has an EHC plan the local authority remains responsible for maintaining it, including until any appeal to the tribunal has been heard and resolved. However, the Coronavirus Act 2020 allows the Secretary of State for Education, where appropriate, to temporarily lift the statutory duty on local authorities to maintain the precise provision in EHC plans, with local authorities needing instead to apply 'reasonable endeavours' to support these children and their families. Any changes made to a child or young person's provision in their EHC plan would only remain in place temporarily.

We are also proposing to amend SEND regulations to provide for flexibility over matters such as the timescales in EHC needs assessments, and the review, re-assessment and amendment processes where particular cases are affected by the COVID-19 situation.

The government has published guidance on ongoing provision for and vulnerable children which can be found at the link below:

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

■ Special Educational Needs; Children and Young People

Steve McCabe:

[33400]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that children and young people with (a) speech, language and communication needs and (b) other special educational needs and disabilities continue to receive adequate support during the school closure period.

Steve McCabe:

[33401]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to issue guidance to (a) speech and language specialists and (b) other specialist staff who work in schools on continued support for children and young people during the school closure period.

Vicky Ford:

We are working closely with colleagues across government to ensure that all appropriate arrangements, and support, are in place for all DfE sectors – from the early years and childcare, 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 now that schools have closed. Local authorities, schools and colleges, together with parents, should assess the risks to children and young people with Education, Health and Care plans (EHC plans) to judge whether they can be safely cared for at home or whether it is safer for them to remain at school or college. Local authorities and education settings have discretion to do a similar risk assessment for any individual children and young people who do not have an EHC plan but who have complex needs that could mean it is safer for them to be at school or college than at home.

The government has published questions and answers about the provisions being made for vulnerable children and young people, which can be found at:

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

We have also published guidance to support management of children and young people in residential educational settings, including boarding schools, residential special schools and specialist colleges and children’s homes:

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

Further useful guidance on social distancing can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-social-distancing-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

We encourage people to keep up to date by regularly checking the GOV.UK webpages, which is where we will publish reliable updates and guidance.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[33432\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what his policy is on universities charging accommodation fees for students while they are closed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

We expect universities to communicate clearly with residential students on rents for this period and administer accommodation provision in a fair manner. I have written to vice-chancellors and set out this expectation to them.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ USA: Diplomatic Immunity

Mary Glendon: [\[29930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many US citizens have diplomatic immunity in the UK.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: US citizens who are members of the Embassy of the United States of America are notified to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, in line with Article 10 of the VCDR 1961.

Mary Glendon: [\[29931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK citizens have diplomatic immunity in the US.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: UK citizens who are members of the Embassy and Consulates of the United Kingdom are notified to the Office of Foreign Missions at the US Department of State.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Yvette Cooper: [\[29831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how the Government will estimate (a) the level of prevalence of and (b) rates of infection and immunity to covid-19 if symptomatic patients are not tested.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The levels of prevalence and rates of infection are calculated based on laboratory confirmed cases. Public Health England (PHE) conducts surveillance of COVID-19 infection using a variety of data sources.

These include surveillance of influenza-like illness presenting to primary care, surveillance of outbreaks in schools, care homes and other community settings. PHE and the National Health Service have also established a surveillance system that reports daily on COVID-19 infections in persons requiring hospital and intensive care admissions.

Plans are in place for serological surveillance to collect data on the prevalence of infection as the outbreak progresses. This will involve the testing of samples from different sources to inform the epidemiological characterisation of COVID-19 immunity in the population.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Equipment**Rosie Cooper:**[\[27575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many pods designed for testing for covid-19 have been (a) acquired and (b) delivered to NHS units; and how many delivered pods are (i) in use or (ii) not yet in use.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 13 March 2020]: The number of pods acquired and commissioned into use is increasing daily. Testing more broadly is increasing at a rapid rate and as of 23 March, a total of 83,945 have been tested with 77,295 being negative and 6,650 testing positive.

Most adults in good health who develop symptoms will fully recover, and the Chief Medical Officer has advised that we need to prioritise testing to those who have the greatest clinical need. Both key workers - such as health workers - and clinically high priority cases will be prioritised.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Jeremy Hunt:**[\[27984\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many tests for covid-19 per day UK-based laboratories can carry out (a) now and (b) at peak capacity.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 March 2020]: The National Health Service with Public Health England (PHE) is undertaking a significant expansion of coronavirus testing, with enhanced labs helping the health service carry out 10,000 tests daily.

PHE has developed a highly sensitive test to detect the virus, one of the first countries in the world to do so, which has been rapidly rolled out to their regional labs across the country.

Approximately 1,500 tests are being processed every day at PHE labs with the great majority of tests being turned around within 24 hours. PHE has processed over 25,000 tests as of 10 March and has not exceeded capacity during this time.

As more people come forward to be tested, the NHS is now scaling up tests by 500%, with NHS England asking expert NHS laboratory services across the country to bring new capacity online, and other labs to begin checks, enabling 8,000 more samples to be analysed every day of the week.

As announced on 27 March, the Government is working with industry, philanthropy and universities to significantly scale up testing.

Andrea Jenkyns: **[28032]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what testing criteria Public Health England is applying for the testing of potential covid-19 cases; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of widening that testing criteria so that higher numbers of people are so tested.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 March 2020]: Details on case definitions are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-initial-investigation-of-possible-cases/investigation-and-initial-clinical-management-of-possible-cases-of-wuhan-novel-coronavirus-wn-cov-infection#criteria>

The Stay at Home Guidance states that Public Health England will not be testing people with mild symptoms of COVID-19. Those with mild symptoms are advised to self-isolate and stay at home for seven days from the onset of the relevant symptoms of a new continuous cough and a high temperature. Therefore, people do not need to be tested to act. The guidance is available at the following link:

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

Ellie Reeves: **[30117]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when testing for covid-19 will be made available for members of the public who are not hospitalised.

Ellie Reeves: **[30118]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he will introduce covid-19 testing for front line NHS and emergency service workers when they show symptoms for covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The United Kingdom has tested more people than almost any other major economy outside of China, South Korea, Germany and Italy.

We have boosted the number of labs undertaking testing while home testing and drive-through testing is also available in some areas.

We have increased the number of tests to 5,000 a day and it reached over 10,000 on 1 April.

Both key workers - such as health workers - and clinically high priority cases will be prioritised for testing.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[30152\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the UK leaving the UK on the (a) ability of and (b) speed with which testing kits for covid-19 can be imported.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are not aware of any restrictions to the access to or delivery of COVID-19 testing kits relating to the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

Following the UK's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020, the UK has entered into a transition period until December 2020. Under this arrangement, the supply of medicines and medical products, including testing kits for COVID-19, should continue to flow as previously.

The Government is in negotiation with the EU regarding our future relationship and will work with companies over the coming months to ensure that they are well prepared for the end of the transition period. Following this process, medicines and medical products should continue to enter and exit the UK with minimal restrictions.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[30158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the number of covid-19 testing kits it will require during the next eight weeks.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We plan to increase testing to 10,000 a day (up from 5,000 a day). Within four weeks, Public Health England and the National Health Service expect to be conducting 25,000 tests a day – and we will continue to increase testing capacity.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[30159\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 testing kits his Department currently has in stock.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

United Kingdom supplies are adequate for projected domestic needs. The National Health Service will be given all the resources it needs to deal with this outbreak.

We plan to increase testing to 10,000 a day (up from 5,000 a day). 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.

Gill Furniss: [\[30800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the World Health Organisation recommendation of increased testing for covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Testing is a crucial part of the United Kingdom's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Government is working on multiple fronts to deliver additional testing capacity into the system.

We have committed to boosting National Health Service lab-based testing to at least 25,000 a day by the end of April for patients most in need and are working to increase our total testing capacity.

By increasing our testing capacity, we can provide better care for the most vulnerable patients across the NHS; help key workers get back to work as soon as possible; and provide certainty and reassurance to the wider UK population.

Key worker testing has now started, with hundreds of staff to be tested. This will increase from the end of March and tests will be turned around as quickly as possible.

We are also purchasing new types of tests including antigen tests to identify those who currently have the virus, and antibody tests to identify those who have had the virus and are now immune. We are working hard to bring additional tests to those that need them as soon as possible.

■ Hospitals: Private Sector**Martyn Day:**[\[32246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of requisitioning private hospitals to help tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

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 are now available.

■ NHS 111**Seema Malhotra:**[\[30185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many calls were made to NHS 111 in the week beginning 9 March 2020; and how many callers waited over one hour for their calls to be answered.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: Data is not available in the format requested. NHS 111 performance is published by NHS England via their statistical work areas on a monthly basis and is available via the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/nhs-111-minimum-data-set/nhs-111-minimum-data-set-2019-20/>

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake: [\[30842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prioritise covid-19 testing for NHS staff.

Olivia Blake: [\[30853\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to test self-isolating healthcare workers for covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: We are purchasing new types of tests including antigen tests to identify those who currently have the virus, and antibody tests to identify those who have had the virus and are now immune. We are working hard to bring additional tests to those that need them as soon as possible. This will ensure that health care and other critical workers can be tested very early on if they are ill – returning to work if possible.

We will prioritise testing to those who have the greatest clinical need. Health workers will be prioritised.

■ Northwick Park Hospital: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas: [\[30666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Northwick Park Hospital is receiving the support it needs to tackle to covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

Northwick Park Hospital is one of a group of hospitals chosen to care for COVID-19 patients.

The Government is working around the clock to give the National Health Service and the wider social care sector the equipment and support they need to tackle this outbreak.

In the past two weeks, the NHS Supply Chain have delivered 170 million FFP3 masks, surgical masks and other personal protective equipment to NHS trusts and 58,000 healthcare settings including general practitioners, pharmacies and community providers.

While this is a new coronavirus, Northwick Park Hospital staff have extensive experience of treating infectious diseases. They also have appropriate facilities designed to provide the best care for patients who have the virus whilst keeping everyone else being treated at Northwick Park Hospital safe.

The NHS in London and Public Health England are well prepared for outbreaks of new infectious diseases. The NHS has put in place measures to ensure the safety of all patients and NHS staff while also ensuring services are available to the public as normal.

HOME OFFICE

■ Alcoholic Drinks: Minimum Prices

Layla Moran: [\[24426\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of minimum unit pricing on alcohol policy in (a) Scotland and (b) Wales; and what plans she has to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a similar policy for England.

Kit Malthouse:

Minimum Unit Price (MUP) has been in place in Scotland for less than two years and the Scottish Parliament will not consider its extension until 2024. MUP was introduced in Wales on 2 March this year. A decision on its introduction in England is for the future.

■ Asylum: Finance

Marion Fellows: [\[13048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to extend the contract with Sodexo for the provision of Aspen cards to asylum seekers.

Chris Philp:

A new supplier will provide payment card services following transition from the current provider, Sodexo. Timelines are currently being finalised.

■ Asylum: Human Trafficking

Dan Jarvis: [\[13983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average waiting time is for a decision on an asylum case where the asylum seeker claims to have been a potential victim of human trafficking in the latest period for which figures are available.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not publish data on the average waiting time for a decision on an asylum case where the asylum seeker claims to have been a potential victim of trafficking.

However, the Home Office does publish data on the number asylum applications awaiting an initial decision by duration. This data can be found at Asy_04, of the published Immigration Statistics September 2019:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2019/list-of-tables#asylum-and-resettlement>

The Home Office are committed to ensuring that asylum claims are considered without unnecessary delay, to ensure that individuals who need protection are granted asylum as soon as possible and can start to integrate and rebuild their lives, including those granted at appeal.

Whilst we take steps to increase capacity and focus on process improvements to deliver better quality decisions more efficiently, we have moved away from the 6-month service standard to concentrate on older claims, cases with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). Additionally, we are prioritising cases where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required. The intention is for this approach to bring balance back to the asylum system.

■ **Bombings: Guildford**

Colum Eastwood:

[25212]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason her Department has reclassified more than 600 files relating to the 1974 Provisional IRA Guildford pub bombings resulting in some files remaining closed for an additional 84 to 100 years.

James Brokenshire:

These files have not been reclassified. The files were held as a single collection with a closed status at The National Archives and a review date of 2019.

Following review of the files, it was decided that it was necessary to apply to extend the closure periods. The Freedom of Information Act exemptions engaged can be found by searching individual records at:

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3043>

■ **Domestic Abuse: LGBT People**

Sarah Champion:

[670]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many dedicated specialist local services there are for LGBT+ victims and survivors of domestic abuse in England and Wales; and how many victims those services support each year.

Victoria Atkins:

While the Home Office has provided over £980,000 of funding to specialist LGBT+ organisations for the provision of domestic abuse services between 2016 and 2020, information on the total number of dedicated local services in England and Wales for LGBT+ victims and survivors of domestic abuse is not held centrally.

The DA Commissioner has however agreed to seek to survey and get a better understanding of local DA service provision in her new role.

■ Electronic Surveillance

Mr David Davis: [\[24237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) Technical Capability Notices and (b) National Security Notices have been issued in each year since 2016.

James Brokenshire:

The Investigatory Powers Act 2016 allows the Government to place obligations on telecommunications operators or postal operators through a Technical Capability Notice or National Security Notice.

The Act governs these notices and provides extensive privacy safeguards and a robust oversight regime, including approval of notices by an independent Judicial Commissioner.

For reasons of national security, it would not be appropriate to disclose the number of Technical Capability Notices and National Security Notices issued.

■ Entertainers: EEA Nationals

Jo Stevens: [\[25687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what qualitative data her Department (a) holds and (b) has commissioned on the benefits of Tier 5 Visa rules for EEA musicians and artistic performers to the UK music industry.

Kevin Foster:

Overseas musicians and performers make an important contribution to the UK's creative sector and remain welcome in the UK and take part in events.

Our existing arrangements provide a number of routes for creatives to enter the UK and undertake work on a temporary basis. The Home Office continues to engage with the creative sector to ensure the future points-based immigration system will enable the UK's cultural life to thrive.

■ European Arrest Warrants

Kenny MacAskill: [\[24435\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to establish a replacement scheme for the European Arrest Warrant after the transition period.

James Brokenshire:

The European Arrest Warrant is an EU tool used exclusively by EU Member States. We have left the EU. In the future our relationship will be fundamentally different to that of a Member State.

The Government stands ready to discuss an agreement with the EU on law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. As set out in our approach to negotiations, the agreement should provide for fast-track extradition arrangements with appropriate further safeguards beyond those provided for in the European Arrest

Warrant. Such an agreement should equip operational partners on both sides with the capabilities that help protect citizens and bring criminals to justice.

■ Europol

Kenny MacAskill: [\[24436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has for cooperation and access to Europol for police services in the UK after the transition period.

James Brokenshire:

As set out in the UK's approach to negotiations, published on 27 February, the UK is not seeking membership of Europol as part of the future relationship agreement with the EU, however the agreement should provide for cooperation between the UK and Europol which facilitates multilateral cooperation to tackle serious and organised crime and terrorism.

Europol already works closely with a number of non-EU countries through dedicated third country arrangements. The agreement on Europol could go beyond existing precedents given the scale and nature of cooperation between the UK and Europol.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Finance

Alberto Costa: [\[24368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of funding provided to (a) Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service and (b) other fire and rescue services in the UK.

James Brokenshire:

In 2020/21, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Authority will receive £36.1 million in core spending power. This is an increase of £1.2 million (3.5%) compared with 2019/20. In addition, at March 2018, the authority held £13.8 million in resource reserves.

Fire and rescue services in England have the resources they need to do their important work and will receive around £2.3 billion in 2020/21. Single purpose fire and rescue authorities will see an increase in core spending power of 3.2% in cash terms since 2019/20. At March 2018 single purpose Fire and Rescue Authorities held £545 million in resource reserves.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Floods

Alberto Costa: [\[24369\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans his Department has to impose a statutory duty on the fire service in England to respond to flooding.

James Brokenshire:

I refer my Hon Friend to the answer I gave to UIN 1261 on 24 February 2020 to the Hon Member for Cardiff Central.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Mental Health Services**Alberto Costa:**[\[24370\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent steps her Department has taking to improve the quality of mental health support provision for firefighters.

James Brokenshire:

It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority in England to ensure that they have appropriate workforce support and wellbeing provisions in place and the National Fire Chiefs' Council's Health and Wellbeing Board is driving positive change across the sector.

In support of this the Government has provided £7m since 2014, to fund emergency services workers' mental health support through Mind's Blue Light Programme.

■ Grenfell Tower Inquiry**John Healey:**[\[25622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 1 report, which Department is responsible for implementing the recommendations in that report; what the implementation status is of each such recommendation; and what the planned timescale is for implementing each of those recommendations.

James Brokenshire:

The Home Office is working collaboratively with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Fire and Rescue Sector and all relevant stakeholders to deliver Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 1 recommendations with quality, pace and ambition.

The Government published an update on delivery on 21 January and continues to make progress. As announced in the Queen's Speech, we will shortly introduce a Fire Safety Bill, a necessary first step towards implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations

■ Home Office: Disclosure of Information**Tim Loughton:**[\[25613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many inquiries into leaks of confidential Departmental information her Department has carried out in each of the last five years.

James Brokenshire:

The leak of any Government information or material is not acceptable and the Government takes such incidents very seriously.

It has been the policy of successive Governments not to comment on security matters other than in exceptional circumstances.

■ Home Office: Written Questions

Colum Eastwood: [\[32234\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to Question 25212 tabled on 4 March 2020 by the hon. Member for Foyle.

James Brokenshire:

The response for UIN 25212 was given on the 6th April 2020.

■ Immigration Controls: Scotland

Martyn Day: [\[21337\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential effects on the health and social care sector in Scotland of the Government's proposed implementation of a points-based immigration system.

Kevin Foster:

The Government published "The UK's Points-Based System: Policy Statement" on 19 February.

The new system will ensure we can attract the brightest and best and deliver for the whole of the UK, whilst protecting our union.

To facilitate the migration of skilled workers to support the NHS, we will create a fast-track NHS visa for certain medical professionals with NHS job offers – reducing their visa fees and providing support to come to the UK with their families. Senior care workers who meet the criteria will be able to come to the UK through the points-based system.

The independent Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) has been clear immigration is not the solution to addressing staffing levels in the social care sector.

In delivering on its manifesto commitments for a new Australian style points-based system, the Government has considered relevant views, evidence, and analysis. We will also keep labour market data under careful scrutiny.

The Home Office will publish further detail on the points-based system in due course.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Claire Hanna: [\[10483\]](#)

To the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2020 to Question 6772 on Devolution: Northern Ireland, what steps she is taking to ensure that immigration status offered to family members of people in Northern Ireland will not reduce the rights conferred under EEA regulations.

Claire Hanna: [\[10484\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to her Answer of 28 January 2020 to Question 6772 on Devolution: Northern Ireland, whether the immigration

route to be offered to the family members of people in Northern Ireland will come into force before the end of the transition period.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office intends to change the Immigration Rules to enable eligible family members of the people of Northern Ireland to apply for UK immigration status on broadly the same terms as the family members of Irish citizens in the UK. This route will be opened in the near future.

Any rights held by such individuals by virtue of the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2016 will be unaffected by the implementation of this route.

■ **Immigration: Music**

Jo Stevens:

[\[21306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that immigration rules support the needs of the music industry.

Kevin Foster:

Non EEA visiting artists, entertainers and musicians can currently perform at events, take part in competitions and auditions, make personal appearances and take part in promotional activities for up to 6 months without the need for formal sponsorship or a work visa. They can also receive payment for appearances at permit free festivals for up to 6 months, or for up to one month for a specific engagement, under the Visitor route.

In future Artists wishing to come to the UK for longer-term work will need to do so under the points-based system. Under this system there will continue to be special arrangements for creative workers, which in future will encompass both EEA and non-EEA citizens.

The Home Office continues to engage with the creative sector to ensure the future system will enable the UK's cultural life to thrive.

■ **Immigration: Scotland**

Martyn Day:

[\[21338\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has undertaken an impact assessment of the potential short-term effects of the proposed immigration policy on the Scottish economy.

Kevin Foster:

The Government published "The UK's Points-Based System: Policy Statement" on 19 February.

The new system will ensure we can attract the brightest and best and deliver for the whole of the UK, whilst protecting our union.

To facilitate the migration of skilled workers to support the NHS, we will create a fast-track NHS visa for certain medical professionals with NHS job offers – reducing their

visa fees and providing support to come to the UK with their families. Senior care workers who meet the criteria will be able to come to the UK through the points-based system.

The independent Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) has been clear immigration is not the solution to addressing staffing levels in the social care sector.

In delivering on its manifesto commitments for a new Australian style points-based system, the Government has considered relevant views, evidence, and analysis. We will also keep labour market data under careful scrutiny.

The Home Office will publish further detail on the points-based system in due course.

■ Immigration: Wales

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[20635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has conducted an impact assessment of the potential short-term effects of the Government's immigration policy on the Welsh economy.

Kevin Foster:

The Government published "The UK's Points-Based System: Policy Statement" on 19 February, following the report of independent Migration Advisory Committee in January.

The Migration Advisory Committee advised against regional variations, hence we will deliver a system which works for the whole of the UK.

In delivering on its manifesto commitments for a Australian style new points-based system, the Government has considered relevant views, evidence, and analysis. We will also keep labour market data under careful scrutiny.

The Home Office will publish further detail on the points-based system in due course and will continue to engage with stakeholders across Wales on it.

■ Knife Crime Prevention Orders: Greater London

Sarah Jones:

[\[25724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that the trial in London of the Knife Crime Prevention Orders does not result in an increase in the number of 12 year olds being criminalised.

Kit Malthouse:

Knife Crime Prevention Orders have been introduced as a preventative civil measure to give the police the powers they need to prevent and tackle serious violence and knife crime. Given the seriousness of the issue, the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 makes breach of an Order a criminal offence.

Knife Crime Prevention Orders will be piloted in London and will be available to the courts to be applied to persons from age 12 upwards. The purpose of these Orders is to prevent those who are subject to them – those who are identified as being

particularly at risk – from being drawn into knife crime and serious violence, through the inclusion of positive requirements and restrictions that can be attached to an Order. This will help more young people to avoid being drawn into violent lifestyles and serious offending.

Knife Crime Prevention Orders that apply to those under 18 years of age will be subject to more scrutiny and oversight than those issued to adults and will be subject to consultation with the relevant Youth Offending Team. The Government will shortly be publishing guidance on Knife Crime Prevention Orders which will set out the specific considerations that must be given to children and young people in applying these new Orders.

The Government is determined to tackle serious violence, and to give the police the powers and resources they need to do this. The piloting of Knife Crime Prevention Orders in London is an important part of the action we are taking.

■ Knives: Crime

Sarah Owen: [9793]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many recorded incidents of knife crime there have been in each year from 2010.

Sarah Owen: [9794]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many recorded incidents of knife crime have taken place (a) involving under 18 year olds and (b) in schools in each year since 2010.

Kit Malthouse:

Information on the number of selected offences involving knives or sharp instruments recorded by the police in England and Wales can be found in the Home Office Knife Crime Open Data Tables published here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

While the Home Office collects data on the number of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, it does not contain details on the age of those involved or whether the offence took place in a school.

■ Licensing Laws: Aviation

Paul Maynard: [25059]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish her Department's response to the consultation on airside alcohol licensing at international airports in England and Wales, which closed on 1 February 2019.

Kit Malthouse:

I plan to publish my Department's response to the consultation on airside alcohol licensing shortly.

■ Migrant Workers: Veterinary Services

Caroline Nokes: [\[24330\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many veterinary practices are registered as Tier 2 employers.

Kevin Foster:

The specific information that has been requested is not included in data published by the Home Office, and would require manual intervention at disproportionate cost to the taxpayer produce this data.

■ Motor Vehicles: Fires

Darren Jones: [\[24412\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of fire authorities to respond to fires in (a) electric and (b) hydrogen vehicles.

James Brokenshire:

It is the responsibility of each fire and rescue authority to determine their operational response based on its analysis of risk and local circumstances, and drawing on national operational guidance provided by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

■ Offensive Weapons Act 2019

Tim Farron: [\[21951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to consult with businesses on the potential effect of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 prior to its implementation.

Victoria Atkins:

We held a public consultation on the draft statutory guidance on measures in the Offensive Weapons Act, which included the sale and delivery of bladed articles, bladed products and corrosives from the 15th August 2019 to the 9th October 2019. The responses to that consultation have been considered and we will shortly be publishing the Government response alongside final statutory guidance ahead of commencement of the measures in the Act.

■ Overseas Visitors: Coronavirus

Kate Green: [R] [\[27588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support will be provided to non-EEA nationals who are at risk of over-staying their short term visas as a result of self isolating in response to covid-19.

Kate Green: [R] [\[27592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Corona virus (Covid-19) immigration guidance on travel restrictions and China, published by her

Department on 17 February 2020, if she will extend that guidance to other non-EEA countries that have isolation measures in place.

Kate Green: [R] [28033]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that foreign nationals will not be regarded as breaking their continuity of residence where their continued absence from the UK results from a restriction on international travel due to covid-19.

Kevin Foster:

Due to travel restrictions because of coronavirus, some individuals may be facing uncertainty in relation to the expiry date of their current visa or leave to remain in the United Kingdom. We are taking steps to ensure foreign nationals will not be regarded as breaking their continuity of residence as a result of coronavirus and related travel restrictions.

Visas for Chinese nationals which were due to expire between 21st January and 30 March 2020 have already been automatically extended until 31 March 2020. We continue to monitor the situation in all countries and we are keeping this under constant review. A dedicated coronavirus immigration helpline <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents#helpline> has been set up for those who wish to discuss their circumstances. The freephone number is 0800 678 1767 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

■ Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Claudia Webbe: [23486]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans the Government has to ensure equitable access to security funding for religious institutions.

Claudia Webbe: [23613]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to ensure equitable access to security funding for places of worship.

Kit Malthouse:

All places of worship, other than the Jewish community, have access to the Places of Worship Scheme that funds protective security measures to counter hate crime. The Jewish community has access to separate funding that was put in place following a series of terrorist attacks against Jews and Jewish targets in Europe. The Government regularly considers the range of threats to our places of worship from hate crime.

Zarah Sultana: [26191]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many places of worship have made unsuccessful applications for funding from the Places of Worship Security Funding scheme in each category of place of worship in (a) England and (b) Wales.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[26192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many of each category of place of worship have applied for funding through the Places of Worship Security Funding scheme in (a) England and (b) Wales.

Kit Malthouse:

Over the first three years, the Places of Worship scheme has received 431 applications in total. Of the applications received, 134 were successful and 297 were unsuccessful.

In England, there have been 253 applications from Christian communities, 108 applications from Muslim communities, 19 applications from Hindu communities, 34 applications from Sikh communities and 1 application from Jain communities.

Of those applications, there have been 193 unsuccessful applications from Christian communities, 60 unsuccessful applications from Muslim communities, 14 unsuccessful applications from Hindu communities, 17 unsuccessful applications from Sikh communities, and 1 unsuccessful application from Jain communities.

In Wales, there have been 14 applications from Christian communities, 1 application from Muslim communities, 1 application from Hindu communities and 0 applications from Sikh and Jain communities.

■ **Terrorism: Islam**

Zarah Sultana:

[\[26190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect on the risk of terrorist attacks on UK mosques of the (a) 12 recent arrests for terrorism offences and (b) events in Hanau in Germany.

James Brokenshire:

Counter Terrorism Policing routinely reviews the threat to all our communities in light of events in the UK and elsewhere, assessing all relevant intelligence reporting. In light of this, appropriate action is taken to ensure the safety of all faith communities.

The Government's Places of Worship Protective Security Funding Scheme continues to provide funding to reassure communities and safeguard mosques and other places of worship. The scheme will provide £3.2 million in 2020-21 (double the amount awarded previously), and in addition a new £5 million fund will be opened to provide security training.

■ **Terrorism: Prisoners' Release**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[18487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, quarterly updates, Table P.05, how many offenders convicted under terrorism and terrorism related offences, excluding anyone serving a sentence of less than one year, were released before serving the full custodial term of their sentence in each year since 2013.

James Brokenshire:

The Home Office collects data from Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Scottish Prisons Service on the number of terrorist prisoners released from prison custody, by length of sentence. However, data is not collected on whether the prisoner was released before serving the full custodial term of their sentence.

The requested information is held in individual prisoner records, is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Last month, following the attack in Streatham, the Government took decisive action by introducing emergency legislation to prevent terrorist offenders being released early automatically, and ensure that the release of any such offender before the end of their sentence will be dependent on a thorough risk assessment by the Parole Board. On 26 February, the legislation received Royal Assent and the Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Act 2020 came into force.

National security is the first priority of this Government and we are determined to ensure that dangerous terrorists are not free to spread their hateful ideologies or harm the public.

■ Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit**Stephen Doughty:**[\[12906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what additional resources have been provided to the Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit to tackle extreme right-wing organisations in the last 12 months.

James Brokenshire:

In 2020-21 the Government is increasing funding for counter-terrorism policing by £90m year-on-year, taking CT police funding for England and Wales to over £900m.

The Government is committed to supporting our superb police, security and intelligence agencies who work round the clock to keep us safe. Since March 2017, the police and the security and intelligence agencies have foiled 25 Terrorist plots, including eight extreme right-wing plots.

For security reasons we do not disclose the breakdown of counter-terrorism police funding to individual forces.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Social Rented Housing: Antisocial Behaviour****Lee Anderson:**[\[28762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to assist landlords who have nuisance tenants in social housing.

Christopher Pincher:

Social landlords have the power to seek the re-possession of a tenant's home where they can demonstrate to the court that the tenant concerned is in breach of the terms of their tenancy agreement

Landlords can rely on the further remedies available through the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 ('the 2014 Act') which provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with a range of flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to anti-social behaviour.

In response to the Covid-19 emergency, all possession cases before the courts, including possession action against tenants for anti-social behaviour, have been suspended for 3 months. This reflects Public Health England's advice that moving home at the moment is strongly advised against.