



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 17 April 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:23 P.M., 17 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

#### ■ Bullying and Harassment: Ministers

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[[28626](#)]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 9 March 2020 to Question 25185, for what reasons only figures for the Home Office were supplied and not figures for all government departments; whether those figures provided include grievances against Ministers; for what reasons grievances against those in Government who hold public office are not recorded separately to grievances against Government employees; and if he will publish information on grievances against all Ministers (a) individually or (b) by Department.

Chloe Smith:

As I set out in my answer to Question [25185](#), the annual report of the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests sets out details of investigations undertaken by the Adviser into alleged breaches of the Ministerial Code. The next annual report will be published in due course.

#### ■ Election Offences: Prosecutions

Sir Christopher Chope:

[[14950](#)]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many prosecutions have been brought against people alleged to have been in breach of UK electoral law in each of the last five years for which information is available.

Chloe Smith:

Data on electoral law offences is not collected or held by the Cabinet Office. The Electoral Commission reports on breaches of UK electoral law and will hold more detailed information.

### EDUCATION

#### ■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Royston Smith:

[[31640](#)]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he has published for schools on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils receive additional tuition after the school closures resulting from covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

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

We want to support parents and schools to ensure young people's education can continue. Support available includes:

- a list of online education resources which have been identified by some of the country's leading educational experts to help pupils to learn at home which are available at the following link:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>
- the BBC enhancing its education provision to include daily lessons, starting from 20 April 2020.

We are committed to doing everything we can to reduce the impact of school closures on pupils.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### ■ Anaemia

Paul Maynard: [\[30728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he has made on the delivery of NICE guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of pernicious anaemia.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines provide comprehensive, evidence-based guidance for the health and care system on best practice in a defined area. They are developed by experts based on a thorough assessment of the available evidence and through extensive engagement with interested parties, including patient groups.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are mainly responsible for the referral of clinically-focused guideline topics to NICE. NHS England and NHS Improvement have asked NICE to develop a guideline on pernicious anaemia. This was commissioned on 9 March 2020 and further information on timescales will be available on NICE's website in due course.

### ■ Breast Cancer: Screening

Mr Richard Holden: [\[30780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of annual breast cancer screening for people aged 45 and under who have previously had breast cancer.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published guidance on 'Early and locally advanced breast cancer: diagnosis and management' in July 2018 which details how follow-up breast screening should occur. It is recommended that annual mammography should be offered to all people who have had breast cancer, until they

enter the NHS Breast Screening Programme in England at age 50. Details of the guidance can be found at the following link:

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng101/chapter/Recommendations#followup](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng101/chapter/Recommendations#followup)

■ Coronavirus: Cancer

Andrew Gwynne: [29954]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the risks that covid-19 poses to people with cancer.

Andrew Gwynne: [29955]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure (a) people living with cancer and (b) other vulnerable people can continue to receive care and support in their homes during the delay phase of the Government's response to covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 19 March 2020]:* On 24 March the Government implemented shielding as a measure to protect people who are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between those who are extremely vulnerable and others. They are strongly advising people with serious underlying health conditions, which put them at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe.

People falling into this extremely vulnerable group include those with specific cancers, including; those who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer; those with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment; those having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer and those having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors. More information on sheltering can be found at the following link:

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

Those at high risk will be contacted by the National Health Service by 29 March 2020. Key workers including those who provide social care are following their own guidance measures to ensure they can still perform their roles without increasing the risk of spread. More guidance can be found at the following link:

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

## ■ Coronavirus: Dental Services

Alex Cunningham: [\[30761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance he has issued to dental health professionals on protecting themselves at work from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 23 March 2020]:* The latest guidance for dental health professionals is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/issue-3-preparedness-letter-for-primary-dental-care-25-march-2020.pdf>

This guidance includes information on how dental health professionals should protect themselves at work from COVID-19.

Previous guidance was issued on 20 March which also has information on how to access personal protection equipment and is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/Issue-2-Preparedness-letter-for-primary-dental-care-20-March-2020.pdf>

## ■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[32073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish sex-disaggregated data on covid-19 (a) infection and (b) mortality.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The Government currently publishes cases by region at the following link:

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

We do not currently publish sex-disaggregated data on COVID-19 infection and mortality. We are keeping the what information we publish under regular review.

Meg Hillier: [\[32074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what proportion figure for asymptomatic transmission the Government is using in its modelling of covid-19 contagion.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* On 20 March, the Government published scientific evidence supporting the United Kingdom Government's response on COVID-19, including modelling on the dynamics of transmission of the virus. Each day, the models are refined and improved as more data becomes available.

Information about the scientific evidence used to support the UK Government's response can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>

#### ■ Coronavirus: Drugs

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[31461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether generic drugs will (a) remain accessible and (b) not be increased in price during the covid-19 pandemic.

Jo Churchill:

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

The Government does not set prices of generic medicines. Instead we rely on competition to drive prices down. This has led to some of the lowest prices in Europe and allows prices to react to the market. In an international market this ensures that when demand is high and supply is low, prices in the United Kingdom can increase to help secure the availability of medicines for UK patients.

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

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

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

#### ■ Coronavirus: Screening

Sam Tarry: [\[30916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS will get an adequate supply of covid-19 testing kits and reagents.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government has bought 17.5 million antibody tests with ongoing orders for millions more.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are asking identified pathology network laboratories to start working up validation of commercially available kits that can be automated to further increase the available testing capacity across England. Once the test is validated and risk assessments have been completed, a 24 hours a day, seven days a week offering will be considered, and testing should be prioritised above other pathology tests as urgent and high priority, including the return of results.

The British In Vitro Diagnostics Association said the problem was a shortage of reagent kits in the global supply chain. While manufacturers are producing the kits as rapidly as they can, the firms are having to prioritise what products are shipped where.

Angela Crawley: [\[32692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what methods of screening for covid-19 infection are to be used under schedule 20 of the Coronavirus Bill.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Screening may include requiring an individual to answer questions about their health or other relevant circumstances; produce supporting health documents; allow biological samples to be taken; and to provide suitable tracing information. Only those screening requirements which are deemed as necessary and proportionate will be used.

Angela Crawley: [\[32693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria will be used to determine the adequacy of assessment facility conditions for screening people for covid-19 infection under schedule 20 of the Coronavirus Bill.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Assessment facilities will be determined as adequate if there is availability of staff with the clinical expertise to take samples and/or medical history; staff have the relevant protective equipment; they are able to safely take biological samples; and the facility is cleaned appropriately.

A Public Health Officer will advise on what can be considered as a suitable facility including for those who are unable to self-isolate at home and will work with relevant authorities to ensure this.

Angela Crawley: [\[32694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what criteria will be used to determine reasonable grounds for suspecting a person is potentially infected with covid-19 under the provisions on screening and assessment in schedule 20 of the Coronavirus Bill.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

An individual will be deemed as being potentially infected with COVID-19 if they display symptoms associated with COVID-19; have travelled from a country which is considered high risk; or have come into close contact with anyone known or believed to have COVID-19.

In assessing whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect an individual may be infected, constables and immigration officers will have regard to public health guidance and, where practicable, consult public health officers to determine if it is necessary and proportionate to require that the individual undergo screening and assessment .

## ■ Coronavirus: Sikhs

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[33645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Sikhs have (a) been diagnosed with covid-19 and (b) died as a result of that disease.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We do not collect data on cases or deaths by ethnicity or religion.

## ■ Drugs

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[32261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to manufacture more active pharmaceutical ingredients in the UK to prevent medicine shortages.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The Government has no plans to create facilities in the United Kingdom to manufacture further active pharmaceutical ingredients. There are 16,000 medicines on the market in the UK. Whilst some of these are manufactured in the UK, most are manufactured abroad. Where medicines are manufactured here, the active ingredients and excipients for those medicines may be manufactured abroad. It is not realistic to manufacture all 16,000 medicines and the active ingredients and excipients needed for these medicines in the UK.

The production of medicines is complex and highly regulated, and materials and processes must meet rigorous safety and quality standards. Supply problems can affect a wide range of medicines and can arise for various reasons, such as manufacturing issues, problems with the raw ingredients and batch failures. These problems arise regardless of where in the world the manufacture takes place.

## ■ Drugs: Rehabilitation

Grahame Morris: [\[32677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether continuity of opioid substitution treatment will be safeguarded during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* The Department is working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to help ensure patients can access the medicines they need, including opioid substitution treatment, and precautions are in place to reduce the likelihood of future shortages.

■ European Medicines Agency: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner: [\[33674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on maintaining membership of the European Medicine Agency during the covid-19 outbreak and until a vaccine is found.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As of 31 January 2020, we are in the Transition Period during which the United Kingdom will continue to follow European legislation and European Medicines Agency (EMA) processes and decisions until 31 December 2020. As such any European Union centrally authorised medicines, including any COVID-19 vaccine, would also be authorised in the UK. We also continue to receive public safety information from the EMA and have firm links with the World Health Organization and other key international public health organisations working on this issue.

The UK is a world leader in preparing for and managing public health incidents and on 3 March the Government published its action plan to tackle the spread of COVID-19.

The Government will not be extending the transition period in light of the latest COVID-19 developments as both the EU and UK remain fully committed to the negotiations and agreeing a future partnership by the end of 2020. The Government is working to ensure that UK patients can access the best and most innovative medicines.

■ Medical Equipment: EU Countries

Stuart C McDonald: [\[32688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to work with EU member states to procure medical equipment needed during the covid-19 pandemic

Edward Argar:

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* The Government is working with industry, the National Health Service, social care providers and the army to ensure the supply of key medical equipment for the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are in active discussions with the European Union Commission on future shared procurement opportunities and we will decide whether to participate in each on the basis of public health requirements at the time. We are exploring all procurement options for medical equipment to give the NHS and the social care sector everything they need to tackle this outbreak.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Sam Tarry: [\[30917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to offer testing for covid-19 to staff members.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We know that dedicated National Health Service staff want to be caring for patients on the frontline, but without a test, if they or a member of their household develops symptoms they are required to self-isolate.

NHS frontline staff tests started on 27 March, with hundreds of staff to be tested. On 29 March, the Government confirmed that a testing programme to support NHS staff will increase throughout this week and tests will be turned around as quickly as possible. If a NHS worker falls ill, they can now come into one of the drive-in centers and get tested, so they know whether or not they have COVID-19.

Dr Luke Evans: [\[31563\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to increase the level of testing for (a) NHS and (b) social care frontline staff for covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Prime Minister has called on industry to work with the Government to urgently develop a new test to determine whether people have developed immunity. Rapid upscaling will help National Health Service and other critical public sector staff back to work as fast as possible.

With a focus on ensuring the highest priority cases are tested first, officials are working to rapidly increase the number of tests that can be conducted by Public Health England and the NHS in laboratories, with the expected surge in capacity ready within weeks.

Maria Eagle: [\[32636\]](#)

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

Ms Nadine Dorries:

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* The Prime Minister has called on industry to work with the Government to urgently develop a new test to determine whether people have developed immunity. Rapid upscaling will help National Health Service and other critical public sector staff back to work as fast as possible.

With a focus on ensuring the highest priority cases are tested first, officials are working to rapidly increase the number of tests that can be conducted by Public Health England and the NHS in laboratories, with the expected surge in capacity ready within weeks.

## ■ NHS: Drugs

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[32260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that the NHS will not face a medicine shortage in the coming months.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[32263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to apply stress tests to the NHS medicine supply in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* The country is well prepared to deal with any impacts of COVID-19 and we have stockpiles of generic drugs, in the event of any supply issues or significant increases in demand.

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

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

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

■ Out-patients: Internet

Bridget Phillipson: [\[33515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to facilitate online consultations for outpatients to reduce non-essential contact with clinicians.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The NHS Long Term Plan outlines NHS England and NHS Improvement's commitment to redesigning outpatient appointments, offering patients the choice of virtual outpatient appointments where appropriate. A pilot programme in April 2019 implemented video consultation in outpatient services at 40 providers. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, NHS England and NHS Improvement are accelerating this work, rapidly scaling up video consultation capability within National Health Service trusts and foundation trusts to reduce the need for physical attendances.

The decision to conduct a consultation via video will be clinically led. NHS England and NHS Improvement are making a web-based video consultation platform available. It works on multiple devices, does not rely on software downloads and access will be free of charge to all NHS trusts and foundation trusts. NHS England and NHS Improvement will provide training and support materials to facilitate rapid deployment of video consulting technology; a nationally assured Data Protection Impact Assessment; a telephone support desk for clinicians and patients; and up to £20,000 per NHS provider for the purchasing of hardware to support the delivery of video consultations.

## ■ Pharmacy: Prescriptions

Grahame Morris: [\[32679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether pharmacies will be required to fulfil longer-term prescriptions for people in need of harm reduction medications during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* Advice, issued by NHS England and NHS Improvement, is that in the main general practitioners should not issue prescriptions for a longer duration, pharmacies should not order larger quantities, and patients and the public should not seek to stockpile medicines as this behaviour could put the supply chain at risk.

## ■ Pharmacy: Protective Clothing

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[32056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department will take steps for pharmacists who are dealing with members of the public to be issued protective clothing and equipment.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* Packs of personal protective equipment (PPE) have now been delivered to community pharmacies by DPD. This began on 13 March 2020; and deliveries were completed on 17 March 2020. These packs are only for use by pharmacy staff in line with the standard operating procedure for community pharmacy, and contain masks, aprons and gloves.

If pharmacies have not received their PPE packs, or if the pack delivered is incomplete, they can contact the National Supply Disruption Service.

Should community pharmacies require further PPE supplies, they can order this through their wholesalers.

## ■ Prescription Drugs

Jim Shannon: [\[29885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) local clinical commissioning groups and (b) National Health Service trusts ensure clinicians are aware of their right to prescribe any product that is on Part IX of the drug tariff.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has no plans to change current policies. Decisions about the provision of medical products available on Part IX of the Drug Tariff are a matter for local clinical commissioning groups, taking account of the needs of their local populations. The Drug Tariff does not apply to National Health Service trusts who are responsible for selecting the products they wish to use locally.

### ■ Refuges: Protective Clothing

Rachel Reeves: [\[32683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure personal protective equipment is allocated to workers in women's refuges during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

*[Holding answer 25 March 2020]:* The Government has issued guidance to providers of supported living, and homeless provision, which includes advice on safety, cleaning and isolation, which is available at the following links:

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

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

The Government is in discussion with refuge providers who are engaged in their own contingency planning to keep specialist domestic abuse safe accommodation and associated support services available to victims in line with Public Health England's advice.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Domestic Abuse: Children

Sarah Champion: [\[30772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 16 March 2020 to Question 28041 on Domestic Abuse: Children, whether the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has been asked to make recommendations to Government on how to address the needs identified in delivering community-based support services.

Victoria Atkins:

As I indicated in response to the Hon Member's Question 28041, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has agreed to lead an in-depth exploration of the current support landscape for domestic abuse in England and Wales over 2020/21.

It will be a matter for the Commissioner to determine how to conduct this review and what to include in the report on her findings. However, it is open to the Commissioner to include any such recommendations as she may see fit with a view to driving improvements to the provision of community-based support services across England and Wales.

## ■ Domestic Abuse: Dudley

Marco Longhi: [\[30039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect victims of domestic abuse in Dudley.

Victoria Atkins:

Domestic abuse is a horrific crime that shatters the lives of those affected.

The Home Office has provided over £1.6m for projects to support domestic abuse victims and their children in the West Midlands and Black Country.

The landmark Domestic Abuse Bill, reintroduced on 3 March, will help to better protect and support victims of domestic abuse and their children across the country.

## ■ Youth Investment Fund

Alexander Stafford: [\[30879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the £500 million Youth Investment Fund.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government recognises the value of good quality youth work and the positive role it can play in the lives of young people. The £500million Youth Investment Fund will provide multi-year funding for new and refurbished youth clubs, support for detached youth work, investment in youth worker skills, and for community-based youth projects. The new £500m Youth Investment Fund will start in 2020/21 and run over five years. This investment will be a balance of capital and revenue funding.

Our departments are working together to consider how the Youth Investment Fund can support our efforts to reduce crime, and in particular violence and exploitation.

**HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

## ■ Public Libraries: Remote Working

Fleur Anderson: [\[32171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps are being taken to keep public libraries open for people who cannot work from home.

Mr Simon Clarke:

*[Holding answer 24 March 2020]:* On 23 March the Prime Minister announced new measures to lock down the United Kingdom for a minimum of three weeks, stating that libraries were among the premises that had to close immediately. People should stay at home, except to shop for basic necessities, take exercise, address medical

needs, and travel to and from essential work. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.government-online.net/the-prime-minister-announces-new-measures-to-lock-down-the-country/>

## JUSTICE

### ■ Prisoners: Voting Rights

Dr Matthew Offord: [\[19843\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether it remains Government policy that convicted prisoners are ineligible to vote in (a) local and (b) national elections.

Lucy Frazer:

The UK Government's position is clear that no convicted prisoner should vote. We have maintained that position for all elections that fall within the UK Parliament's competence

The Scottish Parliament has competence over criminal justice and prisons in Scotland. Since 2016 it has also had competence over local government and Scottish parliamentary elections. The Scottish Government has subsequently extended the right to vote in these elections to convicted prisoners sentenced to 12 months or less.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Off-payroll Working

Justin Madders: [\[29246\]](#)

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

Mims Davies:

As at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, our records show that DWP has a total of 448 contingent labour workers through its Public Sector Resourcing contract engaged across the Department. Of these, under the definitions in accordance with the HMRC Off-Payroll working legislation:

- 53 are assessed and engaged as 'Off-Payroll';
- 383 are assessed and engaged as 'On-Payroll', and;
- 12 are engaged under a PAYE basis and therefore outside of the scope of the off-payroll working legislation.

Whilst the updated legislation for off-payroll working has been postponed for 12 months, the 2017 Off-Payroll working legislation still applies to public sector bodies, and DWP continues to carry out its obligations accordingly.

## MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

### WORK AND PENSIONS

#### ■ Carers: Coronavirus

Marco Longhi:

[\[30043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the Government has plans to extend financial support for people that need to take time off work to care for vulnerable relatives suffering from covid-19.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**It is likely that many employees who have received a shield letter will be able to work from home and therefore be entitled to normal pay. We would encourage employers to make this happen where possible. For those that cannot work from home, we would encourage employers to furlough these staff.**

**Under the scheme employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to 1st March and available for at least three months, with the first grants expected to be paid within weeks.**

**There is also the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme which will help eligible freelance workers receive up to £2,500 per month in grants for at least three months.**

**The Government has set up an advice contact centre and website exclusively to help those who have been identified as shielding to access support.**

**A new Local Support System in England will make sure those individuals that have been identified by the NHS to stay at home, and who are without a support network of friends and family, will receive essential supplies such as groceries and medicine.**

**Everyone infected with Covid-19 or required to self-isolate will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA and UC without the requirement for fit notes or undergoing a Work Capability Assessment. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment.**

■ Employment and Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[31663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional steps the Government is taking to protect the employment and benefits of people who (a) live with and (b) care for people with weakened immune systems during the covid-19 outbreak.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**It is likely that many employees who have received a shield letter will be able to work from home and therefore be entitled to normal pay. We would encourage employers to make this happen where possible. For those that cannot work from home, employers have discretion to offer occupational sick pay or paid leave depending their policies.**

**We are also encouraging employers to make use of the Government's Job Retention Scheme where possible. Under the scheme small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to 1st March and available for at least three months, with the first grants expected to be paid within weeks.**

**There is also the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme which will help eligible freelance workers receive up to £2,500 per month in grants for at least three months.**

**The Government has set up an advice contact centre and website exclusively to help those who have been identified as shielding to access support.**

**A new Local Support System in England will make sure those individuals that have been identified by the NHS to stay at home, and who are without a support network of friends and family, will receive essential supplies such as groceries and medicine.**

**Everyone infected with Covid-19 or required to self-isolate will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA and UC without the requirement for fit notes or undergoing a Work Capability Assessment. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment.**

■ Employment and Support Allowance: Coronavirus

Tim Farron:

[\[30722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has plans to pay employment and support allowance to claimants on the first day of application as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**Those applying for Contributory ESA are able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8. And we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment.**

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Damien Moore:

[\[30179\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**The Chancellor has announced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms continue to keep people in employment. Employers can put workers on temporary leave and the government will pay them cash grants of 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2,500, providing they keep the worker employed.**

**The Chancellor has also confirmed that, depending on their status, workers on zero hours contracts may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and we would urge people to explore this avenue too.**

**The Chancellor has announced a Self-Employed Income Support Scheme that will help millions of people across the UK, with those eligible receiving 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.

The scheme brings parity with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whereby the Government committed to pay up to £2,500 each month in wages of employed workers who are furloughed during the outbreak.

■ Jobcentres: Coronavirus

Neil Coyle: [\[30912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what additional resources she plans to allocate to job centres to ensure that those centres can support people affected by covid-19.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**Our priority as a Department is ensuring people get their benefit payments and that we can continue to support those who need us the most. We have mobilised our robust business continuity plans to ensure we can do just that. We are already redeploying 10,000 staff from other parts of DWP and are also recruiting additional staff to assist with the processing of claims, including support from other government departments and the private sector.**

■ Jobcentres: Staff

John Healey: [\[33409\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to (a) protect public-facing universal credit and jobcentre staff and (b) limit their social interaction since 16 March 2020.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 31 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

~~The Department is taking all appropriate steps to protect colleagues and customers, in line with Government advice.~~

**DWP has always followed Public Health England guidelines on social distancing. As of 24th March, Jobcentres are only offering face-to-face appointments – conducted in accordance with PHE guidelines on social distancing - for the small number of claimants who would otherwise not be able to receive support. This helps us to continue to deliver our critical services whilst keeping our customers and staff safe.**

■ Personal Income: Coronavirus

Ronnie Cowan: [\[30848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing a basic income to provide financial assistance to people affected by covid-19.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**We have strengthened the safety net for the most vulnerable with over £6.5 billion invested into improving our welfare system for this year. There is no intention to introduce a universal basic income.**

■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Rachel Hopkins: [\[31617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether personal independence payments (PIP) claimants who are due for reassessment will continue to receive payments of PIP until face-to-face assessments are recommenced.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**From 17th March, we suspended all face-to-face assessments for health and disability benefits for three months. For existing claimants, we have automatically extended awards and suspended any new review or reassessment activity, except where claimants notify us of changes to their**

needs that may result in an increase to their award. This temporary measure is being taken to ensure the Department's resources are focused on providing access to financial support for new claimants, and it will also reassure claimants about continuity of their benefit during the coronavirus outbreak.

■ Private Rented Housing: Coronavirus

Richard Fuller: [\[30724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether people with a reduced income after following guidance on covid-19 are eligible for assistance with rented housing costs through the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme; and whether additional funding has been allocated to local authorities for that payment scheme.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Will Quince:

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

**We have increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.**

**Discretionary Housing Payments are made at local authority discretion, including the amount and duration of any award.**

**Local authorities administer the scheme as they are best placed to make informed judgements about relative priorities and needs in their area to ensure that the most vulnerable are supported and the limited funds are targeted effectively.**

**As we have announced at the spending round for 2020/21 there is £179.5m in DHPs for Local authorities to support renters with housing costs in the private and social rented sector. The increase to the Local Housing Allowance rates will help alleviate shortfalls in the private rented sector and relieve pressure on DHPs.**

■ Rents: Coronavirus

Richard Fuller: [\[30723\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Will Quince:

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

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

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

**We have increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.**

**The government has brought forward a package of measures to protect renters affected by coronavirus. With these in force, no renter in either social or private accommodation will be forced out of their home.**

**From 26 March, landlords have had to give all renters 3 months' notice if they intend to seek possession (i.e. serve notice that they want to end the tenancy) – this means the landlord can't apply to start the court process until after this period.**

**This extended buffer period will apply in law until 30 September 2020 and both the end point, and the 3 month notice period can be extended if needed.**

**From 27 March, the court service has suspended all ongoing housing possession action – this means that neither cases currently in the system or any about to go in to it can progress to the stage where someone could be evicted.**

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Tommy Sheppard:

[30147]

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19 and we have been clear in our intention that no one should be penalised for doing the right thing. These are

rapidly developing circumstances, we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**The Chancellor has announced a Self-Employed Income Support Scheme that will help millions of people across the UK, with those eligible receiving 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.**

**The scheme brings parity with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whereby the Government committed to pay up to £2,500 each month in wages of employed workers who are furloughed during the outbreak. We have also temporarily relaxed the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 to ensure that the self-employed can access UC at a more generous rate.**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[30148\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**The Chancellor has announced a Self-Employed Income Support Scheme that will help millions of people across the UK, with those eligible receiving 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.**

**The scheme brings parity with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whereby the Government committed to pay up to £2,500 each month in wages of employed workers who are furloughed during the outbreak.**

**We have temporarily relaxed the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 to ensure that the self-employed can access UC at a more generous rate and those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - without the need for a face-to-face assessment.**

Stephen Timms:

[\[31422\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 17 March 2020, Official Report column 953, that self-employed people who self-isolate can apply for employment and support allowance (ESA), whether ESA will be available to people who are not themselves ill.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**Everyone infected with Covid-19 or required to self-isolate will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA and UC without the requirement for fit notes or undergoing a Work Capability Assessment. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment.**

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[\[30012\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**It is possible that employees who have received a shield letter will be able to work from home and therefore be entitled to normal pay. We would encourage employers to make this happen where possible. For those that cannot work from home, we are encouraging employers to make use of the Government's Job Retention Scheme where possible. Under the scheme small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to 1st March and available for at least three months, with the first grants expected to be paid within weeks.**

There is also the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme which will help eligible freelance workers receive up to £2,500 per month in grants for at least three months.

The Government has set up an advice contact centre and website exclusively to help those who have been identified as shielding to access support.

A new Local Support System in England will make sure those individuals that have been identified by the NHS to stay at home, and who are without a support network of friends and family, will receive essential supplies such as groceries and medicine.

Everyone infected with Covid-19 or required to self-isolate will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA and UC without the requirement for fit notes or undergoing a Work Capability Assessment. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment.

Emma Hardy:

[30017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what alternative arrangements will be made available for benefit claimants who are unable to attend face to face meetings.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

We are doing all we can to keep our Jobcentres and service centres operational, but as of 24th March, Jobcentres are only offering face-to-face appointments – conducted in accordance with PHE guidelines on social distancing - for the small number of claimants who would otherwise not be able to receive support. This helps us to continue to deliver our critical services whilst keeping our customers and staff safe.

From 17th March, we suspended all face-to-face assessments for health and disability benefits. For existing claimants, we have automatically extended awards and suspended any new review or reassessment activity, except where claimants notify us of changes to their needs that may result in an increase to their award. This temporary measure is being taken to ensure the Department's resources are focused on providing access to financial support for new claimants, and it will also reassure claimants about continuity of their benefit during the coronavirus outbreak.

We have also taken the decision to temporarily suspend the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments for all claimants in Universal Credit,

**Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support. This means that claimants are not expected to contact their Jobcentre Plus while this temporary suspension is in place. They will continue to receive benefits as normal and they will not be sanctioned for not taking part in interviews with Jobcentres.**

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesis:

[30859]

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**Recognising the need for DWP staff to focus on the processing of claims, we will not be checking conditionality compliance with work search requirements for the next three months. This means no sanctions should be applied for that reason for the next three months, though we still encourage people who can work to seek work. Regulations will be introduced to bring this change into effect.**

**We have taken the decision to temporarily suspend the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments from 19th March for all claimants in Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support. This means that claimants are not expected to contact their Jobcentre Plus while this temporary suspension is in place. They will continue to receive benefits as normal and they will not be sanctioned for not taking part in interviews with Jobcentres.**

**All Jobcentre staff have received updated guidance, which has been reinforced through calls with team leaders.**

**Claimants have also been informed by text message and via their online journals that they are no longer required to attend appointments. Additional information will also be provided in the FAQs accessible through a claimant's online account.**

Owen Thompson:

[32705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure her Department has adequate capacity to process new social security applications resulting from the outbreak of covid-19.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**Our priority as a Department is ensuring people get their benefit payments and that we can continue to support those who need us the most. We have mobilised our robust business continuity plans to ensure we can do just that. We are already redeploying 10,000 staff from other parts of DWP and are also recruiting additional staff to assist with the processing of claims, including support from other government departments and the private sector.**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[32738\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**Recognising the need for DWP staff to focus on the processing of claims, we will not be checking conditionality compliance with work search requirements for the next three months. This means no sanctions should be applied for that reason for the next three months, though we still encourage people who can work to seek work. Regulations will be introduced to bring this change into effect.**

**We have taken the decision to temporarily suspend the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments from 19th March for all claimants in Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support. This means that claimants are not expected to contact their Jobcentre Plus while this temporary suspension is in place. They will continue to receive benefits as normal and they will not be sanctioned for not taking part in interviews with Jobcentres.**

**All Jobcentre staff have received updated guidance, which has been reinforced through calls with team leaders.**

**Claimants have also been informed by text message and via their online journals that they are no longer required to attend appointments. Additional information will also be provided in the FAQs accessible through a claimant's online account.**

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Chris Stephens:

[\[30000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to protect sick, elderly or disabled people in receipt of (a) employment support allowance, (b) personal independence payment and (c) universal credit from having to attend mandatory assessments or appointments in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 19 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**From 17th March, we suspended all face-to-face assessments for health and disability benefits. For existing claimants, we have also automatically extended awards and suspended any new review or reassessment activity, except where claimants notify us of changes to their needs that may result in an increase to their award.**

**We have temporarily suspended the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments for all claimants in Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support. This means that claimants are not expected to contact their Jobcentre Plus while this temporary suspension is in place. They will continue to receive benefits as normal and they will not be sanctioned for not taking part in interviews with Jobcentres.**

■ Statutory Sick Pay

Ellie Reeves:

[\[30126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the adequacy of statutory sick pay in covering individual weekly living expenses; and if she will increase the value of that pay to the European average during the covid-19 outbreak.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

The current Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) rate is the legal minimum rate that an employer must pay to an employee; many employers have their own occupational health schemes. Our welfare system is not directly comparable with other European countries. The SSP system is designed to balance support for the individual with the costs to the employer and, as such, there are no plans to make this change. The Government has been clear in its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system in the past fortnight to ensure people are supported in doing this. These changes include:

- making it easier to access benefits. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment. Both Universal Credit and Contributory ESA can now be claimed by phone or online;
- increasing the standard allowance of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by around £1000 per year; and
- increasing in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.

Together, these measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system.

■ Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[31442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions her Department has had with the Treasury on increasing the amount of Statutory Sick Pay paid to people who have to (a) self-isolate or (b) are diagnosed with covid-19.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19 and we have been clear in our intention that no one should be penalised for doing the right thing. These are

rapidly developing circumstances, we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

**The current Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) rate is the legal minimum rate that an employer must pay to an employee; many employers have their own occupational health schemes. The SSP system is designed to balance support for the individual with the costs to the employer and, as such, there are no plans to make this change. The Government has been clear in its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system in the past fortnight to ensure people are supported in doing this. These changes include:**

- **making it easier to access benefits. SSP is now payable from day 1 – as opposed to day 4 – and those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment. Both Universal Credit and Contributory ESA can now be claimed by phone or online;**
- **increasing the standard allowance of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by around £1000 per year; and**
- **increasing in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.**

**Together, these measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system.**

#### ■ Universal Credit

John Healey:

[\[33408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he is taking to ensure limited social interaction in relation to appointments for new universal credit claimants since 16 March 2020.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 31 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

~~The Department is taking all appropriate steps to protect colleagues and customers, in line with Government advice.~~

**DWP has always followed Public Health England guidelines on social distancing. As of 24th March, Jobcentres are only offering face-to-face appointments – conducted in accordance with PHE guidelines on social**

**distancing - for the small number of claimants who would otherwise not be able to receive support. This helps us to continue to deliver our critical services whilst keeping our customers and staff safe.**

John Healey:

[33410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to provide (a) phone and (b) online appointments for new universal credit claimants.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 31 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

~~The Department is taking all appropriate steps to protect colleagues and customers, in line with Government advice.~~

**We have temporarily suspended the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments for all claimants in Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support. Advances for all new UC claimants are now available online / via phone, with no requirement to attend a job centre.**

John Healey:

[33411]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether new universal credit claimants have been required to attend in-person appointments after a phone assessment since 16 March 2020.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 31 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

~~The Department is taking all appropriate steps to protect colleagues and customers, in line with Government advice.~~

**We have temporarily suspended the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments for all claimants in Universal Credit, Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support.**

**Advances for all new UC claimants are now available online / via phone, with no requirement to attend a job centre.**

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Chris Law: [\[29994\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 20 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

**Face-to-face checks for Universal Credit advances have been removed for people self-isolating due to coronavirus so they can get the support they need quickly. Advances are available online or via the phone.**

Gareth Thomas: [\[30668\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Will Quince:

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

**The Government has been clear in its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system in the past fortnight to ensure people are receiving the support they need. These changes include increasing the standard allowance of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by over £1000 a year.**

**We have also increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.**

**We are also temporarily relaxing the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of**

**COVID-19 to ensure that the self-employed can access UC at a more generous rate.**

**Together, these measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system.**

**New Claims Advances are available to support those in immediate financial need until their first Universal Credit payment is made and the Department is committed to delivering advances as soon as possible to people who have requested them.**

**The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of the design and the current advance system works, and works quickly.**

**It is not possible to award a Universal Credit payment as soon as a claim is made, as the assessment period must run its course before the award of Universal Credit can be calculated. In order to allow the Universal Credit system to cope with the unprecedented demand, we must limit the changes made to its framework.**

Gareth Thomas:

[30669]

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Will Quince:

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

**The Government has been clear in its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system in the past fortnight to ensure people are receiving the support they need. These changes include increasing the standard allowance of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by over £1000 a year.**

**We have also increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.**

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The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of the design and the current advance system works, and works quickly.

It is not possible to award a Universal Credit payment as soon as a claim is made, as the assessment period must run its course before the award of Universal Credit can be calculated. In order to allow the Universal Credit system to cope with the unprecedented demand, we must limit the changes made to its framework.

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[30849\]](#)

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Will Quince:

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

New Claims Advances are available to support those in immediate financial need until their first Universal Credit payment is made and the Department is committed to delivering advances as soon as possible to people who have requested them.

The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of the design and the current advance system works, and works quickly.

It is not possible to award a Universal Credit payment as soon as a claim is made, as the assessment period must run its course before the award of Universal Credit can be calculated. In order to allow the Universal Credit system to cope with the unprecedented demand, we must limit the changes made to its framework.

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

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

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 25 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Will Quince:

~~As both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have made clear, the Government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19 and we have been clear in our intention that no one should be penalised for doing the right thing. These are rapidly developing circumstances, we continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.~~ **New Claims Advances are available to support those in immediate financial need until their first Universal Credit payment is made and the Department is committed to delivering advances as soon as possible to people who have requested them. It is for the claimant to choose to opt for an advance and it would not be appropriate for the department to require new claimants to have an advance.**

Dawn Butler: [\[33438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps he will take to increase staffing of the universal credit helpline in response to increasing demand as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 31 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Mims Davies:

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

~~The Department is taking all appropriate steps to protect colleagues and customers, in line with Government advice.~~

**Our priority as a Department is ensuring people get their benefit payments and that we can continue to support those who need us the most. We have mobilised our robust business continuity plans to ensure we can do just that. We are already redeploying 10,000 staff from other parts of DWP and are also recruiting additional staff to assist with the processing of claims, including support from other government departments and the private sector.**

■ Winter Fuel Payments: Coronavirus

Ms Angela Eagle:

[32053]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to extend the winter fuel allowance for recipients who (a) have to self-isolate or (b) are diagnosed with covid-19.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Guy Opperman:

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

**There are no plans to extend the winter fuel allowance scheme.**

**The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has, however, published a series of measures designed to help those affected by the coronavirus outbreak with the cost of their energy bills.**

**Further information on the measures is available here:**

**<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-agrees-measures-with-energy-industry-to-support-vulnerable-people-through-covid-19>**

■ Winter Fuel Payments: Pensioners

Alex Norris:

[30876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of an additional fuel payment to pensioners following Government advice for them to stay at home.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 23 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Guy Opperman:

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

**There are no plans to extend the winter fuel allowance scheme.**

**The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has, however, published a series of measures designed to help those affected by the coronavirus outbreak with the cost of their energy bills.**

**Further information on the measures is available here:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-agrees-measures-with-energy-industry-to-support-vulnerable-people-through-covid-19>

■ Zero Hours Contracts: Coronavirus

Robert Halfon:

[32138]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department is providing to people on zero-hours contracts whose employment has been terminated as a result of covid-19 and do not qualify for Statutory Sick Pay because they are not self-isolating.

**An error has been identified in the written answer given on 24 March 2020. The correct answer should have been:**

Justin Tomlinson:

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

**The Government has been clear in its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system in the past fortnight to ensure people are supported in doing this.**

**These changes include:**

- **making it easier to access benefits. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment. Both Universal Credit and Contributory ESA can now be claimed by phone or online;**
- **increasing the standard allowance of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by around £1000 per year;**
- **temporarily relaxing the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 to ensure that the self-employed can access UC at a more generous rate; and**
- **increasing in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents – which is on average £600 in people’s pockets.**

**Together, these measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system.**

**The Chancellor has also confirmed that, depending on their status, workers on zero hours contracts may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and we would urge people to explore this avenue too.**