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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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ FareShare: Coronavirus

Alex Norris:

[\[33732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has has to support the expansion of the FareShare network during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

We are working closely with FareShare and other food aid organisations to identify the impacts COVID-19 is having on front-line charities that provide food, and to ensure that those who are financially vulnerable have access to food and essential supplies.

We have worked with FareShare to quantify the current and forecast supply and demand of food to food aid charities, including the hundreds of charities who have asked for FareShare's support since COVID-19. We welcome the efforts of the food industry to support food aid organisations, including the FareShare network, through pledges of donations of food and funds.

We are working through the Food and Essential Supplies to the Vulnerable Ministerial Task Force to identify where Government can best support front-line food charities, in the context of the gap between supply and demand, and the support already shown by the food industry.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[33454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of people who will require food assistance during the covid-19 outbreak; what proportion of those people (a) were vulnerable before the outbreak and (b) are newly vulnerable.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[33565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many people his Department estimates are in need of food assistance; and what proportion of those people (a) were vulnerable before the covid-19 outbreak and (b) are newly vulnerable.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has been and remains in close contact with representatives across the food supply chain and civil society to ensure that vulnerable groups have access to the food and products that they need.

We initially estimated that 1.5 million people would fall into the clinically extremely vulnerable group. We have put in place measures to ensure that those identified by the NHS as being extremely clinically vulnerable and who are without a support

network of friends and family receive basic food and essential supplies when requested via the online NHS webportal or via the phone. Packages of essential supplies are being delivered across England within seven days of a request for support, as soon as their status as a shielded person is verified, and supermarkets are putting these customers at the front of the queue for online delivery slots.

Over 750,000 people across England signed up as NHS Volunteer Responders via the mobile app GoodSam. Over 600,000 volunteers have been verified as NHS Volunteer Responders via the Good Sam platform, and can now receive tasks to help those in their communities. These volunteers will help vulnerable people in England who are at most risk from coronavirus to stay well, including through shopping for vulnerable people for food and essential supplies.

We are working quickly to support people who do not fall into the category of being clinically vulnerable, but still need help getting essential food supplies. Government is working with industry, charities, other government departments and Devolved Administrations to ensure whatever support is needed is delivered in a coordinated and consistent manner. We welcome measures that supermarkets have put in place to support the elderly and other vulnerable groups.

We have been working closely with the third sector to understand the impacts the outbreak has had on food aid organisations, and how best to ensure that those who are financially vulnerable still have access to essential supplies. Food redistribution organisations across England are benefiting from £3.25 million of government funding to help them cut food waste and redistribute up to 14,000 tonnes of surplus stock.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[33456]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the national plan for delivering food assistance is.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is working to ensure that up to 1.5 million people in England identified by the NHS as being at higher risk of severe illness if they contract Coronavirus have access to the food they need. The Government continues to contact this cohort of shielded individuals and ask them to register via the online NHS webportal or via the phone if they need help accessing food.

In partnership with industry, the Government started to deliver Shielding Packages in late March, to those that are clinically extremely vulnerable and have requested this support. These packages consist of essential supplies and food. Supermarkets are also prioritising online delivery slots for those that are most in need and have expanded their capacity for home deliveries.

We are also working quickly to support people who do not fall into the category of being clinically extremely vulnerable, but still need help getting essential food supplies. This includes those who are elderly, disabled or have health conditions that make it difficult for them to get the food they need. We are speaking to food retailers, delivery organisations and volunteer groups to help prioritise those individuals to

access essential food. Wherever possible, people should continue to rely on friends, family and wider community support.

Over 750,000 people across England signed up as NHS Volunteer Responders via the mobile app GoodSam. Over 600,000 volunteers have been verified as NHS Volunteer Responders via the Good Sam platform, and can now receive tasks to help those in their communities, including through shopping for vulnerable people for food and essential supplies.

■ Milk: Coronavirus

Ben Lake: [\[33706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, whether he plans to take steps to support milk processors.

Ben Lake: [\[33707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has plans to provide financial support to dairy farmers whose milk payments have been deferred by milk processors.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working closely with the dairy industry to manage the impact of Covid-19. Though demand for milk and some dairy products has increased in supermarkets, farmers supplying milk to processors that sell into the food service sector have seen a significant reduction in demand.

About 5 per cent of total milk production goes to the service trade and there is therefore a small proportion of milk production that currently has no home. The vast majority of Britain's dairy farmers continue to supply their contracts at the usual price. In order to support affected farmers, we have set aside some elements of competition law to make it easier for processors to come together and voluntarily work out how to ease production down in order to create the space in the market for excess milk and to support a recovery in the spot price.

We have asked the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (which supports the interests of dairy farmers) and Dairy UK (which represents the processors) to coordinate a proposal and discussions are already underway. We stand ready to support them throughout this pandemic. This approach will allow the market for milk to adjust to the change in demand for milk while allowing production to be restored when shops, restaurants and pubs are able to open again.

The Government's Covid-19 Business Interruption Loans scheme is available to the dairy industry. Defra has held urgent discussions with the major banks to ensure they understand that farmers, milk buyers and milk processors are eligible for this scheme and communications are being prepared to increase awareness across the dairy industry.

We will continue to engage closely with representatives from all parts of the dairy supply chain to support the sector throughout this challenging period.

■ Pest Control: Coronavirus

Colum Eastwood:

[35061]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether pest control services are classified as a key service in relation to the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government's guidance for critical workers specifically relates to the continued offer for education provision for their children. The indicative list of critical sectors published in the guidance does not have wider implications, and does not confer special status on individuals included in the guidance pertaining to travel, business or any other services. Pest control services come under the 'Food and other necessary goods' section of the government's guidance here:

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

In the first instance, employees 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 Government's position remains that everyone who can work from home should do so. Where that is not possible, people should go into work where it is safe and they (or members of their household) are not symptomatic, following relevant PHE guidance. This applies to pest control services. The guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found here:

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

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[33713]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with supermarket leaders on social-distancing measures during queues.

Victoria Prentis:

We are in regular contact with the food industry to support them as they respond to COVID-19. This includes providing them with the guidance they need to keep their staff and customers safe, and Public Health England have recently published advice for retailers on social distancing measures in stores.

Representatives of our leading supermarkets have asked customers to shop considerately and we echo their call. We are grateful for the extensive support and positive collaboration that supermarkets have shown. We should be proud of all those across the country who are working round the clock to make sure people have the food they need.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[35026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the sufficiency of the number of refrigerated vans to meet the increased demand for grocery deliveries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[35027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has had discussions with supermarkets on the potential merits of dividing grocery deliveries between perishable and non-perishable items to ensure efficient usage of delivery fleets.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has well-established ways of working with the food industry during disruption to supply situations. Our retailers have highly resilient supply chains and have adapted quickly to these changes in demand to ensure people have the food and products they need. While we have had, and continue to have significant discussions with retailers over this period these issues have not arisen specifically. Deliveries both to stores and to people's homes play an important role, and retailers and suppliers are best placed to make decisions about logistics and distribution.

We have been supporting the industry in their response to this unprecedented situation by introducing measures to help businesses to keep food supply flowing. These include temporary relaxation of competition laws to allow supermarkets to work together, extending delivery hours to supermarkets and flexing rules on drivers' hours to allow a higher frequency of deliveries to stores.

■ **Take-away Food: Coronavirus**

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[33453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what discussions he has had with representatives of the mobile catering industry on the support this industry may be able to provide to society during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has well-established ways of working with the food industry during disruption to supply situations. The Government has regular engagement across the industry including the delivery to home sector and the industry continues to monitor the situation closely, taking the necessary steps to address issues where they arise. Following a significant spike in consumer demand, we have now seen stock levels in supermarkets improve. To support the food sector, the government temporarily relaxed competition law and regulations relating to driver hours and delivery times so that the sector could work together to keep putting food on the shelves.

We are working quickly to support those who need help getting essential food supplies, and we are working with retailers and the voluntary sector to ensure that people are supported to shop for others safely. We welcome the actions that industry is taking, including hiring more staff, and prioritising delivery slots and shopping times

for those that need them most. We are grateful for the extensive support and positive collaboration that the industry has shown.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Rehabilitation

Mary Glendon:

[32278]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure continuity of drug and alcohol treatment services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: Local authorities are responsible for assessing local needs and commissioning drug and alcohol prevention, treatment and harm reduction services to meet these needs. It is important that these services are maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Guidance to support commissioners and providers of services for people who use drugs and alcohol during the COVID-19 pandemic is being developed as of 2 April 2020 and will be published shortly.

■ Chickenpox

Chris Green:

[30160]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have been (a) diagnosed with and (b) hospitalised as a result of chickenpox in (i) England and (ii) the UK in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

Chickenpox is not a notifiable disease in England, therefore data on the exact number of people diagnosed with chickenpox are not available.

A count of finished admission episodes with a primary diagnosis of chickenpox in England for the financial years 2014-15 to 2018-19, provided by NHS Digital, is attached.

Attachments:

1. [30160 table \[A count of Finished Admission Episodes \(FAEs\) with a primary diagnosis of chickenpox, England, for the financial years 2014-15 to 2018-19.xlsx\]](#)

■ Chickenpox: Vaccination

Chris Green:

[30162]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's proposed vaccination strategy will include an approach to limiting the impact of chickenpox on society; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The forthcoming vaccine strategy will consider all vaccination programmes over the life-course. The strategy does not directly consider the impact of chickenpox on

society. However, it will build on efforts already under way to improve national immunisation programmes and support innovation.

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

■ Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord: [29888]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department was first alerted to the existence of the coronavirus pathogen.

Dr Matthew Offord: [29889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which office within his Department first advised Ministers on the existence of the coronavirus pathogen.

Jo Churchill:

On 31 December 2019, Public Health England identified reports of an outbreak of undiagnosed viral pneumonia in Wuhan City, People's Republic of China and on 2 January 2020, the Department was alerted to these reports.

On 9 January 2020, Ministers were formally notified of the outbreak of undiagnosed viral pneumonia in Wuhan and provided with an update of its progression.

The World Health Organization posted a Disease Outbreak News (DON) item on 12 January which stated that a novel coronavirus was detected in 41 patients with pneumonia in Wuhan City. This DON can be found at the following link:

<https://www.who.int/csr/don/12-january-2020-novel-coronavirus-china/en/>

■ Coronavirus: Carers

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [31561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps the Government is taking to protect the health of individuals who live with or care for those with weakened immune systems.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: Guidance has been published for people who are at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 because of an underlying health condition, and for their family, friends and carers. This is available to view 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>.

Further communications to individuals on their risks have been sent by the National Health Service.

Guidance has also been published on social distancing for everyone in the United Kingdom and protecting older people and vulnerable persons. This includes advice for those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures. This guidance is available to view at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Dental Services

Sam Tarry: [30919]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to issue guidance on aerosol production in dentistry and the risk of spreading covid-19 to staff and patients.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement issue regular updates to general dental practices and community dental services regarding the emerging COVID-19 situation. The latest update was issued on 20 March 2020 and includes guidance on aerosol generating procedures. This can be viewed online at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-dental-care/>

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Yvette Cooper: [29834]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the guidance is for people (a) who are elderly and (b) with relevant underlying health conditions on how they can reduce or minimise their personal risk of contracting covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Guidance has been published on social distancing for everyone in the United Kingdom and protecting older people and vulnerable persons. This includes advice for those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to be particularly strict in following social distancing measures. This guidance is available to view at the following link:

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

Guidance has also been published for people who are at particularly high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 because of an underlying health condition, and for their family, friends and carers. This guidance is available to view 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>

Letters will be sent out from Monday 23 March 2020 strongly advising those most at risk from COVID-19 to self-isolate for at least 12 weeks.

Dawn Butler:

[29916]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to tackle the effect of covid-19 on (a) women (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people and (c) disabled people.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The COVID-19 outbreak is the biggest public health emergency in a generation. We are doing everything we can to tackle the pandemic and mitigate its impact on everyone, including women, black, Asian and minority ethnic people and disabled people.

On Wednesday 25 March, the Coronavirus Act 2020 was given Royal Assent. An impact assessment and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) assessment was conducted in relation to the provisions contained in the Coronavirus Bill. The PSED requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities, including those with protected characteristics such as sex, ethnicity and disabilities. We will continue to consider the impacts on people with protected characteristics when considering how to implement policies using powers contained in the Act.

Dan Jarvis:

[30770]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on vulnerable groups of self-isolation as a result of the outbreak of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: In these extraordinarily challenging times, the Government has asked specialist clinical teams to identify their patients who fit the criteria for moderate and high-risk groups. High-risk people will be shielded and provided with a package of care that will hopefully support their needs.

The Government has published guidance which includes information on self-distancing for vulnerable people, shielding and protective measures for vulnerable people and guidance on looking after your mental health. More information on this guidance can be found at the following links:

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

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

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

Tulip Siddiq: [30808]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether any communal self-isolation facilities will be provided for people who need to self-isolate but live with elder or vulnerable people particularly at risk from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, local authorities and providers to make sure the sector is prepared to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The current guidance states that, if possible, any vulnerable individuals (such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions) should be moved out, to stay with friends or family for the duration of the home isolation period. If that is not possible, current guidance states that contact should be reduced as far as possible.

More info on this guidance can be found at the following link:

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

Royston Smith: [30902]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how his Department's advice for covid-19 and the 2009 H1N1 swine flu outbreak differs.

Jo Churchill:

Initial symptoms of H1N1 swine flu and COVID-19 are very similar, so laboratory tests are required to confirm the nature of the disease.

The advice to protect against H1N1 swine flu is to get vaccinated as there is a suitable vaccination available on the market. While United Kingdom scientists have started testing a new vaccine for COVID-19, to date, there is no specific medicine recommended to prevent or treat it. People are advised to follow guidance set out at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Local Government

Matt Rodda: [31533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The Government stands ready to do whatever is necessary to support councils in their response to COVID-19.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Rt. hon Robert Jenrick MP) addressed over 300 council leaders in England reaffirming the Government's commitment to giving councils the support they need to contribute to the national effort. He confirmed a series of practical measures which will give councils greater flexibility to respond to COVID-19.

Guidance for local councils during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government#local-government>

■ Coronavirus: Prescription Drugs**Lilian Greenwood:****[29960]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to lift the requirement for pharmacists to be present when people sign prescriptions for controlled medication to reduce pressure on pharmacists during the covid-19 outbreak..

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: There is no legal requirement for a pharmacist to be present when a prescription for controlled drugs is signed. However, when a Schedule 2 controlled drug is collected from a pharmacy, the pharmacist is legally required to determine whether the person collecting is a patient, patient's representative or healthcare professional, and maintain a record of the person supplied. These measures are important to prevent the misuse and diversion of controlled drugs.

Robert Halfon:**[30743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with NHS professionals on prescribing longer courses of medication for people who have to self-isolate and require regular medication during the coronavirus outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The Government has advised that the duration of prescriptions should not be increased as this would put strain on the supply chain and presents a potential risk to patient safety.

Steps have been taken to reduce the need for a longer course of medicine. Patients, who are required to shield during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a medical condition as identified by NHS England and NHS Improvement, may have any prescription medication that they require delivered to their homes if they do not have family members, friends or a carer who can collect medicines on their behalf. Pharmacies can advise the patient of the potential for a local volunteer to act on their behalf to

collect their medicines or, if this is not possible, arrange for the delivery of the medicines either themselves or through another pharmacy.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Taiwo Owatemi:

[32257]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there is a type of protective face mask that protects people from contracting covid-19; and what assessment his Department has made of whether face masks protect people from contracting covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: The Government, informed by professionals, has published new guidance about personal protective equipment (PPE) for National Health Service teams who are likely to come into contact with patients with COVID-19. This is available at the following link:

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

The guidance recommends the safest level of PPE to protect NHS healthcare workers and specifies the type of PPE that should be worn in the various healthcare settings.

The World Health Organization recommends the use of FFP2 masks but the United Kingdom has gone further and recommends the use of FFP3 masks. However, we are clear that FFP2 have been approved by the WHO and can be used safely if necessary.

Face masks play a very important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals, but there is very little evidence of widespread benefit from their use outside of these clinical settings. Facemasks must be worn correctly, changed frequently, removed properly and disposed of safely in order to be effective.

■ Coronavirus: South Yorkshire

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [27611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to allocate additional funding to protect public health in the event of an outbreak of covid-19 in South Yorkshire.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 13 March 2020]: The Chancellor has set out a £12 billion package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, individuals and businesses through the economic disruption caused by COVID-19.

The Government continues to work closely with the Bank of England and international partners and announced a three-point plan at the Budget, one of which is to support public services.

Full details of the Budget 2020 and where funds have been allocated can be found at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Yorkshire and the Humber

Stephanie Peacock:

[32294]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the increase in covid-19 cases in Yorkshire.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 24 March 2020]: The Government is responding to the outbreak of COVID-19 as a national issue and is actively implementing support plans across the nation.

More information can be found at the following link:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

■ Diabetes: Medical Equipment

Steve McCabe:

[31433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 to Question 26807 on Diabetes: Medical Equipment, what (a) national and (b) regional data NHS England and NHS Improvement hold on the prescription of flash glucose monitors by primary care providers.

Jo Churchill:

The information requested is shown in the following table.

Flash Glucose Monitoring Patient Numbers – Q3 2019/20

NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED PATIENTS WITH PRESCRIPTIONS

Region	Estimated # of Type 1 patients in the region	Q1 Uptake		Q2 Uptake		Q3 Uptake	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
North West	30,630	6,084	20	7,836	26	9,325	30
North East and Yorkshire	40,490	989	2	5,672	14	8,640	21
Midlands	46,455	6,109	13	8,849	19	11,534	25

NUMBER OF IDENTIFIED PATIENTS WITH PRESCRIPTIONS

East	29,635	1,493	5	3,127	11	4,633	16
London	29,565	3,382	11	4,574	15	5,975	20
South West	26,875	4,171	16	5,748	21	6,924	26
South East	39,275	6,231	16	8,530	22	10,751	27
England	242,925	28,459	12	44,336	18	57,782	24

Source: NHS Business Services Authority

Notes:

- These figures represent patient numbers in receipt of flash in primary care.
- Flash Glucose Monitoring uptake has increased markedly in all regions – national uptake is now 24% of all type 1 patients.
- Figures only correspond to individual identified patients with clinical commissioning group prescriptions and may therefore understate full coverage.

Estimated number of type 1 patients sourced from National Diabetes Audit 2017/18

■ Infant Foods: Coronavirus

Sir David Amess:

[31419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) baby food, (b) infant formula and (c) infant medication continue to be available during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The Government has introduced new measures to support businesses to keep food, including baby food, supply flowing on to shelves and into homes, such as temporary relaxation of competition laws to allow supermarkets to work together, extending delivery hours to supermarkets and flexing rules on drivers' hours to allow a higher frequency of deliveries to stores to ensure shelves are being replenished more quickly.

In relation to infant formula, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss MP) on 26 March to Question [30064](#).

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 infant medications, and precautions are in place to reduce the likelihood of future shortages. The steps being taken to protect United Kingdom supplies in response to the COVID-19 outbreak were set out in the Department's

press statement issued on 11 February 2020. This statement can be read at the following link:

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

■ Infant Foods: Food Banks

Robert Halfon:

[33506]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will enable food banks to distribute instant formula baby milk during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Food banks are independent charitable organisations and, as such, are best placed to decide on the most appropriate arrangements for supporting people who use them.

Food banks already offer a wider range of goods depending on availability, which can include formula milk.

The Healthy Start scheme provides vouchers for lower-income families which can be exchanged for fruit, vegetables, milk, infant formula and free vitamins.

■ Intensive Care

Helen Hayes:

[32712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the availability of critical care beds in London; and what plans he has to increase the availability of critical care beds for each (a) NHS and (b) Foundation Trust in the UK.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 March 2020]: In March 2020, the National Health Service had 3,700 critical care beds for adults and, as part of the readiness for the likely influx of more COVID-19 patients, was taking concerted action to free up to a third of the general and acute beds. This was to enable 30,000 of the 100,000 general and acute beds to be available for COVID-19 patients.

The NHS is making sure that, as well as overall hospital beds, intensive care beds, operating theatres, repurposed recovery bays, mechanical ventilation and other facilities across the hospital sector are expanded to provide the greatest possible capacity.

■ Out-patients: Attendance

Emma Hardy:

[32728]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether high-risk people that are social distancing should still attend routine, non-urgent medical appointments.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 March 2020]: We are advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures.

We advise everyone to access medical assistance remotely, wherever possible. However, if individuals have a scheduled hospital or other medical appointment during this period, they should talk to their general practitioner or specialist to ensure they continue to receive the care they need and determine which appointments are absolutely essential.

■ Ovarian Cancer: Scotland**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[31436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the shorter diagnostic pathway for ovarian cancer in place in Scotland whereby women with suspected ovarian cancer are referred for a CA125 blood test and an ultrasound at the same time; and whether he plans to introduce a similar process in England.

Jo Churchill:

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) guideline on ovarian cancer: recognition and initial management (CG122) is incorporated into the NICE guideline on suspected cancer: recognition and referral (NG12), which was reviewed in January 2020. No new evidence was identified during the surveillance review which would warrant a change to the current recommendations.

NICE is planning to undertake a surveillance review of CG122 in 2020/21 and the diagnostic pathway will be considered at that time.

■ Shingles: Vaccination**Chris Green:**[\[30903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the GP contract 2020-21 supporting guidance will require all practices to implement a proactive call and recall for the shingles national immunisation programme to ensure the protection of older adults.

Jo Churchill:

Immunisations play a critical role in preventative healthcare and in promoting health and well-being across the life course, particularly for older adults where protection against shingles is so important. The 'Update to the GP contract agreement 2020/21 – 2023/24' jointly published by NHS England and the British Medical Association on the 6th February 2020 states that practices should ensure their call and recall systems are in line with national standards. These will be defined in supporting guidance for each vaccination programme and over time will be updated to reflect use of the most effective technology. Some areas already use text-based reminders, and all practices must move towards this as soon as the infrastructure is in place.

Call/recall will be delivered by practices themselves as a default or may be delivered by the local Child Health Information Systems (CHIS) on their behalf.

■ Syringes

Grahame Morris:

[32680]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the supply of clean injecting equipment for people who use drugs to avoid the spread of blood-borne viruses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 25 March 2020]: Local authorities are responsible for commissioning drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction services for their local area. This includes the supply of clean injecting equipment for people who use drugs, for example through needle and syringe exchange programmes. Maintaining this supply during the COVID-19 outbreak will be one of their priorities.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Sarah Owen:

[34410]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to support charities and faith organisations who rely on donations from the public to pay for (a) charity work and (b) overheads of religious buildings, during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Faith communities have a long history of service supporting many of the most vulnerable members of our society. The rapid response during the current pandemic has been no different. We value the work being done to support those in need.

We recognise that, like those in the private sector, charities and faith organisations are under significant strain as a result of COVID-19. Charities can access many of the support measures the Chancellor has announced for businesses, including deferring their VAT bills, paying no business rates on charity shops next year, and furloughing staff where possible with the Government paying 80 per cent of their wages. Further details can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

On 8 April the Chancellor outlined a £750 million package of support for frontline charities across the UK responding to the Covid-19 crisis. We are continuing to engage with cross government colleagues on the details of this funding package and more details will be released in the coming days.

We will continue to engage with the sector to maintain a complete picture of the impact of coronavirus to better understand how we can support them to respond to the pressures they may be facing.

■ **Community Development: Ministerial Duties**

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[30701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when there will be a minister in place responsible for the communities portfolio.

Luke Hall:

My noble Friend Lord Greenhalgh is the minister responsible for the communities portfolio.

■ **Homelessness**

Neil Coyle: [\[34360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to provide support and accommodation to people experiencing homelessness who also have no recourse to public funds.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: The Government is aware of concerns about those with no recourse to public funds experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis.

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional £3.2 billion provided to local authorities as part of the wider government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding has been provided to help local authorities to reduce risks to public health and to support individuals on the basis of need.

The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended.

The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times, and expects local authorities to support people who are sleeping rough, and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

■ **Homelessness: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle: [\[34359\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to provide people experiencing homelessness with accommodation where they can self-isolate if they are displaying covid-19 symptoms.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Since the beginning of the crisis, the vast majority of those known to be living on the streets have been offered safe accommodation - ensuring some of the most vulnerable people can stay safe during the pandemic.

This includes those rough sleeping or who have been living in accommodation with communal sleeping spaces such as night shelters.

This response is backed by £3.2 billion of additional funding for local authorities to enable them to respond to COVID-19 pressures. This is in addition to £3.2 million in targeted funding to ensure that we minimise the risk to those currently unable to self-isolate.

This funding will assist local authorities to provide accommodation and support to vulnerable people who are at risk of, or who have been diagnosed with, COVID-19.

Helen Hayes:[\[34385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has ensure that (a) support and (b) accommodation is made available for people experiencing homelessness with no recourse to public funds during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: The Government is aware of concerns about those with no recourse to public funds experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis.

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional £3.2 billion provided to local authorities as part of the wider government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding has been provided to help local authorities to reduce risks to public health and to support individuals on the basis of need.

The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended.

The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times, and expects local authorities to support people who are sleeping rough, and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

JUSTICE**■ Law Centres: Coronavirus****Gareth Thomas:**[\[34896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to provide additional funding from the public purse to law centres to help them respond to increases in the number of legal enquiries during the covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Chalk:

We recognise the valuable role that Law Centres play in local communities across the country, and we support them in this vital work.

It is right that the Government does what it can to help vulnerable people and the charity sector on which they rely during this challenging time. That is why the Government recently announced that it is providing £360m of funding to charities, as well as an additional £370m fund for smaller organisations at the heart of local communities.

MoJ officials continue to meet regularly with representatives of law centres as well as the wider advice sector, to ensure that they are supported during this time and discuss ways in which we can work together to enhance the breadth of legal support available for everyone in society.

TRANSPORT■ **Public Transport: Coronavirus****Bridget Phillipson:**[\[33513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to allocate additional financial support to local transport authorities as a result of lower passenger numbers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: On 3 April we made available to bus operators and local authorities up to £167 million of new funding over twelve weeks under the new Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant to keep key routes running. Another £30 million has also been reallocated to local authorities to safeguard bus services. This is on top of £3.2 billion of additional funding, the Government has announced to help local authorities respond to the immediate impacts of coronavirus.

WALES■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Suzanne Webb:**[\[901911\]](#)

What stakeholder engagement he has undertaken in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

David T C Davies:

We are engaging with Welsh businesses and other sectors on a daily basis to learn more about the impact of the crisis on the ground and feed stakeholders' views back into government policy making. This includes, remotely, one-to-one discussions and group webinars enabling the Secretary of State and I to explain the government's support schemes.

This week I have been pleased to join meetings hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association and CBI Wales. Tomorrow, the Secretary of State will join

the Business Secretary and Welsh Ministers in hosting a joint web-based business question and answer session.

Virginia Crosbie:

[\[901913\]](#)

What steps the Government has taken to repatriate Welsh citizens stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

David T C Davies:

The Government is fully committed to helping stranded British nationals return home. Through our work with airlines and with foreign governments, we estimate over 1.3 million British nationals have returned to the UK via commercial routes and we have brought back more than 13,000 people on 63 chartered flights.

I am in regular contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Welsh Government on this vital work.

■ Coronavirus: Wales

Mr Peter Bone:

[\[901915\]](#)

What arrangements are in place with the Welsh Government to co-ordinate the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

We are working hand in hand with the Welsh Government, including through COBR Ministerial Committee and its sub-committees, to ensure Wales's voice is heard loud and clear as part of the UK-wide response to the covid-19 outbreak.

I also have regular discussions with the First Minister and his Ministerial team to ensure our response is well co-ordinated.

Aaron Bell:

[\[901917\]](#)

What financial support the Government has allocated to the Welsh Government in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

David T C Davies:

The Government has provided over £2.1 billion in financial support to the Welsh Government to respond to the covid-19 outbreak. This is made up of Barnett consequential funding to the allocations in England for public services, business support and support to individuals.

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[901918\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the First Minister of Wales on the covid-19 outbreak.

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[901920\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the First Minister of Wales on the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

The First Minister, his ministerial team, and I regularly discuss our governments' response to the covid-19 outbreak. Last week we both attended meetings between all four administrations, including COBR(M) and a meeting chaired by my Rt. hon Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to discuss the UK-wide approach to social distancing.

Craig Williams:[\[901919\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the deployment of military personnel to Wales in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

David T C Davies:

We have worked closely with the Welsh Government to enable the UK's armed forces to play a vital role. Our servicemen and women have worked tirelessly to help build hospitals, drive ambulances and get PPE where it is needed most. This is testament to how strong we are as a United Kingdom.

Economic Growth: North West and Wales**Scott Benton:**[\[901921\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to strengthen economic links between Wales and the North West of England.

David T C Davies:

I met with the leaders of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, Programme Director Alwen Williams and the Business Advisory Board on 12 March, before the covid-19 crisis, where I discussed the opportunities that will be created by the North Wales Growth Deal to build on the already significant cross-border economic activity that exists between Northeast Wales and the Northwest of England.

Economic Situation: Wales**Geraint Davies:**[\[901922\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the potential effect on the Welsh economy of maintaining the existing transition period deadline.

Simon Hart:

The Government's position remains unaltered; extending the transition period will cause further uncertainty to businesses in Wales and will hamper our post-covid recovery.

Employment: Wales**Carolyn Harris:**[\[901910\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on support for people in Wales whose employment has been adversely affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Jeff Smith:

[\[901916\]](#)

What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on support for people in Wales whose employment has been adversely affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

David T C Davies:

I have regular discussions with Ministerial colleagues on a range of topics, including employment support for people in Wales. The Government has announced unprecedented measures to support people in Wales and right across the UK through these difficult times.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Offshore Industry: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham:

[\[34979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Health and Safety Executive is taking to ensure that (a) social distancing and (b) other measures to help prevent increasing covid-19 infection rates are enforced among offshore oil and gas workers.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a contributing member of the Oil and Gas UK (OGUK) Pandemic Steering Group, which also contains members from OGUK, helicopter operators, oil and gas companies, Step Change in Safety and Health Protection Scotland. The Pandemic Steering Group has developed a protocol and range of measures to give guidance to offshore oil and gas companies on social distancing and other measures to prevent the COVID-19 infection of offshore workers. This has been disseminated to the industry via the OGUK working groups and online communication channels where appropriate and will be supported by the published full guidance document on OGUK's website early next week.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Jon Trickett:

[\[33418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support the Government is providing to self-employed people who have to self-isolate as a result of covid-19 symptoms.

Mims Davies:

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 government has also announced a package of temporary welfare measures to support those on low incomes through the outbreak, including relaxing the Minimum Income Floor for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. Taken together, these measures provide over £6.5bn of additional support through the welfare system.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[34308]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on protecting self-employed workers from financial hardship during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: 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 government has also announced a package of temporary welfare measures to support those on low incomes through the outbreak, including relaxing the Minimum Income Floor for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of COVID-19. Taken together, these measures provide over £6.5bn of additional support through the welfare system.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis:

[33537]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what plans her Department has to change the process of applying for universal credit for people who cannot apply online so that claimants do not have to take proof of identity into their local JobCentre.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: The Department takes seriously the need to support claimants during the COVID-19 outbreak, and wants Universal Credit to be easy to access. It is designed to be a 'digital-first' service, ensuring we make best use of technology to deliver a modern and effective working-age welfare system. This allows our staff to concentrate on those people who require additional support through different channels.

Although the Department offers comprehensive support for claimants to use our digital service, there will be occasions when people are unable to make their claim online, so telephone applications can be accepted through the Freephone Universal Credit Helpline.

Jobcentres are currently closed to claimants, except for the most complex cases where help can only be delivered face-to-face. As a consequence, new Universal

Credit claimants will have their identity verified by telephone through the use of biographical questions generated by information already held by the Department.

Stuart C McDonald:

[35000]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to suspend repayment of all universal credit advances during the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: As part of the Government's strategy to support people affected by the COVID-19 public health emergency, DWP is making a number of changes to its benefit processes to ensure people who need financial help have access to the benefit system.

Universal Credit 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 claimants who have requested them. Face-to-face checks for Universal Credit advances have been suspended and claimants can apply for an advance by phone or online without attending their Jobcentre.

Universal Credit is already much more generous than the legacy benefit system it replaces. From 6th April 2020, we have increased the standard allowance for everyone by over £80 a month for one year. This is on top of the existing 1.7% increase already announced. The increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance provides additional support to claimants in order to help them manage the economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, including the repayment of new claim advances.

The Government has reduced the maximum deduction from 40% to 30% of a claimant's standard allowance from October 2019 and this will be further reduced to 25% from October 2021. The repayment time for advances has already been extended from 6 months to 12 months, and will be further extended to 24 months from October 2021.

If a claimant is in financial difficulty as a result of the level of deductions being made they can contact the Department to request that a reduction in deductions be considered. Any adjustment to repayments will be based on the individual circumstances of the claimant.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HOME OFFICE

■ Right to Rent Scheme

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Immigration Compliance and the Courts (Chris Philp): [\[HCWS195\]](#)

We welcome the Court of Appeal ruling that the Right to Rent Scheme is lawful and does not breach human rights law.

The Right to Rent Scheme was launched to ensure only those lawfully in the country can access the private rental sector, and to tackle unscrupulous landlords who exploit vulnerable migrants, sometimes in very poor conditions.

In 2016, a requirement was introduced for landlords and lettings agents in England to take reasonable steps to check they are renting only to someone who has a right to do so. This is to help make sure our immigration laws are respected. It is only fair to the many people who come to the UK legally and to British citizens that accommodation is not taken by people who are here illegally.

Right to Rent checks are straightforward and apply equally to everyone seeking accommodation in the private rental sector, including British citizens, and there are penalties for landlords who fail to complete the checks and who are later found to have rented to someone without a right to be in the UK. We have adapted the checks to make it easier for landlords to carry them out during the coronavirus outbreak. Prospective renters are now able to submit scanned documents, rather than originals, to show they have a right to rent.

We have always been absolutely clear that discriminatory treatment on the part of anyone carrying out these checks is unlawful. Furthermore, the Right to Rent legislation provides for Codes of Practice which sets out what landlords are expected to do and how they can avoid unlawful discrimination.

We are therefore pleased that the Court of Appeal has overturned the High Court's ruling and found that the Scheme has a legitimate policy purpose and is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

As the Court noted, it is in the public interest that a coherent immigration policy should not only set out the criteria on which leave to remain is granted, but also discourage unlawful entry or the continued presence of those who have no right to enter or be here.

The Right to Rent Scheme forms an important part of our immigration policy. However, as my Rt hon Friend, the Home Secretary said in this House, we are carefully reviewing and reflecting on the recommendations in the Lessons Learned Review report, including those relating to the compliant environment. We will bring forward a detailed formal response in the next six months, as Wendy Williams recommended.

In the meantime, the provisions passed by this House in 2014 remain in force and a full evaluation of the Right to Rent Scheme is underway. The evaluation includes a call to evidence to tenants, landlords and letting agents; a large mystery shopping exercise; and surveys of landlords. Members of the Right to Rent consultative panel provided input into the design of the evaluation.

The Government is committed to tackling discrimination in all its forms and to having an immigration system which provides control, but which is also fair, humane and fully compliant with the law. The Court of Appeal has found that the Right to Rent Scheme is capable of being operated in a lawful way by landlords in all individual cases. We will continue to work with landlords and lettings agents to ensure that is the case.

TREASURY

■ Temporary changes to pensions tax in the context of abatement for returning workers

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):

[\[HCWS196\]](#)

At this time, it is important that key public sector workforces can bring back workers with relevant and valuable experience to ensure that the government can continue to provide critical public services. I am working with colleagues across government to ensure we remove any potential barriers to those who wish to return to work to help in our fight against Covid-19.

For public sector workers returning to support the government's response to Covid-19 the government intends to temporarily suspend tax rules that would otherwise apply significant tax charges to pension income received by recently retired individuals aged between 50 and 55. This change, taken alongside complementary changes to rules for relevant public service pension schemes (subject to relevant HM Treasury agreement), will help ensure individuals' pension income will remain protected if they return to work at this important time.

The measure is designed to ensure that we can continue to provide important public services at this time. As these proposed tax changes form part of our response to Covid-19, they will initially apply in respect of payments made in the period from 1 March to 1 June 2020.

HMRC will set out operational guidance in due course, but this measure will only apply to people returning to roles as a result of Covid-19. I am working with colleagues to identify relevant workforces who should benefit from these changes.

The government's actions will provide relevant public sector staff associations with the assurance that their members with pensions in payment and pension benefits will be unaffected if they wish to play their part in our response to this virus.