



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 April 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (03:48 P.M., 24 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

■ Migrant Workers

Sir Roger Gale: [\[37378\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what estimate he has made of the number of UK nationals working as contractors who have been replaced by specialists from overseas in the latest period for which figures are available.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response [PQ37378.pdf]

DEFENCE

■ Aerospace Industry: Contracts

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[37951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the outcomes of contracts between his Department and companies within the aerospace industry are not adversely affected by the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on those companies.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is closely monitoring the impact of Covid-19 on defence suppliers, including those within the aerospace industry. We remain closely engaged with our key suppliers at this critical time and have also established regular meetings with the mid-tier and small and medium-sized enterprise communities to ensure we understand the impact the Covid-19 outbreak is having throughout the supply chain.

In line with our usual payment policies, we are ensuring that outstanding invoices are paid promptly and are also encouraging prime and mid-tier suppliers to pay invoices as quickly as possible to their sub-tiers.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[37952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that payments made to companies that have aerospace contracts with that Department are timely.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is alert to the financial challenges that the Covid-19 outbreak is placing on all our suppliers, including those in the aerospace industry. In line with our usual payment policies, we are ensuring that outstanding invoices are paid promptly and are also encouraging primes and mid-tier suppliers to pay invoices as quickly as possible to their sub-tiers.

In addition, the MOD is enacting the Government Procurement Policy Note 02/20 published in March 2020, which sets out information and guidance for public bodies on paying suppliers to ensure service continuity during and after the Covid-19 outbreak. That includes ensuring that suppliers at risk will continue to be paid as normal and consideration of interim payments will be made where appropriate.

Mr Stephen Morgan:[\[37953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the effect of the financial security of the aerospace sector on SMEs in the supply chain for Government contracts.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has processes in place to routinely monitor the financial health of all its major suppliers, drawing on both internal and external analysis, and open-source financial information. Regular meetings are also held with the mid-tier and small and medium-sized enterprise communities.

The MOD will continue to work closely with colleagues in the Cabinet Office and other Government Departments to monitor risk across the Government's supplier base, especially in light of the current Covid-19 situation.

■ Porton Down: Animal Experiments**Kenny MacAskill:**[\[37727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether researchers at Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down are working on animal model development; and how much funding that laboratory has allocated to developing non-animal research methods in each of the last three years.

Jeremy Quin:

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is developing and using animal models where this is necessary to understand and mitigate potential hazards to UK Service personnel and civilians

The principles of the "three Rs" of 'reduce' (the number of animals used), 'refine' (animal procedures) and 'replace' (animal experiments with non-animal alternatives) are integral to all animal procedures at Dstl, and so separate allocations for developing non-animal research methods cannot be identified.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Broadband: Coronavirus****Dr Luke Evans:**[\[31566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to meet the demands placed on the national broadband infrastructure to support people using the internet whilst in self-isolation.

Matt Warman:

Overall, the telecoms sector is well prepared for the impacts of Covid-19 on national broadband infrastructure; its plans are extensive and there is currently sufficient network capacity to support the various needs of consumers during the pandemic.

The Government recognises how important good connectivity is across the United Kingdom, as an increasing number of people have to self isolate. With that in mind, I am pleased that we have worked with the industry to announce additional measures to protect and support consumers, including the vulnerable and those who may become vulnerable due to Covid-19 related circumstances. A joint statement from the Government, industry and Ofcom was published on 29 March 2020 highlighting these commitments.

This can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-agrees-measures-with-telecoms-companies-to-support-vulnerable-consumers-through-covid-19>

I remain in regular touch with Ofcom and the relevant companies and will continue to keep the situation under review.

■ Telecommunications: Stoke On Trent**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[37898\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure the effective delivery of broadband and telecommunications in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove.

Matt Warman:

The Government's contingency planning with industry and considerable investment in superfast broadband has ensured that the UK's broadband and mobile networks have stood up well to the increase in home working as a result of COVID-19

We are also ambitious to see further improvements in broadband and mobile coverage, including nationwide coverage of gigabit capable broadband, and are introducing a range of measures to deliver this ambition. The Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill will make it easier for operators to deploy

broadband in blocks of flats. In addition, in March, we announced that we would be legislating to mandate gigabit connectivity in new build homes, and that we will be investing £5 billion in bringing gigabit broadband to the hardest to reach areas of the UK. The Government also announced on 9 March that it had agreed a £1 billion deal with the mobile network operators to deliver the Shared Rural Network. This will see operators collectively increase 4G mobile coverage throughout the UK to 95% by the end of 2025, underpinned by legally binding coverage commitments

In Stoke-on-Trent specifically, the Government has also provided £9.2 million to the City of Stoke-on-Trent for a Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) Wave 3 project. In partnership with VXFIBER, this project will develop a publicly owned and operated, open access and gigabit-capable, 60 mile long network with citywide coverage by spring 2021.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Day Care

Dr Luke Evans:

[34415]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support childcare providers in supporting the families of key workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government has asked providers to continue to provide care for a limited number of children – those who are vulnerable and those whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home. Providers should try to be as flexible as possible for critical workers who work shifts or atypical hours.

We urge all childcare providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents, given the great uncertainty they will be facing too. That is one of the reasons why we announced on 17 March that we will continue to pay funding to local authorities for the early years entitlements for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds and that funding would not be clawed back from local authorities during closures, or where children are withdrawn, because of COVID-19.

The government has already introduced a range of measures to support businesses and workers during this period. Further details of support available for early years providers can be found here:

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

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[34414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the sustainability schools remaining open in the event of an increase in self-isolation rates of teachers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

If some schools are experiencing high demand for places or severe staff shortages, local authorities will coordinate support from other schools in the area. Schools are expected to be flexible and work together where required.

If a school is unable to open, local authorities should try to coordinate provision for pupils in other schools in their area. If this is not possible, local authorities should consider working with neighbouring local authorities while keeping in mind the impact on children. Regional school commissioners can support conversations between local authorities where necessary.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**■ China: Uighurs****Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[37464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the detainment of people in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China.

Nigel Adams:

The British Government regularly makes representations directly to the Chinese Government about the treatment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Most recently, on 9 March the Foreign Secretary raised his concerns with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi. On 5 March, I did the same with the Chinese Ambassador in London.

The UK continues to raise concerns about Xinjiang publicly in multilateral settings, including at the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council on 10 March during our 'Item 4' national statement.

Paul Girvan:[\[37815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Chinese counterpart on the treatment of the Uyghur community in the Xinjiang Region of that country.

Nigel Adams:

The British Government regularly makes representations directly to the Chinese Government about the treatment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. Most recently, on 9 March the Foreign Secretary raised his concerns with his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi. On 5 March, I did the same with the Chinese Ambassador in London.

The UK also continues to raise concerns about Xinjiang publicly in multilateral settings, including at the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council on 10 March during our 'Item 4' national statement.

■ Hong Kong: Freedom of Expression

Afzal Khan:

[37881]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the withdrawal of press credentials from journalists from the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post and New York Times on the preservation of freedom of speech in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

As Lord Ahmad said in the Lords on 19 March, the Chinese Government's announcement that they will prevent certain American journalists from working in China and Macao restricts transparency at an important time. The suggestion by the Chinese MFA that this measure may apply in Hong Kong is particularly concerning. The Sino-British Joint Declaration is clear. It sets out that immigration decisions are the sole responsibility of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and freedom of the press is guaranteed. It is imperative that these rights and freedoms are fully respected.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Occupational Pensions: Stoke-on-trent North

Jonathan Gullis:

[37768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many and what proportion of people in Stoke-on-Trent North constituency have (a) opted out after being auto-enrolled into a workplace pension and (b) saved more than the auto-enrolment minimum contribution.

Guy Opperman:

In the Stoke-on-Trent North constituency since 2012, approximately 6,000 eligible jobholders have been automatically enrolled and 1,280 employers have met their duties.

The Department does not hold data for individual constituencies in relation to opt outs or the number of individuals who have saved above the automatic enrolment minimum contribution level. We do know that overall, around 9% of automatically enrolled workers have chosen to opt out which is significantly below original estimates; and our latest evaluation report shows that, in April 2018 approximately 6.4 million eligible employees in the private sector were already meeting the April 2019 minimum contribution requirements.

Automatic Enrolment Evaluation Report 2019, available via the following weblink:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/867634/automatic-enrolment-evaluation-report-2019.pdf

The Pensions Regulator's data on Automatic enrolment declaration of compliance by constituency, available via the following weblink:

<https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/document-library/research-and-analysis/data-requests>

■ Pensions: Advisory Services

Neil Coyle: [37704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if the Money and Pensions Service will publish a report on the behavioural trials it has conducted on nudging savers towards pensions guidance.

Neil Coyle: [37705]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of implications for her policies of the results of the behavioural trials led by the Money and Pensions Service to encourage people to take guidance from Pension Wise before accessing their pension savings.

Guy Opperman:

The Money and Pension Service (MaPS) has undertaken trials to gather evidence on the best way to encourage more people to take Pension Wise guidance before accessing their pension, fulfilling the requirement set out in the Financial Guidance and Claims Act 2018. MaPS appointed an independent contractor, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), to design, run, and evaluate the nudge to pension guidance trials. MaPS, with BIT will publish an evaluation report of the trials in Summer 2020.

We will not pre-empt the results of the trials. We believe it is essential to use the evidence base that the trials on a stronger nudge to guidance will help to provide, to assess the impact of the trial results when they are available and conduct a consultation prior to implementing any regulations.

Neil Coyle: [37706]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Financial Conduct Authority on when it plans to (a) publish and (b) implement regulations on providing pension guidance on opting out of a workplace pension.

Guy Opperman:

The Secretary of State has not had discussions with the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to this matter.

■ Redundancy: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [33536]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to publish guidance for people that have been made redundant as a result of covid-19 on the JobCentre Plus website in order to promote social distancing by reducing attendance at job centres.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: All face to face appointments have been suspended so that jobcentres are closed to the public except for in exceptional circumstances to minimise risk to the public and staff. Gov.uk already contains information and guidance for people who are being made redundant. This information has been updated as appropriate to inform the public that face to face appointments are currently not required.

In addition, the pages that contain information about claiming benefits have been updated to say that customers do not need to attend interviews at the moment because of Covid-19, and that DWP will contact them should we require more information to enable us to process their claim.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus**Tommy Sheppard:**[\[30815\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support (a) full time students and (b) other people who are not entitled to social security but who are not able to work due to the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on their employment.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[34925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she is putting in place during the covid-19 outbreak to support students in part-time work who are unable to claim universal credit.

Vicky Foxcroft:[\[37828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government plans to extend eligibility for universal credit to full-time students in higher education during the covid-19 pandemic.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Students who do not ordinarily have entitlement to Universal Credit (UC) and who receive a maintenance loan or grant through the student finance system, will continue to be able to draw upon this financial support until the end of this academic year.

Those who do not receive student finance and who would ordinarily not have entitlement to UC, such as those undertaking a part-time course which would otherwise not be considered as compatible with the requirements for them to look for and be available for work, will have entitlement to UC. We have disapplied UC and both legacy and new style JSA work preparation, work search and availability requirements and related sanctions. This will initially be for a three-month period. After three months, consideration will be given as to whether a further extension is required.

■ Universal Credit

Chris Stephens: [R] [\[25694\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2020 to Question 10759, what the value of deductions to universal credit payments has been, by parliamentary constituency; and from how many claimants those deductions were taken, in each of the 12 months prior to August 2019.

Chris Stephens: [R] [\[25696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 5 February 2020 to Question 10759, how many claimants had deductions taken from their universal credit payments in each parliamentary constituency in August 2019.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 10 March 2020]: This Government is committed to providing a strong welfare safety-net for those who need it. Our deductions policy strikes a fair balance between a claimant's need to meet their financial obligations and their ability to ensure they can meet their day-to-day needs. Since October 2019, Universal Credit deductions are set at a maximum of 30% of a claimant's standard allowance, down from 40% previously.

The requested information surrounding deductions to Universal Credit payments by parliamentary constituency is shown in the attached table.

Attachments:

1. Additional data deductions table [PQs 25694, 25696- Chris Stephens- Additional Data Deductions incl. table.xlsx]

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Alison Thewliss: [\[34368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 24 March 2020 to Question 32160, what assessment she has made of the extent to which accessibility of IT and language support resources may prevent claimants applying for universal credit; and if she will make it her policy to allow agencies to support claimants for that benefit without the need for explicit consent.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: The Department is working collaboratively with stakeholders to better understand any issues with the current process of explicit consent and to explore options for improving this process. The system of explicit consent does not prohibit claimants from seeking assistance and consent can be given by a claimant, either through their online account or by telephone. This helps to ensure the security of Universal Credit, including deterring fraudsters who may seek to exploit some of our most vulnerable claimants.

Universal Credit 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, allowing our staff to concentrate on those people who require additional support. 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 are accepted.

Where needed, Foreign Language and British Sign Language (BSL) support will be offered to claimants who need extra support. The service for BSL can be delivered by Video Relay Service and for foreign language interpreting help is available in writing and by telephone.

Additionally, claimants can also access free telephony and web support through the Citizen's Advice Help to Claim service.

■ Universal Credit: Overseas Visitors

Fleur Anderson:

[\[33759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will extend universal credit eligibility to self-employed individuals residing in the UK on overseas visas.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Eligibility for Universal Credit depends on a person's immigration status in the UK. DWP operates a Habitual Residence Test (HRT) in order to assess whether individuals have legal right to reside for the purpose of accessing benefits and are factually habitually resident.

■ Universal Credit: Pensioners

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[37885\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many pensioners have been required to make a claim for universal credit rather than pension credit due to the fact that their partner did not reach pension age between September and December 2019.

Guy Opperman:

From September 2019 to December 2019, there were 2,200 new claims to Universal Credit where one member of the couple was above State Pension age and the other below.

This change in the way support is provided to couples where one partner is below State Pension age will ensure that the same incentives to work and save for retirement apply to the younger partner as apply to other people of the same age. Unlike Pension Credit, which in most cases allows couple to retain only £10 a week of earned income, Universal Credit provides clear incentives for people to find and progress in work.

The younger partner in a mixed-age couple claiming Universal Credit will get the personalised support provided by Work Coaches to help them find and progress in work where appropriate. If the younger partner is unable to work because of disability or caring requirements, additional amounts may be payable and conditionality requirements adjusted. No work-related requirements will be applied to the older partner.