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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

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham:

[\[39679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support the Government will provide to charities who are responding to the covid-19 outbreak but are unlikely to benefit from the support schemes announced to date.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government is aware that the coronavirus outbreak has caused a series of economic challenges to charities at a time where they are seeing an increased demand. The £750m funding package announced by the Chancellor is specifically aimed at supporting those who need to continue providing their services as part of the national coronavirus response.

£360 million will be directly allocated by government departments to charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people during the crisis.

A further £310m will be granted to charities through the National Lottery Communities Fund (NLCF) in England and £60m via the Devolved Administrations. We expect the application system for the National Lottery Community Fund grant pot in England to be operational shortly.

Unfortunately, we cannot match every pound of funding charities expected to receive this year. Many charities will have to assess whether they can access cross-cutting support measures announced by HM Treasury. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; access to a Business Interruption Loan, and schemes to defer VAT bills to the end of June, and pay no business rates for charity shops next year.

■ Entertainments and Exhibitions: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[38500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 lockdown on the events and exhibitions industry.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are aware that multiple aspects of the events and exhibition industries have been significantly impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. The Tourism Minister has engaged regularly with the sector over the last few months to continuously assess the situation, for example by convening a panel of senior leaders from across the industry and meeting with the Events Industry Board.

We have announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency. This includes employee support,

business rates relief and grants for eligible hospitality and leisure businesses, plus £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans. The Chancellor also announced a Bounce Back loan scheme to help small businesses access loans of up to £50,000, with a 100% government-backed guarantee for lenders.

The Government is committed to helping the events industry through this crisis and beyond. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support the sector during the recovery period.

■ Gambling: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris: [\[40682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that vulnerable gamblers are protected during the covid-19 outbreak.

Carolyn Harris: [\[40683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Gambling Industry to ensure that gamblers are protected during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

The government has made clear that we expect operators to be aware of the potential risk for increased gambling harm as people spend much more time at home and online. I have written and spoken to operators to remind them that they should be particularly responsible regarding player protections and advertising at this time, as have the Gambling Commission and the Advertising Standards Authority. We are continuing to monitor the situation carefully.

The government has welcomed the '10 commitments' launched by the Betting and Gaming Council to ensure safer gambling practices amongst its members. Following engagement and correspondence with the government and the Commission, BGC members have also pledged for the next six weeks to replace all slot, casino and bingo advertising on TV and radio with safer gambling adverts or to donate the slots to charity, and their online advertising will focus more on safer gambling measures.

The Gambling Commission has published Covid specific guidance to customers about staying safe when gambling online, including on how to limit ad exposure on social media and access support if needed. This all comes against a backdrop of continuing government and regulator action, including the introduction of tighter age and identity verification requirements, a ban on credit card gambling and the introduction of Gamstop integration as a condition of holding a licence.

We continue to hold operators to account if they fail to adequately protect consumers at this difficult time and will not hesitate to step in if that becomes necessary.

■ Social Enterprises and Voluntary Organisations: Wales

Stephen Doughty:

[\[40627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how the £750 million in funding for charities, voluntary sector organisations and the social enterprise sector is being disbursed; and what steps he is taking to ensure that funding is allocated equitably across the UK.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Of the £750 million, £360m will be allocated by central government to charities in England. This will include up to £200m support for hospices, with the rest going to organisations including St Johns' Ambulance and the Citizens Advice Bureau as well as charities supporting vulnerable children and victims of domestic abuse.

Government Departments have made bids identifying which charities will require their support. The bids are currently being assessed with departments, No 10 and the Treasury.

A further £370m will support smaller, local charities working with vulnerable people. In England, £310m of this will be provided through the National Lottery Community Fund. To ensure funding is distributed equitably, £60m of this amount will be allocated through the Barnett formula so the devolved administrations are funded to provide similar support in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Finally, the remainder of the amount is Government match funding of the money raised during the BBC's Big Night in. The first £20m of this will go to the National Emergencies Trust and the remainder will go through the BBC charities who will be administering this funding.

■ Third Sector: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[38454\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether (a) officials in his Department and (b) representatives of the Charity Commission have had discussions with (i) funding organisations and (ii) institutional donors regarding the use of restricted project funds by (A) charities and (B) civil society organisations to cover core running costs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

DCMS and the Charity Commission are proactively engaging across the sector, to maintain a complete picture of the impact of coronavirus, and working to identify the additional support charities require through this time of financial instability. As such, the Commission is publishing regular updates to its COVID-19 guidance for the charity sector on its website.

As the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, the Charity Commission's approach to regulation during this period is to be as flexible and pragmatic as possible, while helping trustees to be aware of and think about the wider or longer impact of their decisions on their charity.

This guidance provides advice to charities on the use of reserves and restricted funds: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector#using-reserves-and-restricted-funds>.

EDUCATION

■ Academic Year and Free School Meals

Mrs Sharon Hodgson: [\[38875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to announce the allocation of funding for the Holiday Activities and Food Scheme 2020.

Vicky Ford:

On 16 March we wrote to all bidders to let them know whether or not they were successful in their applications for funding and offered feedback to unsuccessful bidders. We are now in the process of negotiating grant agreements with the successful bidders and we will announce the successful bids publicly in due course.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Tom Hunt: [\[38998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to monitor the welfare of vulnerable children who are not attending school during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

As both my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

Our latest guidance on supporting vulnerable children is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>.

We are committed to ensuring the safety and protection of vulnerable children and young people, particularly during the current period. Schools and other educational settings remain open for these children and local authorities are maintaining contact with them. Our guidance explains how education providers can support vulnerable children, including to monitor and encourage attendance.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has written to all educational establishments and Directors of Children's Services in England to encourage attendance for these children. He also stressed the need for schools, local authorities and social workers to maintain contact and support services throughout this period. Officials in the department and re-deployed Ofsted Inspection teams are working with local authorities directly to ensure systems and processes for maintaining contact with vulnerable children are robust in every local authority in England, and to share

good practice. We have asked local authorities and educational settings to ensure every vulnerable child knows that their setting is there to support them.

■ Schools: Food

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[38876]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the National School Food Voucher Scheme; and what comparative assessment he has made between the effectiveness of that scheme and other initiatives schools are using.

Vicky Ford:

During this period, we are asking schools to support pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food suppliers wherever possible. We recognise that providing meals and food parcels is not a practicable option for all schools. That is why on 31 March we launched a national voucher scheme, with costs covered by the Department for Education (DfE).

The DfE assessed several options prior to launch. Our priority has been ensuring that the families most in need are continuing to receive support.

Schools providing meals or vouchers themselves can be reimbursed for any additional costs, with further details available in the published guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools>.

We are monitoring the use of the scheme on a daily basis. Voucher codes are being processed and many thousands of families are already redeeming them.

As of Wednesday 29 April, Edenred reported that over £35 million worth of voucher codes have been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[38455]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) his Department and (b) the Student Loans Company plan to provide support to (i) current and (ii) prospective students whose parents have lost their jobs as a result of the covid-19 outbreak by (A) facilitating access to full maintenance loans and (B) reinstating maintenance grants.

Michelle Donelan:

Many higher education providers will have hardship funds to support students in times of need, including emergencies. The expectation is that where any student requires additional support, providers will support them through their own hardship funds. Contact details are available on university websites.

In addition, students will continue to receive payments of maintenance loans for the remainder of the current academic year, 2019/20. Students who need to undertake

additional weeks of study on their course in the current academic year may also qualify for additional long courses loan to help with their living costs.

Parents who have lost their jobs and whose income has dropped by 15% or more in the current financial year will be able to apply to Student Finance England to have their children's living costs support reassessed for the 2020/21 academic year from 1 August 2020 onwards. This will increase the amount of support students and prospective students are entitled to in 2020/21.

Information for parents on how to apply for a current year assessment is available on the Student Finance England website at:

<https://media.slc.co.uk/sfe/currentyearincome/index.html>.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[38513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that university students who do not have access to (a) the internet and (b) a computer at home are able to complete their studies.

Rachel Hopkins:

[38989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support universities to prevent digital poverty amongst students during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

As my right hon. Friends, the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer have both made clear, the government will do whatever it takes to support people affected by COVID-19.

Higher education (HE) providers take their responsibilities seriously and are best placed to identify the needs of their student body as well as how to develop the services needed to support it. When making changes to the delivery of their courses, HE providers need to consider how they support all students, particularly the most vulnerable, to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. Where students do not have access to the Internet, a computer at home, or cannot afford to purchase it, the expectation is that HE providers will provide support through their own hardship funds

We have worked closely with the Office for Students to enable providers to draw upon existing funding to increase hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. As a result, providers will be able to use the funding, worth around £23 million per month for April and May, towards student hardship funds, including the purchase of IT equipment, and mental health support, as well as to support providers' access and participation plans

Universities: Coronavirus**Rachel Hopkins:**[\[38988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support UK universities affected by reduced international recruitment as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

We understand that the COVID-19 outbreak and a possible reduction in the number of international students poses significant financial challenges to the sector and are extremely grateful for the work that universities are doing in response.

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has announced an unprecedented package of support. This support includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and a range of business loan schemes to help pay wages, keep staff employed and support businesses whose viability is threatened by the outbreak. We recently confirmed universities' eligibility for these schemes.

We are also working closely with the sector, the Office for Students and across the government to understand the financial risks that providers are facing and to stabilise the admissions system and help providers to access the support on offer.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Agriculture: Coronavirus****Dr Dan Poulter:**[\[38463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the agricultural industry.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is aware that COVID-19 represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy. We are working closely alongside the agricultural industry to ensure that we understand and manage the impacts to the industry.

Defra's Food Chain Emergency Liaison Group is meeting regularly to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the food and farming sectors across the UK, and what actions are needed to support the sectors. This group includes the NFU, other industry stakeholders and the devolved administrations.

The UK Agricultural Market Monitoring Group is meeting weekly, to monitor UK agricultural markets and provide forewarning of any atypical market movements. This allows Defra and the devolved administrations to share the latest stakeholder information to assess the effects of COVID-19 on the agricultural industry, as well as prepare the evidence base for a possible range of interventions needed in specific markets, or geographical regions.

Officials are having regular meetings with the different agricultural sectors to understand the specific issues affecting each sector. We have also provided all agricultural industry stakeholders with a central point of contact to send details of any emerging impacts as and when they arise.

The Secretary of State remains in regular contact with representatives of the agricultural industry and will continue to engage with them on the effect of COVID-19. We will continue to monitor the situation and to work closely with the farming sector to respond to emerging issues as they arise.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[38464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the agricultural supply chain.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is aware that COVID-19 represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy. We are working closely with stakeholders in the agricultural supply chain to ensure that we understand and manage the impacts on the industry.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, Defra has been having frequent meetings with the Agri-Supply Coalition stakeholder group, which is meeting weekly. This group includes stakeholders from across the agricultural supporting industries and has been discussing the effect of COVID-19 on the agricultural supply chain. We have also provided these stakeholders with a central point of contact to send details of any emerging impacts as and when they arise.

Officials are having regular meetings across the different agricultural sectors to understand the specific issues affecting each sector. We remain in regular contact with representatives of the agricultural supply chain and will continue to engage with them on the effect of COVID-19. We will continue to monitor the situation and to work closely with the agricultural supply chain to respond to emerging issues as they arise.

■ **Agriculture: Seasonal Workers**

Tom Hunt:

[\[38951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that roles in seasonal agricultural work are advertised to people in the UK to limit the need to import foreign workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The ongoing impacts of the Coronavirus outbreak have meant that there will be a shortfall in the numbers of workers who usually travel to the UK from Europe to work during the harvest season, with the demand for workers peaking from late May through the summer.

Farming leaders have already kick-started a recruitment drive for work on farms, with thousands of British people already expressing an interest in picking up seasonal agricultural work over the coming weeks and months. With many British workers

furloughed from their jobs, and students having to put their summer plans on hold, the Government is supporting industry efforts to help farmers bring in this year's harvest, working to build on these numbers.

The majority of roles for the early part of the harvest season have already been filled. We are closely monitoring the situation and we will shortly be launching a public-facing campaign to highlight the roles available from late May onwards and to encourage people to apply. The Government has confirmed that those who have been furloughed from their jobs due to coronavirus, and who are contractually allowed to work for another employer, can take on this seasonal work.

A new Government-industry digital hub for seasonal work information and job opportunities has been launched to provide guidance on getting into farm work and links to the available jobs and recruiters. The website can be found at pickforbritain.org.uk and will be updated regularly over the coming weeks to help match jobs to workers as the demand grows.

■ Biodiversity: Zoonoses

Caroline Lucas:

[\[38461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the destruction of biodiversity and habitats on levels of emerging zoonotic diseases.

Rebecca Pow:

The Department has not yet made a full assessment of the link between the destruction of biodiversity and habitats on levels of emerging zoonoses. The recent 2019 IPBES Global Assessment Report on biodiversity and ecosystem services highlights this as a factor potentially exacerbating the emergence of infectious diseases in wildlife, domestic animals and people. However, the evidence base is incomplete and the links are complex. We are urgently reviewing this evidence, as well as working to identify other evidence, to enable us to take an informed view as soon as possible.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[38540\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to help ensure a continuing supply of food and essential supplies to vulnerable people in local communities.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has been working to support those who would otherwise struggle to get sufficient, healthy food due to COVID-19. Our analysis identified three key groups: 1) people who have money but are struggling to access food – principally because of the lockdown; 2) people who are struggling to afford food due to COVID-19; and 3) people who are both struggling to afford and access 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 have also been 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 have been working with retailers to ensure that these individuals are prioritised for supermarket delivery and click and collect slots, and we are helping connect those in need with local volunteers to deliver food from shops and with other food businesses offering food delivery.

We have also been working closely with food banks and food aid charities, to help ensure that those who are financially vulnerable have access to essential supplies.

■ **Food Supply: Zoonoses**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[38462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the effect of the food production system (a) in the UK and (b) globally on levels of emerging zoonotic diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The Food Standards Agency and Defra work together to ensure the safety of the food chain both within the UK and through global trade. We regularly assess any changes in food production methods or trade patterns for increased risk from emerging diseases.

■ **Milk: Coronavirus**

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[37850\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he plans to take to stabilise the price of milk during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working closely with the dairy industry to manage the impact of Covid-19. Demand for milk and some dairy products has increased in supermarkets and the vast majority of Britain's dairy farmers continue to supply their contracts at the usual price. However, between 5 and 10 per cent of total milk production goes to the service trade, and these farmers have been impacted by the significantly reduced demand.

In order to support affected farmers, we have eased some elements of competition law to make it easier for processors to come together to maximise production and processing and storage efficiency until shops, restaurants and pubs are able to open again. This SI will be laid shortly and will apply retrospectively from the 1 April 2020. We have asked the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and Dairy UK to

work with farmers and processors to help industry take advantage of these easements.

Public intervention for skimmed milk powder and butter also continues to be available. Industry can sell skimmed milk powder and butter into public intervention when the price they would receive on the open market falls below the intervention price. This provides a floor price for dairy products.

Furthermore, the dairy industry can access various Government backed loan schemes. The Covid-19 Business Interruption Loans scheme is available to farmers, milk buyers and milk processors. In addition, the new Bounce Back Loan scheme, which will apply to businesses operating in agriculture, will ensure that the smallest businesses can access up to £50,000 loans. The government will provide lenders of this latter scheme with a 100% guarantee on each loan, to provide them with the confidence they need to support the smallest businesses in the country. We will also cover the first 12 months of interest payments and fees charged to the business by the lender.

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

■ **Plastics: Marine Environment**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[38900]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the (a) volume and (b) composition of plastic waste in UK territorial waters.

Rebecca Pow:

Marine plastic litter can move with ocean currents, which makes it difficult to calculate how much is situated in UK territorial waters at any given point in time.

Seafloor litter data is collected for the North Sea, English Channel, Celtic Sea and Irish Sea and this area includes, but is not limited to, UK territorial waters. Over 25 years (1992-2017) on average 324 litter items were recorded per km² of seafloor. Between 2016 and 2018 more than 81% of the litter items recorded were plastic. Common items recorded were bags, plastic sheets and fishing debris.

We collaborate closely with neighbouring countries through the OSPAR Convention to reduce the flow of waste into the North-east Atlantic. We are delivering on our commitments in the OSPAR Marine Litter Regional Action Plan, which contains 55 collective and national actions to address both land- and sea-based sources of marine litter.

The Resources and Waste Strategy for England, published in December 2018, sets out our plans to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste, working towards our 25 Year Environment Plan target to reduce all types of marine plastic pollution.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE**■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**

John Lamont: [\[38519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many emergency repatriation loans have been paid; and what the total value is of those loans.

Nigel Adams:

British nationals and UK residents who are overseas and wish to return to the UK, but cannot afford travel costs and have exhausted all other options for getting funds to return home, may apply for an emergency loan from the government as a last resort. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) usually issues around 250 emergency repatriation loans per year. We estimate that over 750 loans have been issued this year with an approximate total value of over £100,000. Some loans are still being processed. Since 7 April, the FCO has been working with Corporate Travel Management (CTM), which is authorised to administer such loans on behalf of the FCO, to extend the FCO's capacity to consider loan requests from British nationals.

The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that British travellers around the globe are able to return home.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi: [\[38622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many British residents, who do not hold British passports, have registered for charter flights to return to the UK.

Nigel Adams:

The FCO does not have a central registration system for charter flights. Eligible British nationals and non-British nationals with indefinite leave to remain (ILR) are asked to register for flights with Corporate Travel Management (CTM) when charters have been announced for a country.

■ Cameroon: Armed Conflict

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[40695\]](#)

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

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[40696\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Cameroonian counterpart on a peaceful solution to the conflict in that country.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[40697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support his Department is offering to people from Cameroon who have been displaced by the ongoing conflict in that country.

James Duddridge:

The British Government remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the North-West and South-West (Anglophone) regions of Cameroon. These regions suffer from high levels of violence, which have driven hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. We have consistently called for restraint, an end to the violence, and for investigations into all reports of human rights violations. On 23 April, I publicly welcomed publication of the findings of the investigation into the appalling violence in Ngarbuh and reiterated our call for the Cameroonian authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice, ensure respect for human rights and redouble their efforts to resolve the conflict.

The UK continues to call for inclusive dialogue, and we welcomed the passing of legislation concerning bilingualism and special status for the North-West and South-West regions in December 2019. Commitments and legislation now need to be implemented in a timely manner to support genuine decentralisation of power and to tackle the root causes of the conflict. The British High Commissioner to Cameroon regularly engages in high-level discussions with the Government of Cameroon on the Anglophone crisis, including the mediation process led by the Swiss Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. We continue to shine a spotlight on the crisis and raise our concerns in multinational fora and with international partners. At the UN Security Council on 12 February, the UK highlighted the significant impact of the crisis on children. At the UN Human Rights Council on 27 February, the UK raised concerns about the protection of civilians in Cameroon.

The UK is committed to supporting civilians affected by the ongoing crisis in the North-West and South-West regions and we have made a £2 million contribution to the UN response, supporting 34,000 people with essential supplies, such as mosquito nets, hygiene kits and nutrition support. We continue to call for unhindered humanitarian access to the affected population. The UK stands ready to support all credible peacebuilding initiatives and believes that the regional and wider international community has an integral role to play, including in responding to the growing humanitarian need.

■ China: Foreign Nationals**Paul Bristow:****[38638]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations officials in his Department have made to their Chinese counterparts about the treatment of Africans in (a) Guangdong province and (b) the rest of that country.

Nigel Adams:

The British Ambassador raised incidents of xenophobia and racism in China with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 17 April, and officials have also raised the issue with the Chinese Embassy in London. The British Government has updated travel advice to highlight potential discrimination against foreigners in China, particularly black and ethnic minority groups.

■ India and Pakistan: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[38616]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of British residents in (a) India and (b) Pakistan who are unable to return to the UK due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Adams:

Both India and Pakistan are a priority for the UK Government.

We have been working closely with the Government of Pakistan and airlines to ensure British Nationals can return home from Pakistan. Our High Commission in Islamabad has worked closely with the Government of Pakistan and Pakistan International Airlines to ensure continued commercial flights from Pakistan to the UK. The UK Government has announced two rounds of special charter flights from Pakistan to bring home British travellers and their direct dependents, operated by Qatar Airways. The first round of flights were between 21 and 27 April, including seven from Islamabad and three from Lahore, to London Heathrow and Manchester. Following high demand for these flights, there will be a second round of nine direct charter flights from 30 April, including one from Karachi.

Repatriations from India is one of our largest Covid-19 repatriation operations, based on the number of Britons there and the absence of commercial options. The scale of the challenge is immense. As all of India is under lockdown, we continue to engage with state authorities to enable British Nationals to reach airports.

In the three weeks up to 28 April, we have chartered 40 flights from 11 Indian cities, including Delhi, Goa, Mumbai and others in Punjab, Gujarat and Bengal. Over 10,000 people have returned home on UK charter flights and we continue to work day and night to return more on daily flights from across India. An additional 12 flights are due to run between 29 April and 4 May, servicing those locations with the highest numbers of BN remaining in India.

■ Karachi: Coronavirus**Gareth Thomas:****[38415]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he plans to schedule repatriation flights from Karachi in Pakistan to enable UK residents physically unable to undertake the 752-mile journey to Lahore or the 877-mile journey to Islamabad from Karachi to return home to the UK; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to hold discussions with the Government of Pakistan to arrange further charter flights. On 26 April we announced that the first UK charter flight from Karachi will depart on 30 April. We have advised British nationals in Karachi looking to return to the UK to register interest, which can be found in the 'Return to the UK' page of our Pakistan travel advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/pakistan/return-to-the-uk>.

■ Overseas Companies: Israeli Settlements

Kate Osamor: [\[38939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what action he plans to take in relation to JCB, Opodo and Greenkote in the light of the publication of the UN Human Rights Council's database of companies directly doing business with Israeli settlements.

Kate Osamor: [\[38940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the report by the UN Human Rights Office published on 12 February 2020 on companies involved in certain activities relating to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, what discussions he has had with (a) JCB, (b) Opodo and (c) Greenkote.

James Cleverly:

The UK, along with a number of other European countries, opposed the creation of the UN Human Rights Office's database. Human rights obligations are directed at states, and not individuals or businesses. Ultimately it is the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The British Government neither encourages nor offers support to such activity.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ African Coalition for Epidemic Research, Response and Training: Overseas Aid

Stephen Doughty: [\[38925\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support his Department is providing to the African Coalition for Epidemic Research Response (ALERRT) initiative.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: The African Coalition for Epidemic Research Response has received United Kingdom's Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding through the Department's ODA-funded global health research portfolio.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[38564\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the care sector has been instructed to follow the version 1 Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home guidance document published on 2 April 2020, since 6 April 2020 when that guidance was withdrawn; and what guidance the care sector has been instructed to follow since 6 April 2020.

Helen Whately:

The Government, NHS England, Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission co-published updated guidance for the care sector on 2 April 2020. 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' is the

current guidance for the care sector and is live on gov.uk. This guidance sets out infection control and cohorting advice to care homes, which providers should follow to ensure that they have the confidence to receive and support residents.

The 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' guidance replaced previous guidance on residential care provision originally published on 13 March 2020. The residential care provision guidance was withdrawn on 6 April 2020, as the new care home guidance contains comprehensive information for care homes on supporting residents and staff during COVID-19.

Following publication of the Adult Social Care Action Plan on 15 April 2020, we are reviewing 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' to update it in line with the plan. We have included a placeholder on the gov.uk page to notify stakeholders that the guidance is being updated. This also includes a summary of relevant sections in the action plan for the most up-to-date guidance.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[38571\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home guidance document, version 1, published on 2 April 2020, will be updated.

Helen Whately:

Following publication of the Adult Social Care action plan on 15 April 2020, we are reviewing the 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' guidance which was published on 2 April 2020. We have included a placeholder on the gov.uk page so that stakeholders are notified that the guidance is being updated. This also includes a summary of relevant sections in the action plan for the most up-to-date guidance.

We are continuing to engage with stakeholders to enable them to feed into the updates to ensure that we answer the majority of their concerns. We aim to publish the updated admissions to care homes guidance shortly.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[38948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons the guidance document Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home, version 1, published 2 April 2020 was withdrawn on 6 April 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: The Government, NHS England, Public Health England and the Care Quality Commission co-published updated guidance for the care sector on 2 April 2020. 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' is the current guidance for the care sector and is live on gov.uk. This guidance sets out infection control and cohorting advice to care homes, which providers should follow to ensure that they have the confidence to receive and support residents.

The 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' guidance replaced previous guidance on residential care provision originally published on 13 March 2020. The residential care provision guidance was withdrawn on 6 April 2020, as the new care home guidance contains comprehensive information for care homes on supporting residents and staff during COVID-19.

■ Care Homes: Out-patients

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[33735\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources he plans to provide to care homes that receiving back residents from hospital.

Helen Whately:

The Government's priority is to free up space and resource in hospitals to care for patients affected by COVID-19, and ensure staff have capacity to treat people in need of urgent care.

The COVID-19 Social Care Action Plan was published on 15 April, to support the adult social care sector in England throughout the coronavirus outbreak, including ramping up testing, overhauling the way personal protective equipment is being delivered to care homes and helping to minimise the spread of the virus to keep people safe.

We have made £1.3 billion available to National Health Service commissioners to enhance the discharge process. It will cover the follow-on care costs for adults in social care. NHS Discharge Service Requirements were published on 19 March.

In March we provided £1.6 billion to local authorities to help their communities through the crisis. On 18 April we announced that councils will receive another £1.6 billion, taking the total for local authorities to over £3.2 billion.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Treatments

Barbara Keeley:

[\[39523\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government is supporting clinical trials of convalescent plasma therapy in treating covid-19; and what evidence he has received on the effectiveness of those treatments.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: On 25 April, the Department announced that the clinical trial REMAP-CAP has been given approval to determine if plasma donated by patients who have recovered from COVID-19 can help those with the virus. NHS Blood and Transplant has started to collect convalescent plasma to supply to REMAP-CAP, with the first transfusion expected this week.

In parallel with the trial, NHS Blood and Transplant is scaling up a national programme for collecting plasma so the treatment can be widely rolled out if it is shown to be effective. The collection of plasma will be ramped up by mid-May to

deliver up to 10,000 units of plasma to the National Health Service every week, enough to treat 5,000 COVID-19 patients per week.

Convalescent plasma has been used as an effective treatment for emerging infections in the past, and this step forward underpins the Department's science-backed approach to fighting this virus.

■ **Coronavirus: Nurses**

Alexander Stafford: [\[37947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support independent private nurses who are on the Nursing and Midwifery Council register and who intend to return to the NHS to tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS Professionals launched the COVID-19 Rapid Response service to enable healthcare workers, including registered nurses who are not currently working in the National Health Service, to move quickly and safely to the frontline to help to tackle the COVID-19 outbreak.

Nurses returning to the NHS will be offered induction, education and training suited to the role.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council, the independent regulator of nurses and midwives in the United Kingdom, and nursing associates in England, has issued statements on the regulatory framework and professional standards for registrants joining the NHS during the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

John Redwood: [\[38403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the error rate is for the current tests for covid-19.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Public Health England's RdRp assay which is the test that has been used to detect the presence of SARS-CoV-2 as part of pillar 1 of the Government's testing strategy has a very high specificity over 95%.

The sensitivity of the test when it is used in the field is determined by a number of factors including when a person is sampled after their illness has started, where the sample is taken from, the device used to swab and the time taken for the sample to get to the laboratory.

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[38530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the cost to the public purse was of purchasing covid-19 antibody tests.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The results from the first evaluation of antibody tests have shown that, of the tests the Government has looked at so far, none have proven accurate enough to be rolled out for public use. The Government is therefore in the very early stages of negotiation with suppliers who received prepayment, in order to cancel orders. To date, the Government has cancelled orders, with no liability to the Government, totalling £70 million in value. Negotiations are ongoing with other suppliers.

Justin Madders:[\[38610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of when an antibody test for covid-19 will become available; and what plans he has for the roll-out of that test.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Confidence in antibody test needs to be established before being rolled out as part of a national programme of testing. The COVID Scientific Advisory Panel, led by Professor Sir John Bell has established a rapid evaluation process to establish the reliability of antibody tests. The results from the first evaluation of commercial antibody tests have shown that, of the tests the Government has looked at so far, none have proven accurate enough to be rolled out for public use.

Health Professions: Disease Control**Rosie Cooper:**[\[39507\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 21 April 2020 to Question 34318, how many (a) consultants in communicable disease control and (b) community infection control nurses work in the NHS in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: The Department does not hold the information requested.

Hospitals: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:**[\[39528\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care how many student nurses are being used to work on wards caring for patients with covid-19; to what extent hours worked on those wards by student nurses will count towards their required placement hours; and if those student nurses are being recompensed for hours worked beyond their placement requirements.

Helen Whately:

As of 23 April 2020, 21,287 second and third year student nurses opted to work in the National Health Service during the COVID-19 emergency. These students are starting to be deployed and Health Education England will start to report on the number from the beginning of May 2020.

The hours that students who opt to work on the wards during the emergency period will count towards the required number of placements hours, these students will receive a salary and have automatic NHS pension entitlement at the appropriate band.

Alongside receiving a salary these students will continue to receive their student maintenance loan and NHS Learning Support Fund payments.

■ Kidneys: Donors

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[34350\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of kidney organ donors that develop health problems after donating a kidney.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Data on the number of kidney donors that develop health problems after donating a kidney is not held centrally.

However, evidence suggests that living kidney donation is safe and life-time risks are low provided that the living donor is carefully assessed in the context of his/her own individual health risks. All potential kidney donors undergo a comprehensive evaluation to ensure their suitability and to minimise the risk of donation.

■ NHS: Conditions of Employment

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[38922\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care what assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing death-in-service benefit to all NHS workers.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Pension Scheme provides death in service cover of two times annual pay to active members who are yet to retire, to support a member's partner and dependents, should they die before claiming their retirement benefits. Membership of the pension scheme is voluntary and is available to all eligible staff in the National Health Service. Around 90% of NHS staff are active scheme members.

Staff who have recently retired from the NHS will have already received a tax-free lump sum from the NHS Pension Scheme and are therefore entitled to less generous death in service benefits should they re-join the scheme after retirement, but their family will receive additional death benefit if they die within five years of their retirement date, as well as partner and dependent pensions.

The Department is considering whether to offer further support for the families of all staff providing frontline NHS services, including those who are not in the NHS Pension Scheme.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Dan Jarvis: [\[37674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS staff have died as a result of contracting covid-19.

Dan Jarvis: [\[37675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) investigate the cause of death and (b) prevent any further deaths of NHS staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

In England, as of 27 April, 85 National Health Service healthcare worker deaths have been reported. This is an increase of three reported deaths. As of 28 April, we are aware of 23 social care workers who have died in the United Kingdom, and we are working with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the care sector to build a more comprehensive picture.

The Department is considering how best it can investigate the deaths of staff in NHS settings, and to capture and disseminate the learning from these investigations.

■ NHS: Crimes of Violence

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[38465\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of assaults on NHS staff in England since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Data is not collected centrally on assaults on National Health Service staff in England. The 2019 NHS Staff Survey showed 15% of NHS staff experienced physical violence from members of the public and patients in the past year.

Any assault, physical or verbal, against NHS staff is unacceptable and should be reported and dealt with through the proper processes. The NHS has recently joined forces with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service in a Joint Agreement on Offences Against Emergency Workers. This provides a framework to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of cases where staff are the victim of a crime and sets out the standards victims of these crimes can expect.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus

Barbara Keeley: [\[25639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support social care providers in managing the effect of covid-19 on people who need social care; and if he will make a statement.

Barbara Keeley: [25640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to manage the potential effect of the spread of covid-19 on the social care workforce; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [25646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support social care providers in managing the effect of covid-19 on people who need care; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas: [25647]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to manage the potential effect of covid-19 on the social care workforce; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 March 2020]: On 13 March 2020 [updated on 6 April 2020], the government published guidance for social or community care and residential settings which was cascaded across the United Kingdom by Public Health England and devolved authorities which can be found at the following link:

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

The guidance is tailored for providers of residential care, supported living and home care, in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak. The guidance sets out:

- How to maintain delivery of care in the event of an outbreak or widespread transmission of COVID-19; and
- What to do if care workers or individuals being cared for have symptoms of COVID-19.

On 15 April 2020 the government published 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult social care action plan' which can be read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-social-care-action-plan>

The government also announced £2.9 billion funding to strengthen care for the vulnerable. This funding is part of the government's commitment to ensure the National Health Service, social care system and other public services, have all the resources they need during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Barbara Keeley: [39524]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which local authorities have informed his Department that they have taken the decision to operate the Care Act easements provided for under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: As of 28 April, six local authorities have notified the Department that they have taken the decision to operate under the Care Act easements. These are Sunderland City Council, Warwickshire County Council, Staffordshire County Council, Birmingham City Council, Solihull Council and Derbyshire County Council. Middlesbrough also notified the Department of a decision to operate under the Care Act easements but has since notified the Department that they have resumed duties under the Care Act 2014.

■ **Social Services: Disability****Marsha De Cordova:****[29274]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what preparations are in place to ensure access to social care for disabled people during the delay phase of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 March 2020]: The Government have published a number of guidelines covering all sectors within social care. New Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 or those with special needs was published on 24 March. Additional guidance has been published for those people who are classed as essential workers of which social care falls under to ensure access is ongoing.

On 1 April the government published 'Care Act easements: guidance for local authorities' which sets out how local authorities can use the new Care Act easements, created under the Coronavirus Act 2020, to ensure the best possible care for people in our society during this exceptional period.

More information can be found at the following links:

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

<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>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-changes-to-the-care-act-2014/care-act-easements-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Marsha De Cordova:**[39764]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made on the effect of the suspension of the Care Act 2014 in the Coronavirus Act 2020 on deaf and disabled people's access to social care.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: The relevant Public Sector Equality Duty process was undertaken during the development of the Coronavirus Act 2020 and we engaged with groups representing service users prior to the passage of the Bill. The Department has issued guidance setting out steps local authorities should take

before deploying the powers in the Act, including upholding the principles of safeguarding, and is working closely with social care and local government partners to monitor the use of Care Act easements. Access to services and how disabled people do so are determined by individual local authorities, who are responsible for complying with the Equality Act.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum: Housing

Alison Thewliss: [\[12326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Home Affairs Committee's Twelfth Special Report of Session 2017-19, Asylum accommodation: replacing COMPASS: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2017-19, HC 2016, what work her Department has undertaken with (a) the Home Office and (b) relevant local authorities in pursuit of that Government's response that it had agreed a combined Local authority/Home office review into the costs, pressures and social impact of asylum dispersal in the U.K.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has established the Home Office/Local Government Chief Executive group (HOLGCEX) to enable partnership working with Local Government.

The Memorandum of Understanding agreed within this group includes reference to a review of funding and equitable dispersal.

■ Home Office: Written Questions

Alison Thewliss: [\[23561\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to respond to Questions 1762 and 1763 on Immigration: EU Nationals tabled on 9 January 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The response was given to UIN 1762 and 1763 on the 1st May 2020.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals

Alison Thewliss: [\[1762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) woman and (b) men have been granted settled status under the EU Settled Status Scheme.

Alison Thewliss: [\[1763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) women and (b) men have been granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

Kevin Foster:

It is not a mandatory requirement for an EU Settlement Scheme applicant to disclose their gender in their application.

The latest edition of the monthly statistical series on the operation of the EU Settlement Scheme was published on 16 April 2020, providing high-level figures on applications received and outcomes made up to 31 March 2020. This can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics-march-2020>

The EU Settlement Scheme Quarterly Statistics provide detailed statistics on applications made to the EUSS. We are continuously considering the content of the future releases and will be taking into account views and feedback from statistics users.

■ Visas: Coronavirus

Alison Thewliss: [\[32208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the requirement in certain categories of visa to leave the UK before being allowed to apply will be suspended during the period of the Coronavirus outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

We continue to monitor the Covid-19 virus situation closely and will make appropriate and pragmatic adjustments to requirements and processes where necessary.

Given the restrictions on travel due to the current pandemic a number of restrictions on what is termed in country route switching have been relaxed.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Bond

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[39685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, when she last met with Stephanie Draper, the chief executive of Bond, the UK network for organisations working in international development.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State has not yet met with Stephanie Draper, although she has corresponded with her twice since her appointment in February of this year. Baroness Sugg, who is the delegated lead for engagement with civil society, has had virtual meetings with Stephanie Draper several times recently, including on a one to one basis. The last time they met was today, as part of a Steering Group on civil society sector response on COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[39728\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to guarantee that a potential vaccine to tackle covid-19 is affordable and accessible to all countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is at the forefront of efforts to develop a COVID-19 vaccine. Our goal is to end the pandemic, save lives and start global economic recovery. At the G20 last month, the Prime Minister called on all governments to work together to develop a vaccine as quickly as possible and make it globally available.

The UK has committed over £313 million into innovative research and development of vaccines, rapid diagnostics and promising therapeutics for COVID-19. We are funding key international organisations such as Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance, to ensure safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines can be rolled out at scale to ensure equitable access.

The UK welcomes the Action for COVID-19 Tools (ACT)-Accelerator launched at WHO last week, a global collaboration to accelerate global access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics. The First Secretary of State participated in this launch.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[39722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment her Department has made of how lessons from the Ebola epidemic can be used to help support countries during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

Responding to COVID-19 and Ebola present markedly different challenges. However, there are lessons from tackling Ebola that have relevance to other infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19. In particular, investment in research and development – especially in vaccines – has been vital in limiting the current Ebola epidemic. To tackle COVID-19, the UK has committed over £313 million into innovative research and development of vaccines, rapid diagnostics and promising therapeutics for coronavirus.

Other relevant lessons from combatting Ebola include the importance of:

- (i) effective community engagement to promote local participation in a response
- (ii) delivering a multi-sectoral response to address people's broad needs
- (iii) ensuring strong coordination across domestic, international and UN partners, and an empowered UN leadership from the onset.

We continue to apply what we have learned as we work to help end the pandemic and mitigate the health, humanitarian and economic impacts on the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[39724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to add flexibility to existing grants to NGOs to enable them to support countries affected by covid-19 in the Global South.

Wendy Morton:

DFID is engaging with supply partners to address the challenges posed to them and DFID-funded projects by COVID-19. We will work collaboratively with supply partners to find pragmatic solutions to support both our partners and continuation of our programmes where appropriate.

DFID is offering support to suppliers and partners where this is appropriate, in line with the UK government position and will apply the provisions of the Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Note and associated guidance for grants, which allows for relief on services and goods provided in the UK, to DFID aid programmes as a last resort and on a case-by-case basis for DFID contracts and grants.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[39732\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with women's rights organisations based in the global south to help to inform her Department's response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

We know that women and girls will be particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely to increase domestic violence, exacerbate the burden of care on women, and increase maternal mortality.

Southern women's rights organisations (WROs) will be among the first responders on the front line and most likely to reach vulnerable women and girls. They are best placed to ensure the response is informed by the voices and needs of women.

DFID has therefore engaged directly with key women's funds and women's rights organisations to understand the impact on the ground and ensured their participation in wider civil society consultations. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence has shared conclusions of its rapid assessment from 122 women's rights organisations.

This evidence is informing our response. This includes providing £10 million of UK aid to the United Nations Population Fund and £20 million to the UN Children's Fund to scale up protection and support services for women and girls. We launched a call for proposals under our Rapid Response Facility which required all projects to mainstream gender, protection and safeguarding.

Consultation will continue as the situation evolves and as we move into recovery and response.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services**Sarah Champion:**[\[39671\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that charges for healthcare are not a barrier to the treatment of covid-19 in developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has, so far, pledged £744 million of UK aid to help end the COVID-19 pandemic, in support of the coordinated international response through the international financing institutions, multilaterals and global health initiatives, and DFID programmes. This is to meet the urgent health, humanitarian and economic needs of vulnerable people in developing countries and to support developing new vaccines, diagnostics and treatments.

The UK continues to champion universal health coverage (UHC) as vital to ensuring access to quality essential services for all and helping to protect everyone from infectious diseases, including COVID-19. UHC includes ensuring that no one is impoverished through paying for health services and reducing financial barriers for essential services, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable.

Sarah Champion:[\[39672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that critical services to prevent (a) maternal, (b) newborn and (c) child deaths in developing countries are maintained during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK government's commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn babies and children by 2030 is more essential now than ever given the COVID-19 outbreak. DFID is stepping up efforts to ensure sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health services continue to be prioritised in our response to the pandemic, to stop mothers and babies dying unnecessarily.

We are funding and working with agencies such as the World Health Organisation, UN Population Fund, the Partnership for Maternal New-born and Child Health and the Global Financing Facility (GFF) to support governments to maintain health systems in affected countries, provide technical guidance and advocate for sustained reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health services. This includes filling essential supply chain gaps and supporting frontline health workers. The UK supported the GFF Investors Group last week in calling for strong, collective action to avoid a potential secondary health crisis from disruptions in health services from COVID-19.

The Global Vaccine Summit in June is also seeking to raise at least US \$7.4 billion for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance 2021 – 2025 strategy. The UK has committed £1.65 billion, the equivalent of £330 million per year, to support Gavi's goal to immunise a further 300 million children and save up to 8 million lives.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[39726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to (a) support and (b) scale-up local health systems in the Global South.

Wendy Morton:

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of building strong and resilient health systems to protect against health threats, achieve universal health

coverage and ending the preventable deaths of mothers, new-born babies and children. We are supporting health systems to manage the primary and secondary impacts of the pandemic by flexing our funding and programming. This builds on our long-term investments to strengthen and scale up health systems through: technical assistance and financial support directly to countries; supporting the World Health Organisation, global health initiatives and other agencies to provide technical assistance and programmes; and funding research and new products that increase access and reduce prices for essential health commodities.

■ **Developing Countries: Human Rights**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[39733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to ensure that funding allocated by her Department to prevent and tackle the spread of covid-19 in developing countries is not used to (a) support the security sectors and (b) facilitate human rights abuses in those countries.

Wendy Morton:

DFID has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and aid diversion. Our Smart Rules framework, including pre-disbursement due diligence checks, project monitoring requirements and risk management processes, is designed to ensure that we spend wisely in all our programmes, particularly those delivering in high risk environments. We work closely with our implementing partners to ensure that DFID funds, in line with the International Development Act, are directed only to the aid outcomes or recipients they are intended for, with effective safeguards in place to maximise value for money for the UK taxpayer.

■ **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[39684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, when she last met with Dr Seth Berkley, the chief executive of GAVI.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State for International Development last met with Dr Seth Berkley on Monday 27 April 2020.

■ **Humanitarian Aid: Coronavirus**

Sarah Champion: [\[39673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that humanitarian (a) access and (b) policies are protected in the global response to the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

To date, the UK has committed £744 million of UK Aid to support global efforts to combat COVID-19. We are working with all our international partners to ensure aid is effectively distributed to vulnerable countries.

The UK is a key contributor to the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), which focuses on humanitarian access, through securing the continuity of the supply chains for essential commodities and services, and supporting the most vulnerable, including protecting and assisting refugees, Internally Displaced Peoples, migrants and host communities.

We are co-leading work with Italy through the G7 to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable countries. A large part of this work is to ensure unhindered humanitarian access for vulnerable populations, and to make sure the global response is prioritising the most in need.

We are also using diplomatic channels to ensure that international humanitarian law and global commitments regarding the rights and protection of refugees and access to asylum are upheld in this crisis.

■ Migrant Camps

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[39731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent steps she has taken to help (a) tackle overcrowding and (b) provide adequate sanitation in camps which support refugees and internally displaced persons.

James Cleverly:

Refugees and internally displaced people are amongst the most vulnerable to the COVID 19 pandemic. Many live in close quarters without access to proper healthcare or shelter, often in crowded camps where social distancing and regular handwashing are particularly difficult.

The UK is at the forefront of responding to refugee crises globally. Existing DFID programmes are already providing access to public health information, clean water, sanitation and health services for both displaced people and host communities. We are also working closely with all our international partners to coordinate a global response to COVID-19 that addresses the particular needs and vulnerabilities of displaced populations.

To date, we have committed £744 million in the international fight against COVID-19. Our most recent funding includes new support to the UN's refugee agency and other partners to help install hand-washing stations and isolation and treatment centres in refugee camps, support vulnerable displaced families, provide protection and education services for forcibly displaced children, and increase access to clean water for displaced people living in areas of armed conflict.

■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[39723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding available through the rapid response facility to support the poorest and most vulnerable countries during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

Decisions on allocating funds through the Rapid Response Facility (RRF) are being made in relation to the wider DFID COVID-19 response. We will keep further funding under review as we do with all our humanitarian interventions. DFID is also adapting its programmes across its country network to respond to COVID-19 and has committed significant new funding through the multilateral system. We expect NGOs to play a key role in delivery through these channels. In addition, extra funding has been allocated to NGOs through the DFID Unilever COVID-19 Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition.

Preet Kaur Gill:[\[39730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to support poor and vulnerable people living in middle income countries who are vulnerable to covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is at the forefront of the global response to COVID-19, through our diplomatic efforts and the provision of £744 million of UK aid to counter the health, humanitarian, and economic impacts. This will provide a safety net for the most vulnerable and support the poorest economies against collapse including in vulnerable middle income countries. The UK is using its significant investment and influence within the international system to leverage a strong and co-ordinated response globally and at the country level.

Overseas Aid: Females**Anthony Mangnall:**[\[39745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she plans to take to ensure that adequate funding is allocated to the protection of women and girls and gender-based violence services, as part of her Department's response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is deeply concerned about the surge in violence against women and girls (VAWG) during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are using significant investment and influence within the international system to ensure that women and girls have access to the vital services they need.

We have already provided £10 million of UK aid to the UN Population Fund and £20 million to UN Children's Fund to scale up protection and support services for women and girls. We have contributed £20 million of UK aid to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees's COVID-19 response for refugees and internally displaced people, which includes support for essential VAWG and child protection services. We launched a call for proposals under our Rapid Response Facility, which required all projects to mainstream gender, protection and safeguarding. This year we will also launch a new £67.5 million programme to scale up violence prevention, which is the

largest investment by any donor government in programming and research to VAWG globally.

We are also urgently reorienting existing bilateral programmes to ensure that women and girls can continue to access support during the lockdown. For example, in Nepal, the UK is financing 14 Women's and Children Service Centres across the country and 62 One Stop Crisis Centres.

■ Overseas Aid: Nutrition

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[39725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the cancellation of the 2020 Nutrition for Growth summit, what plans her Department has to announce funding for nutrition.

Wendy Morton:

Global commitments to nutrition made at the 2013 Nutrition For Growth Summit come to an end this year. Continued investment to prevent and treat malnutrition is important, particularly as countries face worsening levels of malnutrition in the face of COVID-19. The Secretary of State reiterates the importance of nutrition in her endorsement for the DFID-funded Global Nutrition Report, which will be published in May.

DFID is looking at options for the UK commitment now that both the Olympic pledging event and the main Nutrition for Growth Summit have been postponed. The UK remains committed to preventing and treating malnutrition as part of our commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, new-borns and children. We will provide an update on our plans in due course.

■ UNICEF

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[39686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, when she last met with Henrietta H Fore, the chief executive of UNICEF.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State for International Development last spoke to Henrietta H. Fore on 9 March 2020.

JUSTICE

■ Electronic Tagging: Coronavirus

Andrew Bowie: [\[38987\]](#)

To ask Secretary of State for Justice, what procedures are in place for tagging offenders by police services in England and Wales during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Frazer:

The MOJ has no procedures in place for offenders to be tagged by police services during the covid-19 outbreak. The tagging of offenders released from custody as a requirement of a licence or subject to court imposed electronic monitoring is carried out by the Electronic Monitoring Service (EMS) not by police services during the covid-19 outbreak or otherwise. EMS is continuing to fulfil all the tagging requirements that it is responsible for and its staff have been designated key workers as their work is essential to the running of the justice system.

Those being released under the End of Custody Temporary Release scheme, which has been established for low-risk offenders within two months of release, as part of the national plan to protect the NHS and save lives, are being fitted with a GPS tag on release and are subject to conditions requiring them to adhere to a curfew and the Government's Covid-19 measures.

SCOTLAND**■ Coronavirus: Scotland****John Lamont:**[\[38556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, how much additional testing capacity has been created by regional testing centres in Scotland.

Mr Alister Jack:

The UK Government has opened regional testing centres at Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness, and will shortly open one in Perth. As at 28 April 2020, the UK Government's overall daily testing capacity is over 73,000 and is increasing every day.

John Lamont:[\[38947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the adequacy of Government funding to respond to the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Alister Jack:

In addition to regular meetings between officials, my colleague the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Scotland Office (Douglas Ross) spoke with the President of COSLA, Councillor Alison Evison, on 14 April.

A range of issues were discussed, including the package of support that has been announced by the Chancellor and how this flows to Scotland through the Barnett formula.

The UK Government has committed £3.5 billion in additional funding to help cope with the covid-19 outbreak in Scotland.

TREASURY**■ Aviation: Coronavirus**

Mike Amesbury: [\[38992\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to provide support to the airline industry; and whether he plans to ensure that support is contingent on airlines (a) not paying dividends to their shareholders, (b) rehiring staff and (c) taking additional steps to tackle climate change.

Steve Barclay:

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19 and the Chancellor wrote to the aviation sector on 24 March to set out the Government's position and the support measures available. Given the significant importance of the aviation sector to our economy and economic recovery, the Government is prepared to enter negotiations with individual companies seeking bespoke support as a last resort, having exhausted other options. However further taxpayer support would only be possible if all commercial avenues have been fully explored, including raising further capital from existing investors and discussing arrangements with financial stakeholders.

The Government has announced a package of measures, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which help firms to retain employees. This Scheme will allow businesses to put employees on temporary leave, with the Government paying cash grants of 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2,500 per month, providing the business keeps the person employed.

The Department for Transport are planning to consult to update the Government's position on aviation and climate change. It is critical that we consider how the aviation sector can play its part in delivering our net zero ambitions.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Lucy Allan: [\[38937\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to support businesses that had applications for grant funding during the covid-19 outbreak declined because (a) their business rates are included in their rent or (b) they have a rateable value of over £51,000.

Steve Barclay:

a) The Small Business Grants Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund have been designed to support the smallest businesses, and smaller businesses in the some of the sectors which have been hit hardest by measures taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The two schemes have been tied to the business rates system and rating assessments, which together provide a framework for Local Authorities to make payments as quickly as possible. Businesses in the business rates system are also likely to face particularly high fixed costs, such as fixed rents.

In some shared spaces, individual users have their own rating assessments and may therefore be eligible for the grants schemes. In these cases, Local Authorities are urging landlords and management agents to support them in ensuring that the grants reach the correct ratepayers.

b) This Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund has been designed to support small businesses in some of the sectors hit hardest by the measures taken to prevent the spread of covid-19. In order to ensure that payments can be made quickly and efficiently to businesses which are facing particularly high fixed costs, the scheme is tied to the business rates system. Under the business rates system, small businesses are defined as those with a rateable value below £51,000. The Government continues to review the economic situation and consider what support businesses need. However, there are currently no plans to extend the grants scheme above the £51,000 limit.

Businesses which are not eligible for the grants schemes should still be able to benefit from other measures in the Government's unprecedented package of support for business, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bills;
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

■ Child Benefit

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[38938\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what direct mailings have been sent since 2012 to advise parents of the High-income Child Benefit Charge.

Jesse Norman:

The Government introduced the High Income Child Benefit Charge (HICBC) from January 2013 to ensure that support is targeted at those who need it most. It applies to anyone with an individual income over £50,000, who receives Child Benefit or whose partner receives it. The charge increases gradually for taxpayers with incomes between £50,000 and £60,000.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have taken considerable steps to raise awareness of HICBC. HMRC wrote to about 800,000 families affected by the charge when it was launched, and ran a high profile advertising and media campaign in 2013. HMRC also sent letters to two million higher rate tax payers in 2013, containing a prominent message about the charge.

HMRC use a wide array of channels to reach those who may be liable to pay the High Income Child Benefit Charge. This includes putting information about the charge

in packs made available to new parents which tell them how to claim Child Benefit. In addition, where HMRC hold all the relevant information, HMRC write to parents who may have become liable for HICBC, explaining what they need to do to pay the charge when it is due and avoid penalties.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[39015\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the advertising campaigns on (a) changes to child benefit and (b) the implementation of the High-income Child Benefit Charge.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have taken considerable steps to raise awareness of HICBC. HMRC wrote to about 800,000 families affected by the charge when it was launched, and ran a high profile advertising and media campaign in 2013. They also sent letters to two million higher rate tax payers in 2013, containing a prominent message about the charge.

The Government has made two recent changes to Child Benefit. The first is an uprating of Child Benefit payments from 6th April 2020 to a weekly rate of £21.05 for the first child and £13.95 for each additional child. The second enables people to claim Child Benefit during the COVID-19 outbreak, without registering the birth of a child.

These changes have been advertised on GOV.UK guidance pages, in a press notice, on HMRC social media channels and through stakeholder engagement; HM Revenue and Customs will continue to advertise the changes.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) use a wide array of channels to reach those who may be liable to pay the High Income Child Benefit Charge. This includes putting information about the charge in packs made available to new parents which tell them how to claim Child Benefit.

HMRC have also ramped up communications aimed at people whose financial circumstances have changed since they claimed Child Benefit by using social media, GOV.UK, and via third parties such as family websites.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: North West

Jake Berry:

[\[38909\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many businesses in (a) Rossendale and Darwen, (b) Lancashire and (c) the North West have (i) applied to and (ii) been successful in their application to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

John Glen:

As of 30 April, £4.1 billion worth of loans to over 25,000 businesses have been issued across the UK under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). Lenders have received over 52,000 completed applications.

At this time we cannot provide a breakdown of funding by region, as we have given lenders a temporary dispensation from uploading their data to the British Business

Bank's (BBB) system in order to let them focus on issuing new loans. This is a pragmatic step that reflects the urgency of getting loans issued. We are working with the BBB, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and lenders on regular and transparent data publication going forward.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Gareth Thomas: [37401]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether people employed by umbrella companies that are furloughed during the covid-19 outbreak will receive a sum based on 80 per cent of their average take home pay, rather than 80 per cent of the average of their basic pay; and if he will make a statement.

Barbara Keeley: [37550]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to expand furlough payments to cover a proportion of (a) performance-related pay and (b) sales commission up to a cap.

Daniel Zeichner: [37717]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to extend the furlough scheme so that workers who usually receive tips receive 80 per cent of their monthly net tip earnings averages over the last three years.

Vicky Foxcroft: [37798]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to amend the calculation of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claims to include the gross pay of employees whose salaries are topped up through bonuses or tronc schemes.

Chris Elmore: [38007]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of allowing employers to include a proportion of employees wages which are earned through bonuses or commission in claims to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The objective of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is to enable employers to continue to keep people in employment. To achieve this, the grants compensate employers for the payments that they are contractually obliged to make, in order to avoid the need for redundancies. Covering discretionary payments would go beyond the objectives of the scheme. Full guidance on how to calculate 80% of wages can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/work-out-80-of-your-employees-wages-to-claim-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme

For some employees, the pay in scope for the grant will be less than the overall sum they usually receive. The Government is also supporting those on low incomes who need to rely on the welfare system through a significant package of temporary welfare measures. This includes a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit

standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants. These changes will benefit all new and existing claimants. Anyone can check their eligibility and apply for Universal Credit by visiting www.gov.uk/universal-credit.

Mr Toby Perkins:

[38470]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government allows new employees to qualify for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if they can evidence that they started their employment prior to 19 March 2020 even if their employer had not registered them by that date with HMRC.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is open to any individual who was on an employer's PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020 and for whom HMRC received an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee on or before the 19 March 2020. Processing claims for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where HMRC do not have RTI data by 19 March would require much greater manual handling by HMRC, which would significantly slow down the system while risking substantial levels of fraud. It would also require greater resource for HMRC when they are already under significant pressure to deliver the system designed. Those not eligible for the scheme may have access to other support Government is providing, including a package of temporary welfare measures and up to three months' mortgage payment holidays for those struggling with their mortgage payments.

Stuart Anderson:

[38642]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reviewing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in the event of future lockdowns to offer rotating short-term funding to avoid employers furloughing all staff simultaneously.

Jesse Norman:

The arrangement between workers and their employers remains subject to negotiation. To be eligible for the scheme, each employee must be furloughed for a minimum of 3 weeks at a time. This is consistent with public health guidance seeking to minimise the number of people outside their homes on a regular basis. There is no restriction on the number of times an individual could be furloughed or the maximum period, other than the life of the scheme. Employers may also be able to benefit from other schemes and measures such as the VAT deferral and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans Scheme. Further details can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a temporary scheme in place for 4 months starting from 1 March 2020, but it may be extended if necessary and employers can use this scheme anytime during this period. The Government will make future

decisions on the scheme taking into account further developments such as the forthcoming review of non-pharmaceutical interventions.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: EU Nationals**

Selaine Saxby: [\[38958\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that EU citizens eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are issued with National Insurance numbers as quickly as possible.

Selaine Saxby: [\[39023\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure EU citizens receiving a National Insurance number for the purposes of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are not disadvantaged by any delay to that process as a result of covid-19.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC have put processes in place to allow an employer with employees that do not have a National Insurance number to submit a claim to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, in order to ensure that employees without a National Insurance number, including EU citizens, are not disadvantaged.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Pay**

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[38633\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of holiday pay accrued by furloughed staff on the ability of the economy to recover after the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a vital element of the Government's efforts to protect the economy during COVID-19. Employees continue to accrue holiday while on furlough, as per their employment contract, unless the employer and employee agree to vary this as part of the furlough agreement. In order to provide extra flexibility to employers, where it is not reasonably practical for an employee to take some, or all, of the holiday to which they are entitled due to Covid-19, holiday can now be carried over into the next two leave years.

During this unprecedented time, the Government is keeping the policy on holiday pay under review.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Scotland**

John Lamont: [\[38502\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate his Department has made of the number of people in the Scottish Borders who have been furloughed as part of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20th April. As of Thursday 23rd April HMRC had received about 512,000 claims with a total value of around £4.5bn.

This is a new scheme and HMRC are currently working through the analysis they will be able to provide based on the data available. HMRC will make the timescales for publication and the types of data available in due course.

Debts: Developing Countries**Caroline Lucas:**[\[38453\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations he has made to (a) his counterparts in the G20 Group, (b) the World Bank and (c) the International Monetary Fund in support of the cancellation of debt for developing countries to support the (i) public health and (ii) economic response to the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The government is deeply concerned about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on low-income developing countries. In this time of crisis, it is vital that creditors work together to ensure that countries especially vulnerable to the pandemic are able to protect their citizens and economies. The Chancellor joined his G20 counterparts in committing to a temporary suspension on debt service repayments from the poorest countries. The government will continue to work through the G20 and Paris Club of official creditors to monitor sovereign debt vulnerabilities in developing countries closely.

At Budget, the Chancellor announced a leading contribution of up to £150m to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, which will provide the world's poorest countries relief on IMF repayments. And we have committed to double our existing £2.2bn loan to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust to provide financial assistance to its poorest and most vulnerable members in their fight against COVID-19.

More broadly, the UK recently led the development of a G20 Action Plan to support the global economy through the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chancellor will continue his regular engagement with his G20 counterparts on the international community's response to COVID-19.

Dental Services: Coronavirus**Dame Diana Johnson:**[\[38445\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on supporting private dental practices during the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury Ministers are in regular discussions with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about matters relating to health spending and policy.

The Government has set out a range of measures to support private dental practices during the covid-19 outbreak. If they meet the criteria, private dentists who are self-employed could be eligible for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme and those who are employees and receive a salary through a PAYE scheme could be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. All employed staff in dental practices, including support staff, could also be eligible for this scheme. In addition, private dentists can access the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, if they can channel their activity through a business account.

Dental businesses may also be eligible for up to 100% Small Business Rate Relief where it has a single property with a rateable value below £15,000. This is on top of other support, such as tax deferrals.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Felicity Buchan:

[38996]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available for people with fixed term employment contracts that ended prior to 19 March 2020; and how that support differs for people on (a) full time, (b) agency, (c) flexible and (d) zero-hour contracts.

Jesse Norman:

Employees on any type of employment contract, including full-time, part-time, agency, flexible and zero-hour contracts are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme providing they were on their employer's PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020, and that HMRC received an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee on or before 19 March 2020. Fixed term employees can also be claimed for, and if their contract has not already expired it can be extended or renewed.

If employees were made redundant or stopped working for their employer on or after 28 February 2020, they can be re-employed by their previous employer and put on furlough as long as they were on the employer's PAYE payroll on 28 February 2020. Employees that started and ended the same contract between 28 February 2020 and 19 March 2020 will not qualify for this scheme. This is not specific to employees on fixed-term contracts, the same would apply to employees on all other contracts.

Guidance for employers can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#employees-you-can-claim-for

Those who are not eligible to receive this grant may be able to access other support Government is providing. This includes a package of temporary welfare measures, including increases in the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element; providing local councils an additional £500 million to support the most vulnerable people in society; and providing up to three-month mortgage payment holidays for those struggling with their mortgage payments.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Dame Diana Johnson: [\[38444\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing the exclusion of dental practices and other medical providers from the covid-19 business rate relief scheme for the retail and hospitality sectors.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided enhanced support to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors through business rates relief, given the direct and acute impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those sectors.

A range of further measures to support all businesses including those not eligible for the business rates holiday, such as medical service providers, has also been made available.

■ Public Houses and Restaurants: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper: [\[39016\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish any correspondence he has had with insurance companies on covering the contingent liability of losses suffered by pubs and restaurants between 16 and 20 March 2020 due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Daisy Cooper: [\[39018\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish any correspondence he has had with insurance companies on covering the contingent liability of losses suffered by pubs and restaurants between 16 and 20 March 2020 due to the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector given the significant role it has in supporting businesses in the current situation.

However, on 17 March, following a roundtable with the insurance industry, the Chancellor made it clear that the Government's social distancing instructions of 16 March would be treated the same as government-ordered closure for insurance purposes (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-of-the-exchequer-rishi-sunak-on-covid19-response>). As long as all other terms of the policies are met, pubs and restaurants should therefore be able to make a claim for the period between 16 and 20 March.

It is important to note that most businesses have not purchased insurance that covers losses from pandemics and unspecified notifiable diseases, such as COVID-19. Some policies cover losses arising from any disease classed as notifiable by the government, however, most policies only cover a specific list of notifiable diseases. The terms of a policy cannot be changed retrospectively.

The Government recognises that businesses who do not have appropriate insurance cover will require support from elsewhere. As such, businesses should explore the full package of support set out by the Chancellor, which includes measures such as

business rates holidays, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and wage support.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Dame Diana Johnson:

[38443]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing the £50,000 eligibility cap for the Self-Employed Income Support scheme for people classed as key workers.

Jesse Norman:

Some 95% of people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment could be eligible to benefit from the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). The scheme, including the £50,000 threshold, is designed to ensure it is targeted at those who need it the most, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income.

Those with average profits above £50,000 could still benefit from other support. The SEISS supplements the significant support already announced for UK businesses, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[38498]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of lowering the 50 per cent threshold for the proportion of applicants' income that must come from self-employment in order to access the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The grant is only available to those whose trading profit makes up 50% of their total income or more, because this scheme aims to provide financial support to those who rely on self-employment as their main source of income. Many individuals earn small amounts of income from self-employment in addition to income from employment and other sources.

These individuals may benefit from other policies such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Full guidance can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme.

The SEISS supplements the significant support already announced for UK businesses, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

Justin Madders: [\[38990\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of self-employed people who will not be eligible for support under the Government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The new Self-Employment Income Support Scheme will help those with lost trading profits due to COVID-19. It means the UK will have one of the most generous self-employed COVID-19 support schemes in the world. Some 95% of those who receive the majority of their income from self-employment could benefit from this scheme.

Service Industries: Coronavirus**Daisy Cooper:** [\[39014\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support will be made available to (a) pubs, (b) restaurants and (b) other businesses in the hospitality sector that have closed during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government has launched two grants schemes to support businesses during this difficult time.

- The Small Business Grant Fund provides eligible businesses with a £10,000 grant per property, for each property in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rates Relief (RRR). Businesses can receive a maximum of €200,000 from this scheme.
- The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund provides eligible businesses with a £10,000 grant per property, for each property used for these purposes with a rateable value of £15,000 or less and which is not in receipt of SBRR or RRR. Businesses are also eligible for a £25,000 grant per property, for each property used for these purposes with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000. Businesses can receive a maximum of €800,000 from this scheme.

These schemes have been designed to support the smallest businesses, and smaller businesses in some of the sectors which have been hit hardest by the measures taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The grant schemes are already making a real difference to many thousands of businesses, which have received a total of over £6 billion since the schemes were launched.

Businesses in the hospitality sector may also benefit from other support available, including:

- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months
- Rebates for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for SMEs

- Protection for commercial leaseholders against automatic forfeiture for non-payment
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)

The Business Support website provides further information about how businesses can access the support that has been made available, who is eligible, when the schemes open and how to apply - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support>.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

John Redwood: [\[38406\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support small business owners that are unable to trade during the covid-19 outbreak and depend on dividends on their shares as their source of income.

Mr Toby Perkins: [\[38471\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending Government support schemes in response to the covid-19 outbreak to include company directors who pay themselves through dividends.

Jesse Norman:

Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages, and is not eligible for support through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme or Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). Under current reporting mechanisms it is not possible for HM Revenue and Customs to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources, and between dividends in lieu of employment income and as returns from other corporate activity. Expanding the scope would require HMRC to collect and verify new information. This would take longer to deliver and put at risk the other schemes which the Government is committed to delivering as quickly as possible.

Those who pay themselves a salary through their own company may be eligible to claim for 80% of usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, through the CJRS. Individuals who are not eligible for the CJRS may be able to access other support Government is providing, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/

■ Travel Agents: Coronavirus

Nick Fletcher: [\[38640\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what fiscal steps his Department is taking to support travel agents during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

During this difficult time the Treasury recognises the extreme disruption the necessary actions to combat Covid-19 are having on businesses, including important industries such as travel and tourism.

That is why the Government has announced unprecedented support for individuals and businesses to protect against the current economic emergency. This includes grants to smaller businesses, and a package of government-backed and guaranteed loans through the Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF), the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme. Together these schemes ensure almost all viable UK businesses can apply for a government backed loan.

Travel and tourism industries can also benefit from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and travel agents occupying eligible properties will benefit from the retail, hospitality and leisure business rates holiday.

The government will not be able to protect every single job or save every single business, but these measures will support millions of families, businesses and self-employed people to get through this and emerge on the other side both stronger and more united.

■ Veterinary Services: Government Assistance

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[38499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support veterinary practices with increased overheads due to the requirement to remain open to provide emergency care.

Steve Barclay:

There is no specific support available solely to veterinary practices. However, veterinary practices may be eligible for a number of the business support schemes the Government has launched. These include VAT deferrals, Small Business Grant Funding, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, and the Job Retention Scheme. Full details of the unprecedented support the Government has made available to businesses are available on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

■ Welfare tax credits: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[38555\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of increased hours and overtime worked by (a) carers and (b) NHS staff during the covid-19 outbreak on tax credit calculations.

Jesse Norman:

The Tax Credit system has a degree of flexibility, in order to help claimants manage changes in income. The Tax Credit disregard means that the first £2,500 of an

increase or decrease in household income, compared with the previous tax year, is disregarded. Therefore carers, NHS staff and other key workers working additional hours and experiencing an increase in income of up to £2,500 per year will see no change in their overall Tax Credit award.

The Government recognises that Tax Credits were introduced in the early 2000s and no longer fully reflect the world of work for many people, and that is why the Government is introducing Universal Credit.

Universal Credit replaces Tax Credits and other legacy benefits, to provide a single system of means-tested support for working age people. Universal Credit is assessed and paid monthly and is based on claimants' actual earnings in the month, rather than their annual income.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Metro Newspaper

Kate Osamor: [\[38941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of the ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority in November 2019 that the advertisements by her Department on universal credit published in The Metro in May and June 2019 were misleading and exaggerated.

Kate Osamor: [\[38942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will undertake an investigation into the (a) commissioning and (b) approval of the Government's Universal Credit Uncovered advertisements that were published in The Metro in May and June 2019.

Will Quince:

The Department takes its responsibility to ensure people understand the benefits they may be entitled to seriously. Officials went to great lengths to ensure the factual accuracy of the Metro partnership through extensive consultation within the Department. They also consulted with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and their sister organisation team the Committee of Advertising Practice prior to the launch and continued to do so throughout the campaign lifetime.

The Department did not intentionally mislead the public through the partnership and whilst disappointed with the outcome, they have provided assurance to the ASA that the advertising that was the subject of their investigation will no longer appear in its original form.

Following the ASA ruling, the Government Communications Service reviewed the actions taken by DWP throughout the advertising partnership and was satisfied that they did not intentionally mislead the public. However, we continue to recognise the importance of working closely with the ASA to inform future campaigns and establish best practice.

■ Housing Benefit: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[33495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to introduce three-month bloc payments of housing benefit to homelessness accommodation providers to reduce financial risk during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 31 March 2020]: The Government will do its utmost to support people affected by Covid-19. The Department has made a number of changes to support those who are at the greatest financial risk during this time.

Specifically, Local Housing Allowance rates have been increased to the 30th percentile from April for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants, giving additional financial support for private renters to support them through this period and putting an average of £600 more into people's pockets. Discretionary Housing Payments can also be paid to those entitled to Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit who face a shortfall in meeting their housing costs.

Like many other social security benefits, as well as most other forms of income, Housing Benefit is paid in arrears. The reason for this is that payment in arrears reduces the scope for fraud and potential overpayments of benefit. The Government has no current plans to change the current payment arrangements for people in Supported Housing who are in receipt of Housing Benefit.

The Department, and wider Government, will continue to ensure that people who need financial help have access to the benefit system and the wider housing support that is already in place.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[25160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of local housing allowance rates in (a) the London Borough of Lewisham, (b) London and (c) England.

Will Quince:

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) determines the maximum financial support available for renters in the private rented sector. In response to COVID-19, this Department has increased LHA rates to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants, giving additional financial support for private renters.

All LHA rates are now at the 30th percentile including those in the London Borough of Lewisham, with the exception of 15 LHA rates in Central and Inner London where the national maximum caps continue to apply. The national caps have also been increased and are now based on the Outer London LHA rate plus 20%.

■ Small Businesses: Government Assistance

Mr David Davis:

[\[37436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how financial support provided to small businesses through the Small Business Grant Scheme will be classified for the purposes of applications for universal credit made by the owners of those businesses.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 28 April 2020]: During this difficult time for the country, we recognise the extreme disruption the necessary actions are having on people's lives, their businesses, their jobs and the nation's economy. And that's why we have produced a huge and unprecedented programme of support both for workers and for business, and we'll do everything we can to ensure people can pay their bills, stay in their home and put food on their table.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[\[30742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will extend deadlines for social security claimants to (a) ensure that claims are not stopped during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) ease the pressure on the NHS from claimants seeking evidence to support claims.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 23 March 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 appropriate access to the welfare system. This includes claimants being able to claim Universal Credit and access its new claim advance payments where they are directly affected by COVID-19 (or self-isolating), without the requirement to attend a Jobcentre. Any evidence to support claims can be provided remotely, normally online or by telephone.

To avoid increasing the burden on health care professionals and the risk of further infection, everyone that claims Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC, and who is infected with COVID-19 or who is required to self-isolate, will be treated as having Limited Capability for Work in ESA and UC without supplying medical evidence or undergoing a Work Capability Assessment.

In addition, to better support the needs of people (particularly the self-employed and those not eligible for Statutory Sick Pay) and/or not entitled to UC, we are removing the seven waiting days that currently apply to ESA. This means that everyone who makes a new claim for ESA is entitled to the benefit, and is infected with COVID-19 or required to self-isolate, will be paid from day one of their claim.

Government officials continue to work closely together to understand the potential impacts of COVID-19 on employment and benefits. The Department has introduced

new guidance about claiming benefits which can be found at:

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

■ **Universal Credit: Scotland**

Ronnie Cowan:

[39005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much funding is being allocated to extend the Help to Claim universal credit scheme for a further financial year in Scotland.

Will Quince:

Help to Claim assists people to make a Universal Credit claim and receive their first full payment on time through tailored practical support from Citizen's Advice Scotland advisers.

To maintain this support, the Department has agreed to fund Citizens Advice Scotland up to a further £4.1m for a second year of Help to Claim.