

Daily Report

Tuesday, 5 May 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 5 May 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:39 P.M., 05 May 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Saqib Bhatti:

[R] [40790]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to support businesses in villages to recover from the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government has introduced a comprehensive package of measures to support businesses during these unprecedented times.

We have announced schemes providing access to loans, designed to help businesses across the UK impacted by the Coronavirus crisis to access the funding they need:

- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme provides businesses with annual turnover of under £45m with access to working capital of up to £5m. It supports a wide range of business finance products, including term loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance facilities.
- The Bounce Back Loans Scheme supports the smallest SMEs by providing loans from £2000 up to 25% of the business' turnover with a maximum loan size of £50,000. This Scheme launched on 4 May.

The Government has also announced a package of support for businesses to help with their ongoing business costs in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. In particular, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has been working across Government to provide £13 billion of grant funding to help small and rural businesses and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors manage their cashflow through this period. This support will take the form of two grant funding schemes, the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF).

All businesses in England in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) and Rural Rates Relief (RRR) in the business rates system will be eligible for a payment of £10,000.

Businesses in England that would have been in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount (which covers retail, hospitality and leisure) on 11 March with a rateable value of less than £51,000 will be eligible for the following cash grants per property:

- Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of up to and including £15,000 will receive a grant of £10,000.
- Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 will receive a grant of £25,000.

■ Business: Social Media

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[40748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of rules on staff who have been furloughed in line with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme prohibiting the use of social media on the ability of those businesses to retain a customer base after the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The scheme is designed to help employers who are unable to operate or have no work for an employee to do because of coronavirus and those who otherwise would have been made unemployed. There is flexibility in that staff can be rotated and rolled on and off furlough, so long as each period on furlough is for a minimum of 3 weeks.

■ Businesses: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[\[39653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what notice the Government plans to give businesses closed due to covid-19 on reopening, when appropriate, to allow them to undertake necessary forward planning; and what discussions the Government is having with business representatives on planning for reopening.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We have set out five clear tests that will need to be met before making any changes to our current approach. As my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, we will gradually refine the economic and social restrictions at the appropriate time.

The Department has been looking at how we can ensure workplaces are safe - for those in work now and for those who will go back to work once the measures in place are relaxed.

As this work is complex and multifaceted, we are working with industry, business representative organisations, unions, Public Health England, and the Health and Safety Executive. Together, we are considering what is needed to adapt workplaces to further improve safety, thereby minimising the risk of transmission.

Through this engagement activity, we are welcoming views and best practice that might support us in ensuring that businesses can reopen whilst adhering to the social distancing guidelines. We will continue to engage with businesses and industry stakeholders throughout the process to gain a better understanding of wider implications and what needs to be put in place for businesses to reopen.

■ City Deals: Wales**Liz Saville Roberts:** [\[40715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the continued viability of City Deals in Wales as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

To date, the Government has committed up to £3.08 billion to City and Growth Deals across Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. This includes Deals already agreed in Cardiff, Swansea Bay, and North Wales.

These Deals are an important part of our approach to driving growth, attracting long-term investment, and creating sustainable, high-quality jobs in Wales.

Regions need to regularly assess the benefits and deliverability of their individual programmes in light of changing local circumstances. We will work with all areas to ensure City and Growth Deals respond are responsive, so they can continue to deliver maximum impact for their local area.

■ Construction: Coronavirus**Richard Burgon:** [\[40698\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons version 2 of the Construction Leadership Council's guidance Site Operating Procedures Protecting Your Workforce During Coronavirus (Covid-19) stated that no construction work should be carried out on site if social distancing could not be enforced; and for what reasons that instruction has been relaxed in version 3 of that guidance.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has developed Site Operating Procedures (SOP), which align with Public Health England (PHE) guidance on social distancing. The SOP provide practical advice to those seeking to implement the guidance on construction sites.

Following consultation with the industry, the CLC has updated the SOP to align with the latest PHE guidance and provide more detailed advice on safe working. This approach is based on the Health and Safety Executive Hierarchy of Controls for work planning to mitigate risks.

Richard Burgon: [\[40699\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Government plans to enforce staggered start times for construction sites to help ensure that construction workers are able to comply with social distancing guidance on public transport during the rush hour.

Richard Burgon: [\[40700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to protect construction workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The health and safety of construction workers is a priority for the Government. In order to help ensure that it is safe for construction workers to operate in their workplace, the Government has worked with Public Health England (PHE) to develop sector-specific guidance on social distancing, and has also worked with the Construction Leadership Council to develop Site Operating Procedures (SOP), which provide practical advice to those seeking to implement the guidance.

The SOP set out that sites should consider introducing staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact, and plan site access and egress points to enable social distancing. The Health and Safety Executive should consider enforcement action if a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out by PHE.

■ Consumers: Coronavirus**Afzal Khan:**[\[40761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government will take to ensure that businesses do not penalise individuals who do not use the NHS contact-tracing app.

Paul Scully:

As the Solicitor General explained in Parliament on 28 April, the contact tracing app will be for voluntary participation only.

An ethical advisory board will be convened to monitor the use of the app.

No private identifying information will be kept on it and it will be data protection compliant.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**John Redwood:**[\[38407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assumptions a business should make on when they can resume trading so they can produce a meaningful budget and loan proposal when seeking a loan under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Government has now taken further steps to ensure that lenders have the confidence they need to process finance applications swiftly. We have changed the viability tests so lenders are only required to assess whether a business was viable pre-COVID-19. Any concerns over its short-to-medium term business performance due to the uncertainty and impact of COVID-19 cannot be taken into account in the loan decision. The applicant must however still satisfy the other eligibility criteria of the CBILS.

Rachael Maskell:

[39583]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses have accessed the business interruption loan scheme; and what the value is of loans made to date.

Paul Scully:

As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to over 25,262 businesses.

Sir John Hayes:

[40489]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) small retailers, (b) businesses in the agricultural and horticulture sector and (c) other eligible businesses are able to access the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is open to eligible businesses operating in most sectors, including small retailers and businesses in agriculture and horticulture. Agriculture businesses may not qualify for the full interest and lender-levied fee payment paid by government.

In order to be eligible for the CBILS, businesses must:

- be UK-based in their activity, with turnover of no more than £45 million per year;
- have a borrowing proposal which, were it not for the current pandemic, would be considered viable by the lender; and
- self-certify that they have been adversely impacted by the Coronavirus (Covid-19).

For more information on the scheme, businesses should visit the British Business Bank website: www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-schemes/cbils/

The Government has responded to feedback to ensure that companies feel the full benefits of available support through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) by:

- Extending the scheme so that all viable small businesses affected by Covid-19;
- Removing previous restrictions on the following groups to enable them to access the CBILS, subject to other eligibility criteria being met: Employer, professional, religious or political membership organisations and trade unions;
- Removing the ability for lenders to ask for personal guarantees for loans under £250,000, and reducing the personal guarantee for loans over £250,000 to 20% of the outstanding balance after recoveries;
- Introducing technical changes to ensure that applications will be processed faster;
- Removing the forward-looking viability test; and
- Removing the per lender portfolio cap.

The Government will continue to see if there are other areas for improvement across the scheme as a whole.

Kirsten Oswald:

[\[40659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the number of lenders accredited to provide revolving finance and overdraft facilities under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Accredited Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) lenders offer a wide range of business finance products including term loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance. The British Business Bank has put in place substantial additional resource to accredit new lenders to CBILS as quickly as possible, which will further widen the choice of finance options for smaller businesses.

Simon Baynes:

[\[40789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all firms entitled to assistance under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme are able to access it.

Paul Scully:

The Government has responded to helpful feedback to ensure that companies feel the full benefits of available support through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) by:

- Extending the scheme so that all viable small businesses affected by Covid-19, and not just those unable to secure regular commercial financing, are eligible if the lender believes they need finance to see them through these unprecedented times;
- Removing previous restrictions on the following groups to enable them to access the CBILS, subject to other eligibility criteria being met: Employer, professional, religious or political membership organisations and trade unions are now eligible for the CBILS;
- Removing ability for lenders to ask for personal guarantees for loans under £250,000, and reducing the personal guarantee for loans over £250,000 to 20% of the outstanding balance after recoveries;
- Introducing technical changes to ensure that applications will be processed faster;
- Removing the forward-looking viability test that required an assessment of whether the business can trade out of the crisis. The only test that remains is whether a business was viable before Covid-19; and
- Removing the per lender portfolio cap, to give lenders the full 80% guarantee across all CBILS lending.

The Government will continue to see if there are other areas for improvement across the scheme as a whole.

Owen Thompson:

[\[41115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of whether lenders are collating data on the number of (a) applications and (b) rejected applications under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Scheme.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to over 25,262 businesses.

We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on providing transparent and regular data publication going forward.

Owen Thompson:

[\[41116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of his Department collating data on the number of applications (a) submitted and (b) rejected under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Scheme.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to over 25,262 businesses. Lenders have received 52,807 completed applications.

We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on providing transparent and regular data publication going forward.

Owen Thompson:

[\[41539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many and what proportion of applications for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme have been approved (a) by each lender and (b) in each constituency.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to over 25,262 businesses.

Lenders have received 52,807 completed applications.

We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on regular and transparent data publication going forward.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Luton South

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[39715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many Luton South based businesses have (a) applied for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme and (b) had their applications to that scheme rejected.

Paul Scully:

As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to over 25,262 businesses.

In order to minimise administrative burden and therefore facilitate the issuing of as many loans as possible, the British Business Bank's system only gathers data from lenders when loans are offered and drawn. Decisions on whether to capture information relating to rejected loans are at the discretion of the lender.

We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on regular and transparent data publication going forward.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Social Enterprises

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[38906\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many social enterprises have received a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan to date.

Paul Scully:

The British Business Bank does not provide a breakdown on the issuance of loans under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to social enterprises. As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to over 25,262 businesses.

We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on providing transparent and regular data publication going forward.

Lee Anderson:

[\[40763\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of social enterprises that have received Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans.

Paul Scully:

The British Business Bank does not provide a breakdown on the issuance of loans under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to social enterprises.

As of 29 April, in total over £4.1 billion worth of loans have been issues under the CBILS across all sectors, to over 25,262 businesses. We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on providing transparent and regular data publication going forward.

■ Debenhams: Coronavirus**Colum Eastwood:**[\[41194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what additional support the Government plans to provide to (a) staff and (b) suppliers of Debenhams following its closure during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We recognise that this must be a worrying time for Debenhams' employees, their families and their suppliers.

Government is doing everything we can to support Debenhams' employees and suppliers during the Covid-19 outbreak. UK wide schemes include a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme to support SMEs with a turnover of up to £45 million access vital financial support, a Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme providing a Government guarantee of 80% to enable banks to make loans of up to £25 million to firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £500 million and a new Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility where the Bank of England will buy short term debt from larger companies.

Certain support such as Business Grants and the Business Rates Holiday is devolved in Northern Ireland. The devolved administrations will receive at least £3.5bn as a result of the support for businesses in England so they can provide support in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

■ Dental Services: Government Assistance**Mr Barry Sheerman:**[\[39476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend the business loan scheme to ensure that dental practices are able to access financial support where necessary.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is open to eligible businesses operating in most sectors, including dental practices.

In order to be eligible for the CBILS, businesses must:

- Be UK-based in their business activity, with annual turnover of no more than £45m;
- Have a borrowing proposal which, were it not for the current pandemic, would be considered viable by the lender;
- Self-certify that they have been adversely impacted by the Coronavirus; and
- Derive more than 50% of their income from trading activity.

■ Distributive Trade: Coronavirus

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[40484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with national suppliers and wholesalers on encouraging them to provide (a) reduced minimum orders, (b) priority deliveries and (c) small and more frequent deliveries to rural and isolated community shops; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We recognise the vital role played by Community shops in our rural communities, acting as hubs for local people and having a positive impact on the communities they serve.

We are working across Government as well as with industry to ensure the needs of the sector are addressed. Ministers and officials have regular engagement with a large number of businesses and representative organisations across all sectors. Ministers have hosted a series of calls in recent weeks, where they have had the opportunity chance to speak to and directly hear from a wide range of organisations and businesses.

Decisions taken regarding contractual relationships are best taken by individual suppliers and wholesalers who know their operations and customer demand in far greater detail than Government can.

■ Economic Growth: Carbon Emissions

Caroline Lucas:

[40550]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to his UN speech of 6 March 2020, whether his statement that green growth is absolutely possible is based on evidence (a) that absolute decoupling of gross domestic product growth from greenhouse gas emissions has occurred in relation to (a) consumption-based emissions incorporating the overseas impacts of UK economic activity and (b) the UK's equitable contribution to the 1.5 degree temperature goal of the Paris climate agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Green Growth is absolutely possible. Between 1990 and 2018, the UK reduced emissions by 43% while growing our economy by 75% – decarbonising our economy faster than any other G20 country since 2000. The latest statistics show that UK emissions on a consumption basis (including emissions embedded in imports) also fell by 21 per cent between 2007 and 2017. Last year, the UK became the first major economy to legislate to achieve net zero emissions. This will continue to enable us to meet our climate change obligations, including those made under the Paris Agreement, and – as stated by the Committee on Climate Change – goes beyond the reduction needed globally to hold the expected rise in global average temperature to well below 2°C.

■ Energy

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the resilience and competitiveness of international energy markets.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented falls in demand in global energy markets and increased market volatility. Ensuring reliability, stability and security of energy supply during this global emergency is vital. The UK remains a strong supporter of free, transparent, and competitive energy markets and we are working closely with actors right across the sector to ensure that global energy systems remain secure and reliable

I attended an extraordinary meeting of G20 Energy Ministers held on 10 April to discuss the impact of the Covid 19 on global energy markets. At that meeting Ministers agreed that ensuring energy market stability and affordable and secure energy are key in addressing the health, well-being and resilience of all countries throughout the crisis response and recovery phases.

G20 Ministers also committed to work together to develop collaborative policy responses to ensure market stability across all energy sources, the security of our energy systems, and the uninterrupted flow of energy.

We continue to monitor market developments and remain in regular contact with G20 and other international partners.

■ Energy: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that people's energy needs are met during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government has introduced a range of measures to address the Covid-19 outbreak, recognising the pressures facing many UK households.

In addition, and specifically for energy, on 19 March the Government secured an industry-wide voluntary agreement with all domestic energy suppliers to a set of principles for assisting consumers, including those with pre-payment meters, through the difficulties caused by Covid-19.

This agreement requires all energy suppliers to identify and prioritise consumers at risk, support consumers who are impacted financially as a direct or indirect result of Covid-19, support pre-payment meter customers directly or indirectly impacted by Covid-19 to stay on supply, and to provide information to their consumers.

Details can be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/873960/Supplier_Agreement_19.3.2020.pdf

■ Flybe: Redundancy Pay

Paul Girvan:

[40739]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to tackle the delays in Government redundancy payments for ex-Flybe staff in Northern Ireland.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The payment of redundancy claims to employees who were employed in Northern Ireland is a devolved matter for the Northern Ireland Executive. Redundancy claims are processed by the NI Redundancy Payments Service in Belfast under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996.

■ Foreign Investment in UK: China

Liz Saville Roberts:

[40716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the level of dependence on Chinese investment of the (a) manufacturing and production industries, (b) IT and internet industries, (c) retail sector and (d) NUTS 1 region.

Nadhim Zahawi:

At at 2018, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) data shows that China had the following FDI positions in UK sectors:

	CHINA INWARD FDI POSITION (£M)	GLOBAL INWARD FDI POSITION (£M)	CHINA AS % OF TOTAL GLOBAL FDI TO UK
Manufacturing and Production	325	368,718	0.1%
Information and Communication	28	140,695	0.02%
Retail and Wholesale	230	125,302	0.2%
Total Economy	1,775	1,520,603	0.1%

Estimates of FDI that are based on the UK regional location of such investments are not available.

■ Holiday Accommodation and Second Homes: Coronavirus**Dr Dan Poulter:****[40562]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much money has been claimed under the Coronavirus Small Business Grants Fund (a) by second home owners and (b) for holiday lets in Suffolk.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The Government has made £12.3 billion available to businesses under the Small Business Grants Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund. Local authorities are contacting businesses directly to deliver these grants.

As of 26 April, over 610,000 business premises have received grants across the two schemes, totalling over £7.59 billion. We do not receive management information from local authorities broken down by sector. However, we have published a full breakdown of grant funding allocated to and distributed by each local authority at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-localauthority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>. This breakdown is being updated regularly.

■ Home Shopping: Coronavirus**Owen Thompson:****[40691]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to combat online retail price gouging.

Paul Scully:

The Government has been clear that it does not want to see profiteering of any kind. Although only a small minority of businesses or individuals engage in profiteering, we are concerned about the harm it could cause, particularly to the vulnerable.

The Competition and Markets Authority has written to firms suspected of profiteering, and the Secretary of State recently met business, trade and consumer representatives to discuss the scale of profiteering and actions to address it. We are keeping all options under review to tackle profiteering.

Owen Thompson:**[40692]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to regulate online retail prices to prevent price gouging.

Paul Scully:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State met with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), business, trade and consumer organisations on Thursday 9 April to review the prevalence and impact of profiteering.

The CMA has written to firms suspected of profiteering to challenge unjustifiable price increases. The CMA stand ready to take enforcement action where there is evidence that competition or consumer protection law has been broken.

The Government continues to monitor profiteering and is keeping all options under review.

Owen Thompson:

[\[40693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what investigatory, enforcement and regulatory powers the Competition and Markets Authority holds to tackle price gouging.

Paul Scully:

The Competition and Markets Authority have created a COVID-19 taskforce to investigate consumer concerns in light of COVID-19.

They have written to warn firms suspected of profiteering and stand ready to take enforcement action where there is evidence that competition or consumer protection law has been broken.

We are keeping all options under review to tackle profiteering.

■ **Insolvency: Coronavirus**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40488\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that insolvency measures do not inhibit otherwise viable businesses from trading during the covid-19 pandemic.

Paul Scully:

The Government announced on 28th March, plans to amend insolvency law to give companies a breathing space to help keep trading whilst exploring options for rescue as a going concern. In addition, the Government announced a temporary suspension of wrongful trading provisions to support company directors to continue trading through the Covid-19 pandemic without the threat of personal liability. The Government has also announced a temporary suspension of the use of statutory demands made between 1 March 2020 and 30 June 2020 and a restriction on winding up petitions presented from 27 April to 30 June, where a company cannot pay its bills due to the coronavirus emergency. This is to further support companies experiencing trading difficulties at this time and to help ensure that viable businesses are able to continue as a going concern.

■ **Insolvency: Reform**

Anneliese Dodds:

[\[40751\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to planned reforms to the UK insolvency framework, when the new restructuring procedure and new temporary moratorium announced in August 2018 will be implemented.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Government will bring forward legislation for these measures at the earliest opportunity.

■ Iron and Steel: Recycling

Stephen Doughty:

[\[40628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the steel recycling sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department has been in close contact with the metals recycling sector during this challenging period. The sector has seen a reduction to material flows throughout the economy, which is impacting their output.

The metals recycling sector has made use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and we have also promoted the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, alongside other business support schemes.

The Government is mindful of the important role that the metals recycling sector plays in keeping our economy moving and we continue to be receptive to their concerns.

■ Life Sciences and Vaccination

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) vaccine manufacturing and (b) UK life sciences.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK is home to one of the strongest, most productive health and life sciences industries globally, and the support of the sector is critical to our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government is working closely with the sector, including on the UK's capacity to manufacture new vaccines at scale, where efforts are being overseen by the newly established Vaccines Taskforce. My Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced a host of measures to help businesses, including in the life sciences sector, to manage increased costs and disrupted cashflow as a result of the outbreak, with £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support the manufacturing sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Manufacturing is a critical part of our economy. The Department is committed to ongoing engagement with industry to ensure that our manufacturers and their workforce have the support they need, including guidance on how to maintain

production safely, where possible. Many companies across the aerospace, chemical, automotive, steel, aluminium, pharmaceutical, and packaging sectors, including those providing essential services and materials, have answered the Government's call to action. Industry is playing a direct role in our national effort by producing the material we need to fight the spread of the virus.

We have put in place an unprecedented package of Government support to help businesses, which includes providing manufacturers with the support they need to help them get back up and running. Measures include:

- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, to help small and medium-sized businesses with an annual turnover of up to £45 million to access vital financial support.
- Our new Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme, to allow larger firms with an annual turnover of over £45 million to benefit from Government-backed support during this difficult time.
- Deferring VAT payments for firms to the next quarter until the end of June 2020, representing a £30 billion injection into the economy.
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, for which small and large employers are eligible to apply for a Government grant of 80% of workers' salaries, up to £2,500 a month. Wages will be backdated to 1 March 2020 and the scheme is available until the end of June 2020.

The Department has also issued sector-specific advice for manufacturers regarding social distancing in the workplace, which is helping employees to continue working safely during the crisis. This advice is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#manufacturing-and-processing-businesses>.

■ Package Holidays: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[40662]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 6 April 2020 to Questions HL2882, what steps the package travel sector has agreed to take as a result of Government engagement with that sector on its legal obligations to customers whose holiday or travel has been cancelled as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Paul Scully:

Sector representatives are aware that the law has not changed in relation to refunds. Businesses in the sector are offering consumers refund credit notes but this must be the choice of the consumer who retains the right to a cash refund.

■ Parental Leave

Hywel Williams:

[40996]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Government's announcement on 24 April 2020 that employees whose period of family-related leave begins on or after 25 April 2020 will be entitled to full pay, what assessment he has made of the level of financial support required by employees whose period of family-related leave began before that date.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The Government laid regulations last week to ensure that where a worker has been furloughed under the CJRS and is receiving lower earnings as a result, this does not affect his or her eligibility for statutory family-related pay.

For Statutory Maternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay, eligible parents receive 90% of normal earnings for the first 6 weeks, followed by up to 33 weeks at the statutory flat rate (£151.20 per week). The new regulations also ensure that the amount of statutory maternity or adoption pay that new mothers and adopters receive over the first 6 weeks is calculated based on their normal earnings, not their furloughed pay.

Individuals who have been furloughed and whose period of family-related pay or Maternity Allowance begins on or after 25th April 2020 will be in scope of the change. Individuals whose period of family-related pay began before 25th April 2020 may see their entitlement affected. However, we anticipate that this will be a small number of people due to the fact that, for most people starting family-related pay before 25 April, the earnings assessment period will have taken place before the furlough scheme was initiated.

In a situation where employers decide to 'top-up' statutory pay for their employees on a contractual basis, they are able to claim this money through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

■ Parental Leave: Coronavirus

Ben Lake:

[41574]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of extending (a) maternity and (b) paternity leave in response to the covid-19 outbreak and associated social distancing guidance.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: During this difficult time parents retain their entitlements to Maternity and Paternity Leave, allowing parents to bond and care for their new child and for mothers to recover from birth. We have no plans to extend Maternity or Paternity Leave at this stage.

■ Pneumoconiosis: Compensation

Alexander Stafford:

[40821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that family members of people who have underlying industrial diseases, but who die from covid-19, are allowed to put in posthumous claims to the Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis Compensation Scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Under the terms of the Coal Industry Pneumoconiosis Compensation Scheme (CIPCS), formerly the Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis Compensation Scheme, there is provision for posthumous claims to be made. The criteria for a posthumous claim are:

- Employment with British Coal (which extends to employment with contractors or in a licensed mine); and
- 10 years or more of employment in the coal mining industry; and
- Having been in receipt of Industrial Injuries Disablement (IIDB) for Pneumoconiosis (Prescribed Disease D1 (PD D1)) or one of the other qualifying diseases, which does not include Covid-19; or
- Pneumoconiosis or one of the other qualifying disease, which does not include Covid-19 appearing on the Death Certificate.

Where a former miner was not in receipt of IIDB during life a request can be made, within a year of their death, to the DWP for a retrospective assessment. In instances in which there was no IIDB assessment during life or a retrospective request either is not possible or successful, a claim can be made if pneumoconiosis appears on the Death Certificate.

Alexander Stafford:

[40823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many people have put in claims to the Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis Compensation Scheme in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire, (c) the borough of Rotherham and (d) Rother Valley constituency in the last calendar year.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

A breakdown of claims received under the Coal Workers Pneumoconiosis Compensation Scheme by area requested during the last full calendar year (2019) are set out below:

- (a) 132 (England)
- (b) 41 (Yorkshire)
- (c) 16 (Borough of Rotherham)
- (d) 3 (Rother Valley Constituency)

For information:

- The address of the claimant has been used (as opposed to using the last known postcode of a deceased miner) to define the origin of each claim.
- 'The Borough of Rotherham' has been taken as being postcode districts S60-S63, S65 and S66.
- 'Rother Valley Constituency' was ascertained using <https://members.parliament.uk/constituencies/>.

■ Remote Working: Pregnancy

Marsha De Cordova:

[39769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps are being taken to protect pregnant women who are unable to work from home.

Paul Scully:

Government advice is clear. If at all possible, people should work at home and where they cannot, employers should ensure that the work environment is a safe one and follow all relevant public health guidance. This advice applies equally to pregnant women.

Government is determined to ensure that pregnant women do not suffer detriment at work in any circumstances, including where they have followed public health guidance.

The Coronavirus outbreak has not changed the law on pregnancy and maternity discrimination. There is no place for it under any circumstances. If a pregnant woman is dismissed or made redundant on the grounds of her pregnancy, this is automatically unfair dismissal.

Under Health and Safety at Work legislation, it remains the employer's responsibility to put in place arrangements to control health and safety risks. There are already specific requirements in place for pregnant workers and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) sets out the expectations around risk assessments, finding alternative work and medical suspension. HSE will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks where it is clear an employer is not following PHE guidance properly.

In terms of new specific coronavirus interventions, Government guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme makes it clear that pregnant women can be furloughed if they and their employer agree, and provided they meet the normal eligibility requirements.

■ Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund

Tom Hunt:

[40774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take urgent steps to ensure that floating bar and restaurant businesses that are not eligible for business rates are able to access the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund has been designed to support smaller businesses in some of the sectors which have been hit hardest by the measures taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The scheme has 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.

On 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to local authorities. This additional fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs such as rents rather than business rates. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in a range of shared workspaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would meet the criteria for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates. Local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need.

Stephen Hammond:[\[41407\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to expand the (a) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and (b) the business rate holiday due to the outbreak of covid-19 to (a) dentists, (b) osteopaths, (c) physiotherapists, (d) veterinary surgeries, (e) providers of shared office space, (f) financial advisors in retail premises and (g) language schools.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund have been designed to support smaller businesses and some of the sectors which have been hit hardest by the measures taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The 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.

Through the Covid-19 crisis we have continued to look at the performance of business support scheme and introduce changes, including the recently announced Bounce Back Loans.

On the 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to local authorities. This additional fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would meet the criteria for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates. But local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need. The allocation of funding will be at the discretion of local authorities.

■ Small Business Grants Fund

Grahame Morris:

[\[40584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will allow local authorities to retain any surplus funding allocated for the business support grant to distribute further grants to local businesses that did not qualify under that scheme's initial criteria.

Nadhim Zahawi:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The Department is in regular contact with local government to understand how the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund are rolling out, as well as the impact they are having on businesses. The main priority of the Government is that funding can get out to eligible businesses as quickly as possible.

On 1 May 2020, the Business Secretary announced the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund, which is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs - not linked to the business rates system. Where local authorities have surplus funding from their original allocations, they can use up to 5% of their allocation to provide these discretionary grants. Local authorities that have used, or expect to use, all of their allocation will receive an additional 5% to meet the cost of these discretionary grants.

■ Small Business Grants Fund: Coronavirus

Scott Benton:

[\[39682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that small businesses who pay business rates as part of their rental agreement with their landlord are able to access the Small Business Grants Fund for covid-19 support on the same basis as those small businesses who are directly registered for business rates payments.

Paul Scully:

Only businesses with their own assessment for business rates and which are eligible for either Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rates Relief (RRR) will be eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund. Businesses which are not ratepayers in their own right are not eligible.

The Government understands that for some shared spaces and service offices, individual users may not have their own rating assessment and may not therefore be eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund.

Therefore, on 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to local authorities. This additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared work spaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would otherwise meet the criteria for Small

Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates. Local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need.

■ **Small Business Grants Fund: Tourism**

Scott Benton:

[\[39683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that manufacturers making Blackpool rock and other products exclusively for the tourism sector can access the covid-19 small business grants scheme on the same basis as other tourism businesses.

Paul Scully:

All businesses in England in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) and Rural Rates Relief (RRR) in the business rates system will be eligible for a payment of £10,000. This is estimated to apply to around 730,000 businesses across England and eligibility is not determined by sector.

Additionally, on 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to local authorities. Whilst this Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is primarily aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates and business rates reliefs, local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need so long as they are not eligible for either a Small Business Grant, a Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant or Self-employed Income Support Scheme funding.

Scott Benton:

[\[39740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend the covid-19 grant scheme for tourism and hospitality firms to small bed and breakfast businesses that are currently ineligible because they pay council tax and not business rates.

Paul Scully:

On 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to local authorities. This additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared workspaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would otherwise meet the criteria for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates. Local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need.

■ **Small Businesses: Beer**

Owen Thompson:

[\[39638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the independent brewing sector on

support required by that sector to begin operating again once social distancing measures are lifted.

Paul Scully:

The Government is engaging regularly with the Society of Independent Brewers (SIBA) to assess how the independent brewing sector can return to normal operations following the current COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Small Businesses: Billing**

Matt Western:

[\[39739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to tackle late payments to small businesses.

Paul Scully:

Legislation already exists under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, which sets out that payment terms between two businesses should not exceed 60 days, unless they are fair to both parties. Additionally, suppliers can claim statutory interest, and debt recovery costs, on invoices not paid within the agreed period or (if no period is agreed) within 30 days. It also establishes maximum 30-day payment terms for transactions with public authorities.

The Government is completely focussed on fulfilling our manifesto commitment to clamp down on late payment and strengthen the powers of the Small Business Commissioner (SBC) to support small businesses who are least able to cover financial shortfalls and find temporary finance more difficult and more expensive to obtain.

The Government has transferred the administration of the Code to the Office of the SBC in March to unify prompt payment measures under one umbrella and we continue to consult on extending its powers. We have also taken a tough compliance approach to large companies who do not comply with the Payment Practices Reporting Duty and will use enforcement powers to prosecute those who do not comply where obliged.

■ **Small Businesses: Coronavirus**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40485\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support SMEs during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government has announced a package of support for businesses to help with their ongoing business costs in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. In particular, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has been working across Government to provide £13 billion of grant funding to help small and rural businesses and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors manage their cashflow through this period.

This support will take the form of two grant funding schemes, the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF).

Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF):

All businesses in England in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) and Rural Rates Relief (RRR) in the business rates system will be eligible for a payment of £10,000.

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF):

Businesses in England that would have been in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount (which covers retail, hospitality and leisure) on 11 March with a rateable value of less than £51,000 will be eligible for the following cash grants per property:

- Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of up to and including £15,000 will receive a grant of £10,000.
- Eligible businesses in these sectors with a property that has a rateable value of over £15,000 and less than £51,000 will receive a grant of £25,000.

Sir John Hayes:

[40487]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support SMEs to design new ways of working in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Government is already supporting Be the Business, the business-led independent charity which launched in 2017: its key intention is to help every UK SME to improve their productivity and is backed by some of Britain's most high-profile businesses. In response to the COVID19 outbreak, Be the Business have augmented their original offer of support by publishing a range of online advice and guidance to help SMEs adapt their business practices. This includes case studies, 'how to guides', podcasts and video interviews sharing the experiences of business owners and entrepreneurs who have already made changes to adapt their business to survive in the new business environment. Be the Business are also adapting their existing support programmes to help SMEs prepare for recovery and build resilience, including via one-to-one virtual surgeries, peer-to-peer learning networks and a 12-week rapid response mentoring programme.

The £9 million Business Basics Programme, launched in June 2018, is already testing innovative ways of encouraging SMEs to take-up proven technology (such as accountancy or customer relationship management software) and business practices that can boost productivity.

Our regular contact with major UK Business Representative Organisations (BROs) – including with the Federation for Small Businesses, the British Chambers of Commerce and MAKE UK, the Manufacturers Organisation and UK Finance – has been increased considerably, to understand where support is needed most for SMEs. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have held weekly calls with the BROs

to gain feedback on government support measures; and we have initiated additional calls to announce additions and developments to the suite of COVID19 business finance, such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme.

Government departments are also hosting a series of free webinars - via Teams, Twitter and Facebook - week commencing 4 May to help businesses understand the support available during the COVID outbreak.

This is in addition to the business support already launched in March to help businesses in COVID19: this includes

- A Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month. The scheme will be backdated to March 1 and available for at least three months, with first grants to be paid within weeks.
- Deferral of the next quarter of VAT payments for firms, until the end of June - representing a £30bn injection into the economy.
- £330bn worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses.
- A Bounce Back Loans scheme, which will provide loans of up to £50,000 to benefit small businesses with a 100% government-backed guarantee for lenders. These loans will be interest free for the first 12 months and businesses can apply online through a short and simple form.
- A Self-Employed Income Support Scheme will help eligible freelance workers receive up to £2,500 per month in grants for at least three months.

Dr James Davies:

[40681]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the financial sector on additional financial support that may be made available to SMEs which are ineligible for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is part of a comprehensive package of support for SMEs, including business rates relief, grants and support for wage packages. The Government continues to seek to identify new areas for improvement across this support.

The Government held discussions with the banking industry prior to the launch of the CBILS. The Business Secretary continues to hold a regular dialogue with each of the biggest CBILS lenders to address feedback on how the scheme has been working and closely monitor its implementation.

The Business Secretary continues to work with banks and other finance providers to help SMEs access the finance they need and has discussed with these organisations the alternative forms of support for businesses that they are offering. The Government welcomed the statement by UK Finance on behalf of the financial sector

which announced that banks, building societies and credit card providers are committed to supporting their business customers in continuing to trade.

Fleur Anderson:

[\[40780\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will extend the Coronavirus Small Business Grant scheme to all active businesses, including (a) limited companies and (b) sole traders registered with HMRC who are not eligible for business rates relief.

Paul Scully:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The two existing business grants schemes have helped support many thousands of small businesses. In order to ensure that Local Authorities can help businesses that are not eligible for the grant schemes, the Government has allocated an additional £617 million funding to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants.

The following businesses should be considered as a priority for these funds:

- Businesses in a range of shared workspaces;
- Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment;
- B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; and
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

■ Space Technology

Jessica Morden:

[\[39823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he is having with UK satellite companies on their development of capability in Cislunar space; and if he will make a statement

Amanda Solloway:

The UK is investing to participate in future lunar activities including Cislunar space through our membership of the European Space Agency. This is an independent organisation and not part of the EU. In November 2019, the Government invested 218M€ in ESA's exploration programme which covers our involvement in the International Space Station, and the exploration of the Moon and Mars. ESA has provided workshops for industry explaining the future opportunities. Specifically, for the Moon the future opportunities include building elements of the Gateway a space station that will orbit the Moon, led by NASA; a commercial data relay service and a study for a future telecommunication and navigation network service. UK officials and ESA are working closely together with SSTL and Goonhilly Earth Station to launch the first lunar communications satellite in 2023. This activity will enable the UK to deliver on the joint Statement of Intent between the UK Space Agency and NASA to identify areas of cooperation for Lunar exploration and research.

■ Space Technology: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[40503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help the UK space industry use its skills to support the UK response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK Space Agency, working with NHS England and the European Space Agency, has made £2.6 million available through a new, fast, contracting process enabling robust scrutiny, but swift development for 'close to market' ideas to manage pandemics.

The UK Space Agency feeds information and data about the current state of the space sector into the wider Cabinet Office contingency planning strategy. In order to facilitate this, the UK Space Agency distributes regular surveys to space operators to understand their resilience.

The UK Space Agency is also working with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to accelerate drone applications within healthcare to support logistics, such as the safe delivery of personal protective equipment and test samples between sites.

■ St George's Day

Tom Hunt:

[39812]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to make St George's Day a bank holiday.

Paul Scully:

The Government regularly receives requests for additional bank and public holidays to commemorate a variety of occasions – such as cultural, history, military and religious events. The current pattern on public and bank holidays is well established and acknowledged throughout the country.

■ Take-away Food: Businesses

Julian Sturdy:

[39654]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to encourage and facilitate the ordinary operation of (a) takeaway and drive-through food services and (b) other businesses who can operate safely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Department has published sector specific advice for a number of industries which can currently remain open. This advice can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>. This is to enable companies and their employees remain safe.

The health of our people and the protection of our NHS is the Government's top priority. The Government has been very clear that in order to limit the transmission of coronavirus, people should only travel to work where they absolutely cannot work from home, and provided that they and members of their household are well. This is consistent with advice from the Chief Medical Officer. We have on going discussions with businesses, trade unions and BRO's on how we can keep everyone safe both now and as the Government framework adjusts in the future.

■ **Tourists: Compensation**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[39603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions his department has had with representatives of the travel and tourism industry on compensating holidaymakers that (a) no longer wish to and (b) are unable to travel following the outbreak of covid-19.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the extremely difficult circumstances consumers and many businesses are currently facing. BEIS officials have held regular discussions with travel and tourism sector representatives, travel businesses and consumer advocacy bodies to assess the impact of cancellations made in light of the covid-19 outbreak.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Blood: Contamination**

Taiwo Owatemi:

[\[39759\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the timetable is for discussions between the Government and victims and families of the contaminated blood scandal on a framework for compensation.

Aaron Bell:

[\[39806\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Government will next hold discussions with (a) victims and (b) victims' families of the contaminated blood scandal on a framework for compensation.

Dr Liam Fox:

[\[40475\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's timeframe is for holding discussions with victims and families of the contaminated blood scandal on a framework for compensation.

Penny Mordaunt:

In January 2020, the then Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Minister for Patient Safety met campaigners representing the people infected and affected, and campaigners raised a number of issues about the support that would assist them outside of the Inquiry process. Ministers have committed to looking at these issues

carefully, including to consider a request to look at a framework for compensation before the Inquiry reports, and to report back on where progress can be made. The Paymaster General is the lead Minister for the Inquiry and is taking forward these actions.

■ **Borders: Northern Ireland**

Stephen Farry: [\[40795\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, who the proposed participants are who are not civil servants for the meeting of the Specialised Committee on the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol scheduled for 30 April 2020.

Penny Mordaunt:

As set out in the New Decade, New Approach deal, the Government will ensure that representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive are invited to be part of the UK delegation in any meetings of the UK-EU Specialised or Joint Committees discussing Northern Ireland specific matters which are also being attended by the Irish Government as part of the European Union's delegation. This applied to the meeting on the 30 April 2020.

■ **Conditions of Employment: Coronavirus**

Dan Jarvis: [\[41453\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to extend the death in service benefit to families of all key workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Penny Mordaunt:

We recognise the extraordinary efforts of frontline workers, who are going above and beyond to ensure people get the support they need in these incredibly challenging times. The government will continue to review the support provided to public sector workers on the front line of responding to this crisis.

■ **Press Conferences: Coronavirus**

Nadia Whittome: [\[41211\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, for what reasons only people aged 18 and over are able to submit a question to the Government's daily covid-19 press conference.

Penny Mordaunt:

We have introduced a process to verify the individuals asking questions. Accepting questions from people under the age of 18 will require further processes and additional protections to ensure that privacy is protected.

■ Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

Stephen Farry: [\[41196\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, which (a) members of the UK delegation and (b) other participants excluding civil servants were present at (i) the first meeting and (ii) any subsequent meetings of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee.

Penny Mordaunt:

The first Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee meeting was co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP. I accompanied him, as alternate co-chair. The meeting was attended by a small UK delegation, which included two ministers from the Northern Ireland Executive.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Churches: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford: [\[42227\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, when churches will be re-opened for worshippers.

Andrew Selous:

It is essential that when church buildings reopen for public worship or private prayer by members of the public, that it is done safely. In the meantime, churches across the country are holding virtual services and offering support to the vulnerable and elderly. Where they are unable to do this locally national resources are available such as the national church service on a Sunday and the Daily Hope phone line.

The Church is adapting and rising to the challenge of supporting their community physically and spiritually during this medical emergency. The Church is regularly reviewing the medical advice and is in regular conversation with the Government. What is needed is a wide range of detailed protocols and practices to be established to ensure that church buildings and services do not represent risks for renewed transmission of the virus.

The Church of England is currently preparing for the reopening of church buildings, but it must be recognised that not all churches and clergy may be able to satisfy all the necessary criteria, especially in the early stages of the recovery phase. This has been the experience in other jurisdictions such as Germany where the Government has advised that churches can be reopened for public worship.

Alexander Stafford: [\[42228\]](#)

To ask the right hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, for what reasons churches and other places of worship were not listed as essential services in the covid-19 lockdown guidance.

Andrew Selous:

Following the address to the nation made by the Prime Minister on the 23rd March, the Church of England took the difficult decision that it would ask this clergy to close their parish churches to the public due to the unprecedented high risk of transmission of the covid-19 virus. While the church buildings and halls were shut, their congregations have continued, where possible, to live out their vocation and mission to serve the needs of their local communities during the lockdown period.

The Government listed the clergy as key workers during the medical emergency, and it has enabled them to continue to meet the needs of their communities right across the country, serving as chaplains, officiating at funerals, administering last rites, operating food banks and other essential community services.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT■ **Football: Females****Julie Elliott:**[\[40607\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the financial sustainability of women's football; and what plans the Government has to support that sport during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to her on 27 April to Question 38579:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-04-21/38579/>

■ **Football: Tickets****Scott Benton:**[\[R\] \[40782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with Premier League football clubs on devising a level of reimbursement for season ticket holders, and for people who have already purchased tickets, in the event that the remainder of the games left in the current season take place behind closed doors or do not take place at all.

Scott Benton:[\[40783\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with English Football League football clubs on a level of reimbursement for (a) season ticket holders and (b) people who have already purchased tickets in the eventuality that the remainder of the games left in the current season cannot admit fans or do not take place at all.

Nigel Huddleston:

We have been liaising closely with the sport sector, including the Premier League and English Football League, to discuss a wide range of matters during these difficult times.

This includes whether it would be possible for events to go ahead and in what capacity, whilst making it clear that the Government will not consent to events taking place unless we can be sure it is safe to do so. The Premier League and English Football League will be considering the player, staff, and of course ticket holders in their assessments.

The Government will continue to liaise closely with all the football authorities as the situation develops.

■ Gambling

Carolyn Harris:

[\[40684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether (a) gambling operators, (b) the Gambling Commission or (c) his Department has a statutory duty of care for protecting vulnerable people under section 1(c) of the Gambling Act 2005.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Gambling Act 2005 does not create a statutory duty of care on operators, the Gambling Commission, or the Department. However, the protection of vulnerable people is one of the primary objectives of the Act, permeating many of the provisions such as the duty on the Gambling Commission to promote the licensing objectives, which include the protection of children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling. The Act created an extensive framework for player protection with a statutory basis for the protection of vulnerable people, including through licence revocation and financial penalties. The range of specific and extensive regulatory and licensing measures mean licensees are accountable for player protection failures.

■ Gambling: Coronavirus

Owen Thompson:

[\[40687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many complaints have been received by the Advertising Standards Authority on adverts for online gambling sites during the covid-19 outbreak.

Owen Thompson:

[\[40688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many adverts for online gambling sites on online channels have been found to be in breach of existing standards (a) to protect adult audiences and (b) to limit exposure for under-18s during the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[40767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the level of online gambling advertising on television during the covid-19 lockdown.

Nigel Huddleston:

Gambling advertising is subject to strict controls set out in the advertising codes of practice issued by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP). Rules on content mean that these adverts must never seek to exploit or appeal to children or vulnerable people, and rules on placement mean that they must never be targeted at these groups. Both the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) – as the independent advertising regulator – and the Gambling Commission can take action where gambling advertising is found to be in breach of these rules.

The Advertising Standards Authority received 82 complaints about gambling advertising in March this year, and a further 97 complaints between 1 and 28 April. This is compared to 79 complaints received in January, and 71 received in February. Of the 179 complaints received between 1 March and 28 April, 109 related to TV advertising, 8 to radio advertising and the rest to online and non-broadcast media. The ASA does not record what proportion of these adverts were promoting online gambling sites. It did not find any of the adverts complained about to be in breach of the codes for gambling advertising but did take enforcement action where a gambling advert was found to be misleading and therefore in breach of the wider advertising codes.

Between 23 March and 28 April, the Gambling Commission identified a total of 11 online adverts for online gambling products that were in breach of the rules on advertising that relate to the protection of vulnerable adults. Gambling Commission intervention with the operators involved ensured that these adverts were removed or altered. During that period it did not find any adverts to be in breach of rules requiring adverts not to be targeted at children or of particular appeal to them.

The government, Gambling Commission and the ASA do not hold information about the volume of broadcast advertising promoting online gambling. The Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage has written to operators to urge them to increase the prominence of safer gambling messaging adverts across all channels during the current period. In addition, the ASA has warned operators that they must continue to abide by existing rules and must not look to exploit the current situation. Industry group the Betting and Gaming Council announced on 27 April that in response to public concern its members would replace adverts for online slot, casino and bingo products on TV and radio with safer gambling adverts, or donate the slots to charity, for an initial period of six weeks.

■ Social Enterprises: Coronavirus**Alexander Stafford:****[40803]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 business support package on social enterprises.

Alexander Stafford:

[40804]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he has taken to support social enterprises during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises the vital work social enterprises and co-operatives are doing to support communities and ease demands on public services in light of Covid-19. In recognising this, we have put in place a number of emergency measures to support these organisations during this time.

The government's Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) has been made available to social enterprises and co-operatives. This scheme will provide lenders with a government-backed guarantee of 80% on each loan, ensuring eligible social enterprises and co-operatives gain access to crucial finance with no upfront costs and lower initial repayments. Big Society Capital has established and capitalised a Resilience and Recovery Loan Fund which aims to improve access to CBILS for social enterprises. The initiative has been enabled by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) accelerating the release of previously committed dormant bank accounts money.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is also available to social enterprises and co-operatives. This scheme allows employers to claim for a cash grant of up to 80% of a furloughed employee's wages. Many organisations are already accessing this support measure.

Additionally, the government announced a £750 million support package earlier this month for charities. A number of social enterprises that are delivering vital work during the coronavirus outbreak will be eligible to apply for this support package.

Over the coming weeks and months, the government will monitor and evaluate the support that has been provided to social enterprises and co-operatives, and it continues to consider what else can be done. This includes examining further initiatives around access to finance for social enterprises and cooperatives.

■ **Tourism: Coronavirus**

Scott Benton:

[42206]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with tourism businesses on developing guidance on (a) social distancing and (b) improved hygiene measures to help facilitate the re-opening of those business as quickly as possible following the covid-19 lockdown.

Nigel Huddleston:

I have held multiple recent discussions with tourism businesses on this issue. These include meetings last week with the Tourism Industry Council and with senior leaders from across the business events industry. My Department is also collating evidence from tourism businesses across the country on the potential impact of any changes to the current measures.

We will take into account information and feedback from the sector as we review our approach and will continue to be guided by the latest medical advice. As soon as it is safe to do so, we will encourage people to book holidays and support the recovery of the tourism sector.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[\[39621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will appoint a Special Envoy for Children reporting directly to the Prime Minister to lead an emergency Children's Taskforce on the impact Covid-19 is having on children.

Vicky Ford:

The government recognises the significant effect COVID-19 may have on children and will do whatever it takes to protect them. The government has taken a range of actions to ensure that children are supported, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This includes keeping schools and other educational settings open for vulnerable children, such as those with a social worker or with an Education, Health and Care Plan, and encouraging attendance from them where that would be in their best interests; providing resources to support children to continue learning at home; funding vouchers for free schools meals; and providing additional funding for the NSPCC to support their helpline for those with concerns about children. The government has also given local authorities more than £3.2 billion to support local services at this time, including children's social care. The department has also announced additional support for adoptive families and up to £12.1 million of new money to continue 14 separate projects that are aimed at supporting vulnerable children and families.

Ministers and officials have had, and continue to have, discussions with organisations representing the interests of children, including with the Children's Commissioner for England, in order to monitor and minimise the impact for children, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. The department has also already established a Vulnerable Children and Young People National Board to provide a forum to share good practice across the sector and provide a cohesive and ambitious system-wide response to support vulnerable children and young people through the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Secretary of State for Education will therefore not appoint an additional role of a Special Envoy for Children.

■ Children: Day Care

Neil Coyle:

[\[39634\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on working with external partners to deliver the planned

digital integration of the Tax-Free Childcare scheme once covid-19 social distancing measures are lifted.

Vicky Ford:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and ministers at the department, meet regularly with colleagues to discuss the Department for Education's agenda.

■ **Children: Social Services**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[40635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which organisations were consulted on changes to regulations in children's social care before the publication of the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; and over what period were those organisations consulted.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[40636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Answer of 24 June 2019 to Question 266173 on Children in Care, on what date his Department began assessing changes to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 which have been included in the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[40637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which organisations requested changes to the (a) Residential Family Centres Regulations 2002, (b) Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005, (c) Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, (d) Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, (e) Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Inspection of Local Authorities) Regulations 2007, (f) Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, (g) Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, (h) Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, (i) Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and (j) Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Children's Homes etc.) Regulations 2015 which were subsequently incorporated into the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[40638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many local authorities have informed his Department that they have been unable to arrange for a social worker to have a telephone or video link call with each child in their care at least once every six weeks during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[40639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, on what date he discussed with the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families for England the amendments to the children's social care regulations; and what her response was to those proposed changes.

Vicky Ford:

The safety of vulnerable children remains a high priority, and we have taken a number of steps to ensure this is prioritised during the COVID-19 outbreak, including ensuring that vulnerable children can continue to attend education and childcare settings that are closed to the majority of children.

The vast majority of statutory duties on children's social care remain unchanged. However, in light of the current pressures COVID-19 is bringing on social care services, and the risk of such pressures increasing, we have reviewed our regulations to allow some temporary and limited flexibility, to be used where absolutely necessary, to enable children's services to continue to support vulnerable children in the most effective and safest way during the outbreak. The regulatory changes will be kept under continuous review and will expire on 25 September 2020 unless extended.

The department consulted a wide range of stakeholders and local authority practitioners about what changes to children's social care regulations would be appropriate and has carried out an internal review of all existing regulations over the last couple of months since the start of the outbreak. The changes made anticipate the potential issues children's social care may face during this period, as well as those currently being dealt with. Our starting point has been to make minimal changes to ensure the safe functioning of children's social care during COVID-19. The additional flexibilities should only be used when absolutely necessary and in line with overarching safeguarding and welfare duties.

The department has produced COVID-19 guidance for local authorities on children's social care which is currently being updated to include a plain English explanation of what each regulation change does. This guidance is due to be published very shortly and will be kept under review alongside the Regulations.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Pre-school Education**Caroline Lucas:**[\[40553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he made of the effect on the viability of the early years sector of his decision to place entitlement restrictions on early years education and childcare settings under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; and if he will make it his policy to remove those restrictions.

Vicky Ford:

HM Revenue & Customs' guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has always been clear that "where employers receive public funding for staff costs, and that funding is continuing, we expect employers to use that money to continue to pay staff in the usual fashion – and correspondingly not furlough them".

The guidance published by the Department for Education on 17 April confirms that early years providers remain eligible for the CJRS while continuing to receive early entitlement funding via local authorities. This guidance sets out that early years

providers can access the CJRS to cover up to the proportion of their pay bill which could be considered to have been paid for from their private income.

This is a complex situation involving schemes which must be fair and work for all sectors. This approach is vital to support providers whilst ensuring that staff are not furloughed if staff costs are paid for by public sector funding.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures> and <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[33699]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will guarantee programme income for (a) grant, (b) contracted and (c) other provider types until the end of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: We are very grateful for how further education (FE) providers are responding to the unique challenge of COVID-19. We recognise the financial impact that this is having on the FE sector and are working to make changes where we can.

We have confirmed that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to pay grant-funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019/20 funding year. Allocations for 2020/21 have now also been confirmed and payments will be made as scheduled. Up-to-date details are contained in operational guidance available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision>.

For colleges in significant financial difficulties, the existing support arrangements remain in place, including short-term emergency funding.

In addition, we have been regularly liaising with the sector. On 24 April 2020, we published details of a provider relief scheme that will offer targeted financial support for training providers. This is designed to retain capacity within the apprenticeships and adult education sector to deliver the skills that we need to support economic recovery. As part of that, we want to maintain support for existing learners and employers and to enable new learners to enrol. Full details of the scheme are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-post-16-provider-relief-scheme>.

This is in addition to the series of wider measures to support employers and employees set out by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3

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

We are continuing to work through remaining issues on provider funding.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[41569]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to ensure that students receive all key stages of learning they may have missed during the covid-19 lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is doing everything it can to ensure that schools have the guidance and support they need to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on all students.

The Department is committed to ensuring that children can continue to learn at home in these very difficult circumstances. We recognise that many schools and colleges have already shared resources for children who are at home, and we are grateful for this.

The Department has issued guidance for schools which signposts to an initial list of free online resources identified by educational experts and teachers. Many other suppliers have also helpfully made their resources available for free. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources>.

The Department has also issued information, guidance and support to parents and carers of children who are learning from home at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supporting-your-childrens-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Leading state schools have worked together to open The Oak National Academy, which was launched online on 20 April. This new initiative is led by 40 teachers who have assembled video lessons and resources for any teacher in the country to make use of if they wish to do so. 180 video lessons will be provided each week, across a broad range of subjects, for every year group from Reception through to Year 10. Additionally, the BBC has developed resources for families as part of a comprehensive new education package, which is now available on TV and online at BBC Bitesize. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The Department is also considering, with a range of partner organisations, how best to support all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, to make up for time spent out of school.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Mrs Sharon Hodgson:

[\[38874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to provide free school meal support to children during future school holidays that take place during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Provision for free school meals is ordinarily term time only. However, during the Easter holidays the department met the costs of offering free school meals to eligible pupils not attending school. This was in recognition of the unprecedented levels of disruption and uncertainty for schools during this time. We currently have no plans to extend the scheme into future holiday periods but will keep the situation under review.

However, the department remains committed to supporting children and families through our 2020 Holiday Activities and Food programme and continues to work with coordinators on appropriate provision this summer. 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.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Hilary Benn:

[\[40511\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of telephone calls to Edenred have been unanswered since 23 March 2020 to date.

Vicky Ford:

During this period, we are asking schools to support pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. However, 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 as an alternative option, with costs covered by the Department for Education.

Voucher codes are being processed and many thousands of families are redeeming them. As of 28 April our supplier, Edenred, reported that over 16,500 schools had placed orders for the scheme and as of Monday 4 May, Edenred has reported that over £47 million worth of voucher codes has been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme.

Schools can contact Edenred using either the email address or phone number set up specifically for the Department of Education's national voucher scheme (freeschoolmeals@edenred.com or 0333 400 5932). Call volumes are very high at the moment so we would recommend submitting queries via email where possible. We do not hold call handling details.

We are working closely with Edenred on the performance of the voucher scheme and their engagement with queries from schools.

As always, we thank schools for their patience and for ensuring that families most in need continue to receive the support they require.

Stella Creasy: [\[41038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support the Government is providing to schools that wish to access free school meals vouchers from a retailer not listed on the Government's National Voucher Scheme.

Stella Creasy: [\[41039\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the costs to schools that wish to access free school meals vouchers from retailers not listed on the Government's National Voucher Scheme will be reimbursed in full.

Vicky Ford:

During this period, we are asking schools to support children who are eligible for and claiming benefits related free school meals, by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. We know that many schools are successfully delivering food parcels or arranging food collections for eligible children, and we encourage this approach where it is possible. However, 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 as an alternative option, with costs covered by the Department for Education. As of 28 April our supplier, Edenred, reported that over 16,500 schools had placed orders for the scheme and as of Monday 4 May, Edenred has reported that over £47 million worth of voucher codes has been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme.

Through the national voucher scheme, schools and families could initially access eGift cards for Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Waitrose and M&S. On Monday 27 April Aldi was added to this list and on Wednesday 29 April McColl's were also added. We recognise that it may not be convenient or possible for some families to visit one of these supermarkets and we are continuing to work to see if additional supermarkets can be added to this list.

If the national voucher scheme is not suitable for families in their local area, schools can provide alternative vouchers for a local shop or supermarket and can be reimbursed for associated costs.

We are providing additional funding to schools to cover unavoidable additional costs incurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak that cannot be met from their existing resources. This includes free school meal costs which are not covered by the national voucher system in situations where there is no access to appropriate local supermarkets

■ Higher Education: Coronavirus

Colleen Fletcher:

[41474]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the implications for its policies of the proposal by Universities UK to Government, entitled Achieving stability in the higher education sector following covid-19, on support needed in that sector; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

Today my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, has announced a package of measures, drawing on proposals from the universities sector, to stabilise university admissions this autumn and ensure sustainability in higher education (HE) at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

Temporary student number controls will be put in place for domestic and EU students for academic year 2020/21, to ensure a fair, structured distribution of students across providers. These measures mean that providers will be able to recruit students up to a temporary set level, based on provider forecasts, which allows additional growth of up to 5% in the next academic year. The Education Secretary will also have the discretion to allocate an additional 10,000 places on top of the controls, of which 5,000 will be allocated to students studying nursing or allied health courses, to ensure growing numbers that will support our vital public services. This measure will only apply to full-time, undergraduate, UK/EU domiciled students, with certain specified exemptions. These controls will not apply to international (non-EU) students.

The Office for Students (OfS), the regulator in England, will also consult on a new temporary condition of registration. The OfS' proposed condition would prohibit registered providers from engaging in any form of conduct which, in the opinion of the OfS, could reasonably have a material negative effect on the stability and/or integrity of the English HE sector.

The government has also: reprofiled tuition fee payments, expected to be worth £2.6 billion, for providers so that they receive more cash in the first term of academic year 2020/21; announced £100 million of public funding will be brought forward to the current academic year to help protect vital university research activities in England; and, confirmed providers are eligible to apply for the government financial support schemes estimated by the OfS to be worth at least £700 million to the sector.

Universities have an integral part to play in our economy, society and culture, which is highlighted now more than ever through their leading role in the fight against the virus. That is why we are introducing a package of measures to boost support for students, stabilise the admissions system and ease the pressures on universities' finances.

I have written to all hon. Members today, with full details of the package, which have also been published on GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students>.

Emma Hardy:

[\[41578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to engage with (a) small and specialist higher education institutions, (b) institutions that are not members of Universities UK and (c) universities in remote, rural and coastal areas on their financial sustainability as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

We recognise that the COVID-19 outbreak is an unprecedented situation and brings significant challenges to the higher education (HE) sector.

My department engages regularly with representative bodies covering all types of HE provider, encompassing all locations, as well as receiving representations in person and by correspondence from individual providers. We continue to work closely with the Office for Students (OfS), as the regulator for the HE sector in England, to ensure that we maintain an up-to-date understanding of the financial risks and implications COVID-19 is bringing to bear on providers.

The OfS has stated that one of its key priorities during the outbreak is to support the financial sustainability of the sector and it has enhanced its monitoring to identify any potential risks. Providers with concerns about their financial viability or sustainability have been encouraged to contact the OfS at the earliest opportunity. The OfS ensures that it keeps the department aware of its current assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 across the whole English HE sector.

My department is working closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Her Majesty's Treasury to ensure that we consider the implications across the whole of England arising from COVID-19 related financial sustainability risk in HE.

■ **Music: GCE A-level**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[40808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils study music at A-Level in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire and (c) Rother Valley constituency.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[40809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils study music at GCSE level in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire and (c) Rother Valley constituency.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[40810\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils study music at secondary school level in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire and (c) Rother Valley constituency.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[40811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils study music at primary school level in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire and (c) Rother Valley constituency.

Nick Gibb:

The number of pupils[1] entered[2] for music GCSE[3],[4] and GCE A Level[5],[6] in Rother Valley and Yorkshire and the Humber for the academic year 2018/19 is shown in the table below:

REGION/LOCAL AUTHORITY [7]	GCSE	GCE A LEVEL
Rother Valley	29	6
Yorkshire and The Humber	2,334	280

The national figure for GCSE entries can be found under 'Subject data' from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised>.

The national figure for GCE A Level entries can be found under 'Underlying data:

2019 Revised' and selecting 'REVISED_A_Level_Results_by_LA_and_Region' from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/a-level-and-other-16-to-18-results-2018-to-2019-revised>

Please note that we have not provided figures for pupils studying music at primary and secondary school overall. This is because music is part of the national curriculum and is a compulsory subject between Key Stages 1 and 3. Therefore, all pupils are required to study music during these stages.

[1] Includes attempts and achievements by these pupils at the end of their year of study.

[2] Counts are for pupils who have entered exams. We do not hold data for the number of pupils who study the subject.

[3] In line with discounting rules, only one attempt is counted.

[4] Counts are for pupils with exam entries only.

[5] Represents the number of exam entries, which will differ slightly from initial registration in a subject.

[6] GCSE information is based on final data, A level data is based on revised figures.

[7] Local Authority and Region figures cover achievements in state-funded schools only. They do not include pupils recently arrived from overseas and so will not match with state-funded figures in the published data.

■ Students: Coronavirus**Colum Eastwood:****[39748]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support his Department is providing to university students tied into rental agreements 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.

Students will continue to receive scheduled payments of loans towards their living costs for the remainder of the 2019/20 academic year.

While it is for universities and private accommodation providers to make their own decisions about charging rents to absent students, we would encourage them to consider the fairness of doing so and to clearly communicate their policies to students. It is also important to stress that accommodation providers should not have instructed any student to leave. If any accommodation provider did formally instruct a student to leave the property then it would be unacceptable to continue to charge student rents.

Students who are tenants with individual private landlords should discuss the possibility of an early release from their lease. As tenants, students are entitled to support such as repayable rent reductions or postponements and assurances that eviction proceedings cannot begin against them for 3 months if they are impacted by Covid-19. However, students renting under licence (which is the case in most halls of residence) are ineligible for this support.

Students with a part-time employment contract should speak to their employer about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19> - which has been set up to help pay staff wages and keep people in employment.

We have also asked that higher education providers pay particular attention to the additional financial hardships that are being faced by student staff who have been reliant on income from campus-based jobs at this time.

If a student thinks that their accommodation provider is treating them unfairly, they can raise a complaint under the accommodation codes of practice as long as their provider is a code member. The codes can be found at: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/> ; <https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain> and: <https://www.rla.org.uk/about/nrla-code-of-practice.shtml>.

Nadia Whittome:**[39801]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for students renting private accommodation who are not able to make rental payments due to loss of earnings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

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.

Students will continue to receive scheduled payments of loans towards their living costs for the remainder of the current, 2019/20, academic year.

Students with a part-time employment contract should speak to their employer about the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been set up to help pay staff wages and keep people in employment. This can be accessed from here:

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

We have also asked that HE providers pay particular attention to the additional financial hardships that are being faced by student staff who have been reliant on income from campus-based jobs at this time.

Students who are tenants with individual private landlords are entitled to support if they are impacted by COVID-19, such as repayable rent reductions or postponements and assurances that eviction proceedings cannot begin against them for 3 months.

The government encourages universities and private hall providers to be fair in their decisions about rent charges for this period. A number of universities and large companies have waived rents for the summer term or released students early from their contracts.

It is also important to stress that accommodation providers should not have instructed any student to leave. If any accommodation provider did formally instruct a student to leave the property then it would be unacceptable to continue to charge student rents.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ **Broadband: Rural Areas**

Gareth Bacon:

[40784]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to promote rural broadband; and if she will ensure that Downe and Cudham in Orpington constituency and other rural areas that have yet to receive funding for broadband are prioritised.

Rebecca Pow:

We recognise that access to fast and reliable broadband is essential to support economic growth and thriving rural communities. We are working closely with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure rural businesses and communities get the connectivity they need.

The Government is investing record amounts to level up digital infrastructure across the UK. We are already connecting some of the hardest to reach places in the country, including through the Superfast Broadband Programme and £200 million Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme.

The Government wants nationwide coverage of gigabit-capable broadband as soon as possible and we are supporting rural areas as a priority. We have committed £5 billion of public funding to close the digital divide and ensure rural areas are not left behind. Further details will be announced in due course.

Defra has also allocated up to £79.5 million of grant funding from the Rural Development Programme for England, targeted at helping to connect businesses with broadband in some of the hardest to reach rural areas.

Those premises that do not have access to 'decent broadband' (10 Megabits per second download speeds) are able to request a Broadband Universal Service Obligation connection.

■ Food Poverty: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[39677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the ability of charity sector to meet the needs of people in food (a) poverty and (b) insecurity during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

There are large numbers of charities across the country who are supporting vulnerable people, including those who cannot afford food as a consequence of Covid-19. Defra is working closely with these charities to estimate the supply of food to charities and demand for food from users of those charities.

The food industry has pledged food and financial donations for charities to support vulnerable people's access to food by helping to fill the gap between supply and demand.

On 3 April Defra launched a £3.25 million grant opportunity to help surplus food redistributors with infrastructure and associated support to help get more food to charities working on the front line in supporting vulnerable people in need. Wrap are delivering the grant opportunity for Defra and report as of 30 April £402,000 has been awarded to 46 charities pending final compliance checks, with further applications being assessed.

Defra is working through our stakeholder forum of 43 charities, who provide services to vulnerable people, to identify what more needs to be done to ensure that people who are vulnerable have access to food during Covid-19.

■ Food: Coronavirus

Carolyn Harris:

[\[40827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what financial support has been made available to the food and drink wholesale sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19. The measures available to food and drink wholesale businesses depend on their size, and include:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for furloughing of staff;
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan;
- Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan;
- Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility;
- Statutory sick pay relief package for SMEs with fewer than 250 employees;
- Value Added Tax (VAT) deferral to the end of June;
- HMRC Time To Pay Scheme;
- Eviction protection for commercial tenants;
- £10,000 cash grant for all business in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief and Rural Rates Relief

From 4 May, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme will be available to small businesses, who will be able to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000 with a 100% Government-backed guarantee for lenders.

With counterparts across Whitehall, and through engagement with industry, we are monitoring the potential impacts COVID 19 on the food and drink wholesale sector. We remain committed to working in partnership with industry to respond to these challenges as they evolve.

Carolyn Harris:**[40830]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will provide financial support to food and drink wholesale businesses that are affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has already set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19. The measures available to food and drink wholesale businesses depend on their size, and include:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for furloughing of staff;
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan;
- Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan;
- Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility;
- Statutory sick pay relief package for SMEs with fewer than 250 employees;
- Value Added Tax (VAT) deferral to the end of June;

- HMRC Time To Pay Scheme;
- Eviction protection for commercial tenants;
- £10,000 cash grant for all business in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief and Rural Rates Relief

From 4 May, the Bounce Back Loan Scheme will be available to small businesses, who will be able to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000 with a 100% Government-backed guarantee for lenders.

With counterparts across Whitehall, and through engagement with industry, we are monitoring the potential impacts COVID 19 on the food and drink wholesale sector. We remain committed to working in partnership with industry to respond to these challenges as they evolve.

■ Milk: Competition

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger:

[40513]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of long-term competition rules derogation for milk processors in non-aligned dairy farms for (a) facilitating trading cooperative and (b) building resilience in the milk processing and supply industry.

Victoria Prentis:

In order to support milk producers, we have temporarily eased some elements of competition law to make it easier for the dairy industry to come together to maximise production, processing and storage efficiency and ensure as much product as possible can be processed into high quality dairy products. This approach will allow the market for milk to adjust to the change in demand for milk while allowing production to be restored when shops, restaurants and pubs are able to open again. Exempted activities have been developed in conjunction with the dairy industry.

Beyond this immediate and temporary measure, the Government plans to launch a range of initiatives to improve the position of milk producers. Government is keen to see greater levels of collaboration between producers and will continue to support farmers who want to harness the benefits of working together. Our Agriculture Bill includes powers to introduce a new domestic system for recognising producer organisations, which will be better tailored to the requirements of UK producers.

The Bill also includes powers to introduce and enforce statutory codes of practice to address unfair trading practices which can occur between milk producers and purchasers. We will carry out a full consultation on dairy contracts to take account of the range of stakeholder views and hope to launch the consultation later this year.

■ Milk: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[39795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will hold urgent discussions with with key stakeholders in the dairy industry on managing the milk supply chain.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is working very closely with both farmer and processor representatives through this period of disruption to manage the impact on the dairy supply chain of Covid-19 including holding a number of roundtable discussions with the sector. Farmers supplying milk to processors that sell into the food service sector have seen a significant reduction in demand and we have taken several steps to support those affected.

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 was laid before Parliament on 1 May and applies retrospectively from 1 April 2020. The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and Dairy UK have agreed to work with farmers and processors to help industry take advantage of these easements. The SI is available at the following link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/481/contents/made>

The Government's Covid-19 Business Interruption Loans scheme is available to the dairy industry and where this is appropriate for this business, I urge farm businesses to access the loans that are available to support them in this difficult period. Defra has held urgent discussions with the major banks to ensure they understand that farmers, milk buyers and milk processors are eligible for this scheme and we are working to increase awareness across the dairy industry. HMT have also now announced the new Bounce Back Loan scheme which will apply to businesses operating in agriculture. This will ensure that the smallest businesses can access up to £50,000 loans. The Government will provide lenders with a 100% guarantee on each loan, to give lenders 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.

The Government also took a number of early emergency steps to support dairy farmers and the wider sector. These included designating employees in the food sector as key workers and temporarily relaxing the normal rules on drivers' hours, enabling the sector to keep supply chains running, including deliveries from farm gate to processors.

The existing public intervention scheme for skimmed milk powder and butter continues to be available. This provides a floor price for dairy products, supporting the dairy industry to sell skimmed milk powder and butter into public intervention when the price they would receive on the open market falls below the intervention

price. The European Commission has this week approved the opening of additional measures for private storage aid which UK processors will be able to access should they chose to.

We will continue to engage closely with farmer and processor representatives to ensure that we support them throughout this challenging period.

■ **Pets: Animal Welfare**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[40708]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to introduce parity of treatment under the law for people found guilty of harming or injuring a domestic pet to bring them in line with the penalties imposed if a service dog used by the police or an assistance dog used by a visually impaired person is attacked or injured.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government remains fully committed to animal welfare and supports increasing the maximum custodial sentences for animal cruelty offences from six months to five years. This will enable courts to take a firmer approach to cases such as dog fighting, abuse of puppies and kittens, or gross neglect of farm animals. The Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on 5 February by Chris Loder MP and is due to have its Second Reading on 10 July. The Government will continue to support the Bill as it makes its way through Parliament. The proposed new maximum sentence of five years would apply to all animals under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, and hence would provide parity of treatment under the law for domestic pets, for service dogs used by the police, and for assistance dogs used by visually impaired people.

The new maximum penalty of five years is in line with campaigns by key stakeholders such as Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Blue Cross, Dogs Trust and the RSPCA. This is a positive step forward in improving animal welfare and will act as a serious deterrent against animal cruelty. The increase to five years' imprisonment will provide one of the toughest sanctions in Europe, strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare and will apply where anyone is convicted of causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

■ **Supermarkets: Coronavirus**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[40719]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 31 March 2020 to Question 33719 on Supermarkets: Coronavirus, what steps he is taking to ensure supermarkets improve the accessibility of online shopping for (a) people with disabilities and (b) housebound people.

Victoria Prentis:

Supermarkets have been working at pace to expand the total number of delivery and click and collect slots and we are working with major retailers to ensure that they

prioritise delivery slots for those who are most vulnerable and at risk. This means that we have shared with supermarkets the details of those who have registered as clinically vulnerable and needing to shield, and who need help accessing food. These details are then processed by supermarkets, who match these names against their own customer databases. They then offer people the option of priority access to online delivery.

We have also been working quickly to support vulnerable people who do not fall into the shielded definition. This includes all people who are unable to access food and other essential supplies due to a Covid-19 related change in physical and / or financial circumstance. Most supermarkets are offering prioritised delivery or click and collect slots to those they have identified as vulnerable from their customer database (for example by age, shopping habits, previous use of vulnerable customer helplines etc.). We are working closely with retailers and local authorities to stand up a service to allow local authorities to refer vulnerable people to supermarkets for a priority delivery or click and collect slot.

We are also working with a range of suppliers to make available an increased range of food packages that can be ordered online or over the phone.

■ **Veterinary Services: Coronavirus**

Alex Sobel:

[\[38666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support small independent veterinary practices during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Sobel:

[\[39767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) small and (b) independent veterinary practices during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The veterinary profession is vital in maintaining high standards of animal health and welfare in UK, particularly at this very challenging time.

Working alongside HM Treasury, Defra is in regular contact with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), British Veterinary Association (BVA) and other key stakeholders to ensure we understand the economic impacts to small independent veterinary practices and the wider industry over the Covid-19 outbreak.

Following the Prime Minister's statement of 23 March bringing in the lockdown measures, the veterinary professional bodies produced guidance focussing on the provision of essential services only. This was updated from 13 April, reducing the restrictions. Under this guidance it is for individual vets to make decisions about what work can and should be undertaken and how to do this in line with social distancing guidelines including remote consultations, if practical.

Veterinary practices should be able to access Bounce Back loans, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) or the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), subject to eligibility criteria for each scheme. Many vets and locums are self-employed and there is also a range of support available where they can demonstrate the financial impact of the Coronavirus outbreak.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Africa: Diplomatic Service

Stephen Doughty: [\[40624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK Embassy and High Commission staff throughout Africa are unavailable to work at post due to health or logistical effects of the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: In response to the covid-19 pandemic, as of 29 April we have temporarily withdrawn 95 FCO staff, and 235 staff from other Government Departments, from Posts in our Africa network, where the risk warrants it. These staff are continuing to work remotely from outside the country of their deployment, either supporting Post or carrying out wider COVID-19 work. Posts continue to carry out essential work, including providing 24/7 consular assistance and support to British people overseas.

■ Animals: Markets

Anthony Mangnall: [\[39742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he plans to make to his international counterparts to secure a global ban on wet markets.

Nigel Adams:

Research into COVID-19's origins is ongoing, and the UK is working with the international scientific community to determine the source of the outbreak. The sale of wildlife has been suspected as the source, but conclusive evidence about the mode of transmission is not yet available. Wet markets can be found globally and the majority of such markets do not sell wild animals. We agree with the advice of the World Health Organisation that strict food hygiene and health standards should apply to wet markets and that they should be closed if those standards are not met. The UK is at the forefront of international efforts to regulate global trade in wild animals. Once the immediate challenge presented by the virus has been overcome, we will be looking to make use of all relevant fora and opportunities to press for international action to avoid a repeat of this pandemic, including within the G7/G20, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES. The World Animal Health

Organisation, of which the UK is a member, will be addressing wildlife trade at the next general session in October 2020.

■ **Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[39743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of a longer-term funding cycle for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative projects.

Nigel Adams:

Funding for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) projects comes from a variety of sources. Foreign and Commonwealth Office-funded programmes within PSVI moved to a two-year programming cycle between 2018/19 and 2019/20 to allow for more strategic programming, although individual projects were contracted for one financial year to ensure effective learning and deliver value for money. Conflict Stability and Security Fund PSVI projects on the FCO baseline already operate multi-annually. The FCO will consider future funding cycles for FCO funded programmes as part of its preparation for the Spending Review when it resumes.

■ **Bangladesh: Coronavirus**

John Spellar:

[\[38871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many people are registered with his Department for flights to the UK from Bangladesh.

Nigel Adams:

Bangladesh is a priority for the UK Government. We have been working closely with the Government of Bangladesh and airlines to ensure British Nationals (BN) can return home from Bangladesh. The UK Government delivered an initial set of four special charter flights from Bangladesh to the UK to bring home British travellers and their direct dependents. These flights ran from Dhaka to London, with the first landing in the UK on 21 April and the last on Sunday 26 April. Domestic transfers were also arranged between Sylhet and Dhaka. Following high demand, the UK Government organised a second round of five direct charter flights from 29 April to 7 May, from Dhaka to London. Four of these flights will be accompanied by a domestic transfer flight from Sylhet to Dhaka. As of 4 May over 1,200 British Nationals have returned from Bangladesh. Our High Commission in Dhaka is providing consular assistance to those who need it, including the most vulnerable. We are advising BN who are unable to depart Bangladesh to follow the advice of local authorities, find accommodation that is suitable for their needs, and keep in regular contact with family and friends at home. For further updates, the British High Commissioner has been regularly providing information on social media (@UKinBangladesh and @RCDicksonUK) about what we are doing to help BN. They should also subscribe to the UK's travel advice updates for Bangladesh to receive the latest information on flights.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:****[38491]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of British nationals stranded abroad as a result of the covid-19 outbreak who (a) are over the age of 70 and (b) have a serious medical condition who have registered with his Department for flights to return to the UK from abroad.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: The British Government is working with the airline industry and host governments across the world to help bring back British travellers to the UK as part of the plan announced by the Foreign Secretary on 30 March - with up to £75 million available for special charter flights to priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers. In some countries, where commercial routes are no longer an option due to countries closing borders, we are working with airlines to charter their aircraft on an at-cost basis to help stranded British travellers return home.

British travellers have been asked to register for flights with Corporate Travel Management (CTM) when charters have been announced for a country. We will prioritise vulnerable British Nationals most at risk from the effects of Coronavirus who normally live in the UK and are trying to return home for these flights, together with their families who normally live with them in the UK. We are giving additional consideration to the local context and the situation of the individual themselves, this can include lock-down processes in country, access to reliable healthcare, possible reduction in access to routine medication, and those at additional risk if they contract the virus for example the elderly or those with pre-existing medical conditions. We cannot provide an accurate figure for those currently registered for HMG charter flights because many passengers have registered more than once, have already returned by commercial flights or no longer want to return to the UK.

In many countries, commercial flights have also continued to operate and have been able to return British Nationals to the UK. We are working with host governments to keep flights running and airspace open where possible for this to continue to happen.

John Spellar:**[40971]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department requested military assistance for the civil authorities to increase capacity for flights repatriating British nationals during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Spellar:**[40972]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential merits of using (a) RAF Voyager aircraft and (b) civil-registered aircraft from the non-core Voyager fleet to repatriate British nationals during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Spellar:

[40973]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, for what reason his Department has not used RAF Voyager aircraft to repatriate British nationals during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Adams:

At the start of April, an RAF Voyager, returning from the Falklands as part of the South Atlantic Airbridge, repatriated a number of British nationals who had been stranded in Senegal. They were picked up whilst the aircraft was refuelled in West Africa.

The Royal Air Force remain on standby to support where necessary. The Ministry of Defence has already returned 131 British nationals on 11 flights from seven countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, Kenya and Afghanistan; the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is thankful for this support.

Ronnie Cowan:

[41523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on ensuring quarantine facilities throughout the country for UK citizens returning from abroad that need to self-isolate before returning to their families.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary is in regular contact with other Cabinet ministers, including the Secretary of State for Health and the Home Secretary, to help coordinate the Government's response to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. We recognise the concern held by some returning citizens regarding quarantine facilities. Upon arrival, everyone should follow the UK's latest public health advice. Anyone who presents symptoms at check-in will be refused boarding to return to the UK, and will need to follow the advice of local authorities.

■ **Chile: Training**

Patrick Grady:

[39646]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government has provided (a) military training, (b) internal security training and (c) public order training to Chile since January 2015; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The UK and Chile have bilateral relationships at the Defence and single-service level, within which opportunities for training or exercises may be discussed. However, in order to protect the interests and third-party relationships of both the UK and its partners, the details of any training provided by the UK Ministry of Defence or other departments are not released into the public domain.

■ China: Belt and Road Initiative

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[41169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how much financial support the Government has made available for projects relating to China's Belt and Road Initiative in each financial year since 2012-13.

Nigel Adams:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a Chinese foreign policy initiative. There is no formal definition of what is or is not a 'BRI' project, but it is generally seen as comprising Chinese-led infrastructure projects in Asia, Eurasia, and Africa. I can confirm the UK government has not directly funded Chinese-led infrastructure projects in Asia, Africa or Eurasia since 2012-13. The UK government contributes to overseas infrastructure development in many ways, including direct financial support, and export credits for UK companies, and funding for multilateral development banks. The UK's engagement with China on overseas infrastructure development is focused on practical steps and collaboration to help ensure that projects are delivered in line with the highest economic, environmental, social and financial standards in order to deliver sustainable development outcomes and deliver opportunities for UK and international businesses.

■ Hong Kong: Politics and Government

Fiona Bruce:

[\[40575\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether the arrest of fifteen prominent democracy activists and former lawmakers in Hong Kong on 18 April 2020 is a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

Nigel Adams:

We are concerned about the arrests of a number of political figures in Hong Kong, and are following these cases closely. We expect any arrests and judicial processes to be conducted in a fair and transparent manner. The right to peaceful protest is fundamental to Hong Kong's way of life and as such is protected in both the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. It is essential that any protests are conducted peacefully, and that the authorities avoid actions that inflame tensions. The authorities should focus on rebuilding trust through a process of meaningful political dialogue.

We continue to follow the situation in Hong Kong closely and we provide a full assessment of the implementation of the Joint Declaration in the six-monthly reports to Parliament. The UK remains committed to upholding the rights and freedoms underpinned by the Joint Declaration, the Basic Law and enshrined in Hong Kong's Bill of Rights, and we expect the Chinese authorities to respect and preserve Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy. We have made this position clear to the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities and will continue to do so, publicly and privately.

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[41395\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his response to protests in Hong Kong of the letter of six UN Special Rapporteurs, date 23 April 2020 which states that neither Hong Kong's secession nor its anti-terror legislation comply with China's human rights obligations.

Nigel Adams:

We note the views expressed by the UN Special Rapporteurs regarding Hong Kong's secession and anti-terrorism legislation and its consistency with international human rights treaties that apply in Hong Kong. The letter raises some important and complex issues, including points of law, that we are considering carefully.

■ India: Coronavirus

John Spellar:

[\[38870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many people are registered with his Department for flights to the UK from India; and how many of those people are in Punjab.

Nigel Adams:

Before our repatriation programme, around 20,000 people in India told us they wished to return to the UK. To date we have returned over 10,000 people to the UK from India on FCO chartered flights. This includes, as of 29 April, over 2,750 passengers who have returned home from Punjab. An additional 13 flights are due to run between 2 May and 11 May, servicing those locations with the highest numbers of British nationals remaining in India. The UK Government has arranged a fifth round of special charter flights from 5 May to 11 May. We anticipate that all eligible British travellers on our waiting list in Punjab who can and wish to return to the UK will be repatriated by the end of our repatriation programme.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[40667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many British citizens are waiting to be allocated a repatriation flight from India; and what steps his Department is taking to secure sufficient repatriation flights for British citizens.

Nigel Adams:

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 (BN) to reach airports.

As of 5 May, we have chartered 52 flights from 11 Indian cities including Delhi, Goa, Mumbai and others in Punjab, Gujarat and Bengal. Over 12,000 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. The UK Government has arranged a fifth round of special charter flights departing from Amritsar from 5 May to 11 May.

■ Panama: Coronavirus**Thangam Debbonaire:****[40668]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether his Department plans to provide repatriation flights for British citizens stranded in Panama during the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

The Government has committed up to £75 million to help thousands of British people return home from priority countries where there is greatest need. As of 30 April, we have brought back more than 21,000 people on 102 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 21 different countries and territories. We have helped 85 British nationals in Panama access commercial repatriation flights, including a group of 46 people who were attending the Tribal Gathering festival. Our Embassy in Panama City has provided domestic transportation, safe passage documentation, and secure access to multiple exceptional departure options.

We will continue working to bring British nationals back to the UK where commercial options do not exist, focusing on the most vulnerable. We are still working through future plans, identifying where needs are greatest, and where charter flights will have the greatest impact on vulnerable British nationals overseas. British Embassy Panama City's Travel Advice and social media channels are updated frequently with information on lockdown measures and departure options, where available. Those affected can contact the Embassy directly by emailing BEPanama.CV@fco.gov.uk.

■ Repatriation: Coronavirus**Stephen Timms:****[40471]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 37391, how many UK nationals have returned to the UK on repatriation flights organised by the Government as of 27 April 2020, and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: As of 30 April, we have brought back more than 21,000 people on 102 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 21 different countries and territories.

■ Taliban: Peace Negotiations**Jonathan Edwards:****[41027]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 April 2020 to Question 34327 on Taliban: Peace Negotiations, what involvement he had with the formation of the US position in the US-Taliban peace negotiations.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: As stated in our answer of 2 April to Question 34327, we were in close consultation and engaged intensively with the US throughout the US-Taliban talks in Doha.

■ **Turkey: Asylum****Hywel Williams:**[\[40998\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Turkish counterpart on the humanitarian situation of migrants along the Greek-Turkish border.

Wendy Morton:

We continue to be concerned by the situation on the Greece-Turkey border. We recognise Turkey's generosity in supporting millions of refugees who have fled the civil war in Syria; and the challenge faced by both Greece and Turkey in dealing with increased migrant flows. We remain committed to supporting Turkey's efforts to manage migration effectively and are working both bilaterally and with our international partners to this end. The Prime Minister discussed this with the Turkish President on 3 March, as did the Foreign Secretary during his visit to Ankara, also on 3 March.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Emma Hardy:**[\[902201\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the potential long-term effect of social isolation as a result of covid-19 lockdown measures on levels of demand for mental health services.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise that staying at home is tough and stressful for many people.

Mental health services remain open and are working around the clock to support people with mental health problems through the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

It is too early to say definitively what the longer-term impact on mental health services will be, but we are working closely with the National Health Service and Public Health England to monitor emerging data.

Steven Bonnar:[\[902211\]](#)

What steps he is taking to help prevent a second wave of covid-19 infections after the easing of lockdown measures.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have set out five tests that will need to be satisfied before any lockdown measures are eased which are as follows:

- ensuring the National Health Service has capacity to provide critical care right across the United Kingdom;
- evidence to show a sustained and consistent fall in daily death rates from coronavirus;
- the rate of infection decreased to manageable levels across the board;
- the UK is ready for operational challenges including testing and personal protective equipment are in hand with supply able to meet future demand, and;
- confidence that measures do not risk a second peak.

To offset the risk for a second peak, a certain degree of social distancing measures will need to remain. We have rapidly and very significantly expanded our testing capability and are developing a test and trace programme to support the next phase of our Covid-19 response.

■ Abortion

Sir John Hayes:

[\[34910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of women have suffered an infected womb following an abortion in the latest period for which figures are available.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold information on how many and what proportion of women have suffered an infected womb following an abortion.

■ Arthritis

Stephen Timms:

[\[40468\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to share understanding and co-ordinate support for people with arthritis across the NHS in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Local commissioners are best placed to understand the needs of their local populations and to deliver high-quality care for patients with arthritis, taking into account best practice guidance from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and other relevant organisations.

On 3 April 2020, NICE published 'Rheumatological autoimmune, inflammatory and metabolic bone disorders', that sets out best practice for clinicians and commissioners on managing disorders, including arthritis, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, on 8 April 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement published a clinical guide for the management of rheumatology patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, covering patients with arthritis. Finally, NHS England and NHS Improvement have also supported the development of a self-management resource, that provides a range of advice for patients, including those with arthritis, in managing

their condition during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both sets of guidance and the self-management resource can be found at the following links:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG167

www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/secondary-care/other-resources/specialty-guides/

www.csp.org.uk/conditions/managing-pain-home

■ Autism: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[38425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support autistic people and their families during the covid-19 lockdown.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the challenges that autistic people and their families face as a result of the response to COVID-19, including, for example, the disruption to their usual activities. We are working with stakeholders and charities to ensure that autistic people and their families are supported appropriately during the pandemic. For example, through the development of autism specific guidance and access to online support and social groups. Guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

The Guidance includes information about supporting the mental health and wellbeing of people with learning difficulties and/or autism.

■ Bereavement Counselling: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[37693]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will implement a national bereavement support line to provide counselling and support for families during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government has no plans at present to create a national bereavement support line but we are taking a cross-Government approach to address bereavement support, and what is needed to ensure that families and friends of those deceased get the support they need.

A number of charities and voluntary organisations provide a range of valued services for people experiencing bereavement.

Cruse Bereavement Care provides a national helpline. For National Health Service staff, a confidential bereavement support line and other sources of support are available at the following link:

<https://people.nhs.uk/help/>

■ Cancer: Surgery

Olivia Blake: [41201]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of ICU bed availability on the delivery of complex cancer surgery during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Critical care / intensive care bed capacity has been increased to ensure the National Health Service can provide effective and appropriate care to all critically ill patients (both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19) who need it, including cancer patients. NHS England have issued guidance to trusts and Cancer Alliances advising essential and urgent cancer treatments must continue in a COVID-19 free environment.

Availability of critical care beds in response to COVID-19 is being managed on a national and regional level. Nightingale hospitals are designed specifically to treat patients with COVID-19.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell: [39589]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how are cases of covid-19 in care homes being reported; and whether that data is being published.

Helen Whately:

Suspected outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes are reported by care homes to health protection teams at Public Health England (PHE). Data on these reported outbreaks were published on 29 April 2020 by Lower Tier Local Authorities, Government Office Regions and PHE Centres. The outbreaks were reported between the 3 March and 28 April 2020. Weekly totals and a cumulative total for the time period are presented as well as the proportion of care homes which have reported an outbreak over this time period. These data will be updated weekly and are available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/covid-19-number-of-outbreaks-in-care-homes-management-information>

Kate Hollern: [902198]

What assessment he has made of the availability of covid-19 testing for (a) care home residents and (b) home care recipients.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to testing every resident in every care home in England when they need it. Around 30,000 care home residents have already been tested. We have started couriering tests directly to care homes and testing the whole home will now be done when it is needed to prevent outbreaks and control infections. We are offering testing to all social care workers and unpaid carers. We are also making tests available to over 65s and people they live with who show symptoms, which therefore includes many, although not all of those who receive home care

■ Care Homes: Dementia**Jim Shannon:****[37657]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that people with dementia that are discharged from hospital as a result of the covid-19 outbreak are placed in care homes with staff that have received dementia training.

Helen Whately:

The COVID-19 discharge service requirements support the safe and rapid discharge of patients who no longer need acute care. Wherever possible, people who are clinically ready will be supported to return to their place of residence, where assessment of longer-term needs will take place. The Government has made £1.3 billion available to support this.

On training, the Department is working with its partners to ensure that relevant guidance is communicated to care providers who are supporting people with dementia in line with the 'COVID-19: Ethical Framework for Adult Social Care'. This includes sharing guidance and resources for dementia training including the Dementia Training Standards Framework 2018. The Government is working with the sector to ensure that dementia awareness and training is made available to staff where possible.

The COVID-19 framework can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-ethical-framework-for-adult-social-care>

Selaine Saxby:**[39808]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to help ensure that residents of care homes living with dementia can maintain contact with their relatives to preserve their cognitive and communication skills during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

The Department, Public Health England, the Care Quality Commission and the National Health Service have published guidance on the care of residents in care homes, including those with dementia. It asks care homes to consider alternatives to in-person visiting, including use of telephones or video, or the use of plastic or glass

barriers between residents and visitors. Care homes are responding with innovative solutions which are allowing residents to stay in touch with their family and friends.

We continue to review the need for further guidance including specific guidance on the care of people with dementia, informed by the views of stakeholders. We have also commissioned research on the best ways to mitigate the psychological and social impact of COVID-19 on people with dementia living in the community and their family.

■ Care Homes: Fees and Charges

Andrew Rosindell: [\[40525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a freeze on private care home fees during the covid-19 outbreak.

Andrew Rosindell: [\[40526\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prevent private care homes increasing fees during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Care and support is arranged on an open market where prices and fee rates are negotiated locally by commissioners for state funded clients, whilst individuals and their families do so for those who self-fund. The Government has no say in these individual negotiations, as the level of fees charged to people who fund their own care is a private contractual arrangement.

The Government has taken and continues to take steps to support adult social care providers and local authorities, including providing regular advice and guidance, and working with the sector on contingency and preparedness.

We recognise the pressures that all parts of the sector are facing, and that is why we have announced £1.6 billion to help local authorities deal with the immediate impacts of COVID-19. On top of this, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced an additional £1.6 billion of funding to support local authorities delivering essential frontline services.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake: [\[40800\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support he is providing during the covid-19 outbreak to people who care for a friend or family member.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We recognise the crucial role unpaid carers play, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have published guidance for unpaid carers, which provides carers with general advice, including advice on infection control, links to other information and support

and advice on caring where someone has symptoms. It is available on gov.uk. New guidance for young carers will also be available shortly.

In addition, unpaid carers can continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they need to self-isolate. During the outbreak emotional support can also count towards the 35 hours a week Carer's Allowance care threshold.

We have also provided funding to extend Carers UK's information and advice service during the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to work closely with carers organisations to identify further solutions to support carers.

■ Charities: Children

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[41451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will allow non-hospice voluntary sector children's palliative care organisations access to the funding for charities allocated by Government departments announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 April 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8 April 2020, included funding of up to £200 million for hospices, as part of a wider package of £750 million for the wider voluntary and charity sector. This funding is supporting hospices to increase capacity of NHS services and provide stability as the Government manages its response to COVID-19.

Of the £200 million, some of this funding has already gone to non-hospice voluntary sector children's palliative and supportive care organisations that have the capacity (within their inpatient services or community care provision) to take pressure off the NHS in line with the funding agreement.

In addition, a further £370 million will support charities working with vulnerable people. In England, this support will be provided through the National Lottery Community Fund. We will allocate £60 million of this funding through the Barnett formula so the devolved administrations are funded to provide similar support in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will provide support for thousands of charities on the frontline of helping vulnerable people affected by COVID-19.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Rachael Maskell:

[\[39591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how deaths caused by covid-19 are being reported (a) in and (b) outside of the NHS and care sector; and when the Government plans to publish the combined data on those deaths.

Helen Whately:

From the start of the pandemic, the Department has reported a daily count of COVID-19 deaths in hospitals as that provided the most up to date figures on a consistent basis.

However, the Government has since been developing expanded approaches to daily statistics, to provide a daily count with fixed, defined and transparent coverage, but to do so in a way that addresses all settings, not just deaths in hospital. On 29 April 2020 the Government introduced a new daily death reporting protocol which will include deaths that have occurred in all settings where there has been a positive COVID-19 test, including hospitals, care homes and the wider community. More information can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/daily-death-reporting-now-includes-all-positive-covid-19-deaths>

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is also publishing statistics from deaths registered in a given week, which include deaths outside hospital such as care homes. From 28 April 2020, the ONS will publish counts of deaths involving COVID-19 in care homes, based on reporting from care home operators to the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The data from the CQC will put deaths involving COVID-19 in care homes in proper context, alongside the ONS's more comprehensive figures.

Caroline Lucas:

[41019]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many death certificates have been authorised in the community since 1 March 2020 without the physical presence of a GP; how many of those deaths were attributed to covid-19; what assessment he has made of the potential under-reporting of deaths in the community from covid-19 as the result of GPs not being present to issue death certificates; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

General practitioners do not issue death certificates. Death certificates are issued by registrars. Medical practitioners complete Medical Certificates of Cause of Death.

■ **Coronavirus: Dental Services**

Emma Hardy:

[31562]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Covid-19 Guidance NHS General Dental Services from the Chief Dental Officer, published by the Scottish Government on 17 March 2020, what recent discussions he has had with the Chief Dental Officer for England on updated (a) guidance and (b) support for dentists during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 23 March 2020]: The Government is working to support and protect all our frontline National Health Service health and care staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, including dentists.

NHS England issued guidance on 20 March and further guidance is expected very shortly. Existing guidance has set out an expectation that routine care is radically reduced, further guidance will cover detailed arrangements for service delivery and

include plans for redeployment of dental teams where possible to support frontline services dealing with the pandemic.

The latest COVID-19 guidance for dental practices which is regularly updated can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/dental-practice>

Sir Alan Campbell:

[32060]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether dentists should cease all use of aerosol producing procedures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement has issued guidance setting out that routine dentistry should be stopped. Practices can continue to offer urgent care only, remotely. This means they are restricted to offering advice, analgesia and antibiotics. Urgent, hands on dentistry, is being provided by urgent dental care centres where full personal protective equipment is available to reduce the risks associated with aerosol generating procedures. The latest NHS England and NHS Improvement guidance can be viewed online at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/dental-practice/>

Sir Alan Campbell:

[32061]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when further guidance will be issued on dentistry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England has issued a series of guidance notes setting out expectations for primary care dentistry to minimise spread of disease and protect dentists and patients during the current pandemic. The advice includes radically reducing the number of routine check-ups and agreeing local arrangements to consolidate, where necessary, the provision of any essential, routine National Health Service work that cannot be delayed and urgent dental problems. The full series of guidance notes is available at:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/primary-care/dental-practice/>

The latest guidance was issued on 15 April 2020. This included the fourth dental preparedness letter as well as guidance on standard operating procedures:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0282-covid-19-dental-preparedness-letter-15-april-2020.pdf>

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Barry Gardiner:

[40466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the compatibility of Government guidance requiring people at high risk from covid-19 to stay at home and self-isolate for 12 weeks with the content of the frequently asked

questions document issued to GPs on 11 April 2020 that states that shielded patients may attend GPs surgeries.

Jo Churchill:

Shielding protects the most clinically vulnerable against COVID-19. However, this protection cannot come at the expense of the clinically extremely vulnerable accessing the health care they need for current health conditions. General practitioners have been asked by the National Health Service to review any ongoing care arrangements for shielded patients at highest risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Wherever possible, patient contact, triage and treatment should be delivered via phone, email or online. However, if a shielding patient needs a face-to-face assessment, they should be seen on a home visit, and not brought into general practice premises unless a designated site has been set up for such purposes. Strict infection prevention and control measures should be followed at all times for the protection of shielded patients.

■ **Coronavirus: Intensive Care**

Yvette Cooper:

[29829]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the national capacity of (a) intensive care unit beds and (b) ventilators is; what level of capacity he estimates reaching in the next four weeks; and what proportion of covid-19 cases are likely to require (i) intensive care, (ii) oxygen therapy and (iii) ventilation treatment.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 19 March 2020]: The standard capacity of the National Health Service's critical care beds in the United Kingdom is approximately 4,000. The number of critical care beds available to the NHS has risen by over 3,000. This does not include further additional capacity being created in Nightingale Hospitals.

At the start of the crisis in March the NHS across the UK had access to over 8,000 mechanical ventilators. The number of mechanical and non-invasive ventilators sourced for the NHS has increased by over 4,000. These figures are expected to rise as we procure further equipment and products from the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge.

NHS capacity predictors show that the NHS remains with sufficient capacity to meet and exceed demand. Modelling by Imperial College London has predicted intensive care capacity usage which can be found at:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/medicine/sph/ide/gida-fellowships/Imperial-College-COVID19-NPI-modelling-16-03-2020.pdf>

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[37447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the equality of access to ICU beds in the regions of England during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether the new hospitals in (a) London, (b) Birmingham and (c) Manchester will operate according to a catchment area system.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: NHS England and NHS Improvement are actively monitoring patient and bed numbers across the country on a twice daily basis. Mutual aid is in place between intensive care providers as well as across National Health Service regions that allows for timely access for all patients who require an intensive care bed to the most appropriate setting.

The Nightingale Hospitals provide extra capacity to help ensure that nationally all those who need care can get it.

■ Coronavirus: Kidney Diseases**Dan Jarvis:**[\[34346\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to prioritise testing for covid-19 for patients who are in receipt of dialysis treatment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Testing is a crucial part of the United Kingdom's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we are working on multiple fronts to deliver additional testing capacity into the system.

The Government is rapidly scaling up the national effort to boost testing capacity for COVID-19 to protect the vulnerable, support the National Health Service, and ultimately save lives.

The Government has always prioritised testing for those most at risk of severe illness. Capacity is now ahead of our plans which means that we can move from prioritising hospital patients and NHS and social care workers to testing any key worker in England who needs a test. From 24 April any key workers, including anyone in their household who needs a test, will be able to book an appointment on GOV.UK themselves directly. By increasing our testing capacity, we can provide better care for the sickest patients across the NHS; help key workers get back to work as soon as possible; and provide certainty and reassurance to the wider UK population.

■ Coronavirus: Learning Disability**Barbara Keeley:**[\[37551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people who have (a) been diagnosed with and (b) died from covid-19 (i) had learning disabilities and/or autism, (ii) were in detention under the Mental Health Act 1983 and (iii) were otherwise classed as disabled under the Equality Act 2010.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: Data on the number and proportion of people who have been diagnosed with and died from COVID-19 are not available in the format requested.

The latest data on the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in hospitals can be viewed at the following link:

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

■ Coronavirus: Local Government

Olivia Blake: [40798]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources he is providing to local government for care services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We have set out a comprehensive action plan to support the adult social care sector in England throughout the COVID-19 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.

On 19 March we announced £1.6 billion to help local authorities deal with the immediate impacts of COVID-19, which many councils will have directed towards the adult social care services required to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 18 April we announced an additional £1.6 billion of funding to support councils delivering essential front line services.

■ Coronavirus: Mental Health

Dan Jarvis: [41048]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of (a) social distancing and (b) shielding during the covid-19 outbreak on people's mental health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We recognise that social distancing and self-isolation are likely to increase the risk of loneliness and mental health issues. We are working with the National Health Service, social care, the voluntary sector and across Government to understand specific impacts and to improve mental health support and provide guidance for people experiencing mental health issues.

Monitoring and tracking the impact of COVID-19 on people's mental health is a key part of the overall national response to the pandemic. To this effect, Public Health England are developing a reporting tool of near real time information about changing population mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Coronavirus: Patients

Rosie Duffield: [38017]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people have contracted covid-19 as in-patients in hospitals in England, on each day since 1 January 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: We do not yet have a methodology to differentiate between cases contracted in hospital and cases in which the patient already had the condition when admitted. Our data sources do not differentiate between:

- Cases admitted as suspected COVID-19 and subsequently confirmed as COVID-19; and
- Cases admitted as non COVID-19 but subsequently contracting COVID-19 in hospital.

NHS Digital and NHS England and NHS Improvement are using a variety of data sources to explore the extent to which they can provide this information through data linkage in future.

■ Coronavirus: Screening**Alex Sobel:**[\[34405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) his Department and (b) NHS Trusts have ordered covid-19 testing kits from Novacyt; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: Testing is a crucial part of the United Kingdom's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we are working on multiple fronts to deliver additional testing capacity into the system.

We are making provision to secure testing kits both to meet current demand and scale our capacity. This includes securing testing kits from a variety of sources. The identities of suppliers are subject to confidential commercial agreements.

■ Coronavirus: Ventilators**Helen Hayes:**[\[32710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department made of the current availability of ventilators in (a) London and (b) England; and what steps he is taking to increase provision of ventilators for NHS Trusts responding to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Hayes:[\[32711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many additional ventilator machines he plans to provide to each NHS Trust and NHS Foundation Trust in London.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 25 March 2020]: At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in March there were more than 8,000 ventilators in hospitals across the United Kingdom. Today, we have over 10,800 mechanical ventilators available to National Health Service patients. There are another 2,000 mechanical ventilators on order that are expected to be available shortly, comprising 1,500 sourced from existing providers

and 500 from new UK suppliers responding to the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge. This figure will continue to rise as we procure further equipment and more products from the Prime Minister's ventilator challenge become available.

Ventilators are allocated to trusts based on clinical need and demand as assessed by NHS England.

■ Dementia: Health Services

Mr Clive Betts:

[40508]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information he holds on the number of memory clinics in (a) England and (b) Wales which have remained open since 23 March 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The information requested on the number of memory clinics that have remained open in England since 23 March 2020 is not held centrally.

Health and social care for people with dementia in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a devolved matter and the responsibility respectively of each of the devolved administrations.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Remote Working

Margaret Ferrier:

[41484]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many staff in his Department have formal arrangements to work from home during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

In line with the wider Civil Service and as a result of Government guidance on social distancing measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, the majority of staff working for the Department are currently working at home. These are temporary measures and are either in line with their normal working pattern or adapted to reflect caring and other responsibilities, along with business needs. Working from home is not recorded on our HR systems, although from our current business knowledge and levels of remote systems access we estimate that over 90% of our staff are currently working from home.

As part of our existing approach to working flexibly, Departmental staff have access to laptops and IT to enable them to work remotely. We have also supplemented the existing guidance with additional staff toolkits in the context of COVID-19 about working from home, managing teams remotely and wellbeing and are also deploying a programme of remotely delivered staff communication and engagement activities.

■ Eating Disorders: Health Services

Scott Benton:

[37890]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that medical monitoring of at risk people with eating disorders continues in the absence of face to face appointments during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Eating disorder services across the country are adapting their protocols, as required, to ensure that medical monitoring continues in way that is safe for both patients and the workforce.

Examples of this adaptation include using dedicated rooms for weighing patients with strict cleaning timetables, working with primary care or local neighbouring teams to undertake measurements and utilising digital means or telephone or video consultations to share information between clinicians and people with eating disorders.

■ Female Genital Mutilation

Hywel Williams:

[40519]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much and what proportion of his Department's budget has been spent on tackling female genital mutilation in the UK in each financial year since 2015.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department funded the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Prevention Programme between 2014 and 2018. The spend is shown in the following table:

FINANCIAL YEAR	AMOUNT	PROPORTION OF DEPARTMENT'S BUDGET
2015-16	£900,014	0.0008%
2016-17	£607,808	0.0005%
2017-18	£494,265	0.0004%
2018-19	£349,050	0.0003%

NHS England and local National Health Service bodies also fund healthcare services for women and girls who have undergone FGM, alongside Departmental funding for national FGM prevention work.

Note:

The above figures are based on the Department's financial records. The proportion of Department's budget spent on FGM is shown as a percentage of the Department's total revenue spend.

-	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
FGM spend (£ million)	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.3
Department Group spend (£ million)	113,700.0	117,000.0	120,700.0	125,300.0
FGM spend as % of Department Group spend	0.0008%	0.0005%	0.0004%	0.0003%

Spend for 2019-20 is not yet available as accounts have yet to be audited.

■ General Practitioners

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[40964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy that GP surgeries are required to provide primary care to people without a registered doctor in order to discourage those people from having to present at A&E; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Anyone who requires treatment that a general practitioner (GP) or healthcare professional regards as an emergency, or as immediately necessary, should be provided that treatment free of charge, regardless of whether they are registered with a GP. A patient can receive emergency treatment for 14 days. If the patient needs treatment for more than 14 days, they will need to register with that GP surgery as a temporary or permanent patient. Registration as a temporary resident allows a patient to be taken on to the practice's list for up to three months. After three months the patient will have to apply to register with that surgery as a permanent resident.

■ Health Services and Social Services: Staff

Kirsty Blackman:

[\[902193\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of staffing levels in the health and social care sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Social care workers are at the frontline of our battle with COVID-19. We are grateful to all care workers, caring for our loved ones every day.

Care workers must follow the guidance on isolating if they or a household member have COVID-19 symptoms - which means that there are higher absence levels than normal – but there must also be enough staff to provide essential care.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has been monitoring staff absence rates to see where there are particular risks. The CQC is sharing this information with local authorities and the Government has provided them with guidance on supporting care providers. We are encouraging returning health and social care professionals to work in social care and we have launched a national recruitment campaign with the ambition to attract 20,000 people into adult social care.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Gavin Robinson:

[\[41055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) routine appointments and (b) red flag referrals were cancelled or postponed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The collection of information on cancelled appointments has been suspended to free up capacity within the health system during the COVID-19 outbreak.

'Red flag referrals' are only used in Northern Ireland. Health is a devolved issue and is dealt with by Health and Social Care Northern Ireland and therefore the information requested is not available.

■ Health Services: Mental Health

Ian Paisley:

[\[40613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the mental health of NHS workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department has commissioned NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a comprehensive emotional, psychological and practical support package for all National Health Service staff during and after COVID-19 response.

This includes free access to well-being apps, a dedicated helpline and text service that offer support and confidential listening, and where appropriate signposting to other services that support staff welfare. A separate helpline is also now available offering bereavement support by a team of fully qualified bereavement specialists.

More information on how to access this support can be found online at the following link:

people.nhs.uk/help

■ Health Services: Students

Judith Cummins:

[\[41494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what arrangements are in place for students to access (a) medical care and (b) repeat prescriptions during the covid-19

lockdown while those students are residing at home or away from the GP practices they are registered with while at university or college.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We recognise that students registered with a general practitioner (GP) practice near their university may need to access treatment from another GP when returning home or away from university. Anyone who requires treatment that a GP or healthcare professional regards as an emergency should be provided treatment free of charge, regardless of whether they are registered with a GP. A patient can receive emergency treatment for 14 days. If the patient needs treatment for more than 14 days, they can register with that GP surgery as a temporary patient for up to three months. Additionally, students will be able to access their repeat prescriptions from a GP practice near their home. Patients who have nominated a pharmacy local to their place of study through the Electronic Prescription Service will be able change their nominated pharmacy to their new preferred location by contacting the GP practice who prescribed the repeat prescription or set up a nomination if they do not have one.

■ **Home Care Services**

Stuart Anderson:

[37975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of health of people reliant on care provided by domiciliary care staff; and what protection is being provided to those staff visiting multiple private homes in one day.

Helen Whately:

We do not currently hold data on trends in the level of health of those receiving domiciliary care. NHS Digital do however collect and publish an annual survey on the quality of life of individuals in state funded domiciliary care, their satisfaction with services, and other important outcomes which is available at the following link:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-social-care-outcomes-framework-ascof>.

Care staff visiting multiple private homes in one day should receive personal protective equipment (PPE) from the care provider they work for in line with the latest government recommendations. To support staff in using this equipment, Public Health England published tailored guidance on the use of PPE in domiciliary care on 27 April. This is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/882376/Domiciliary_guidance_England.pdf.

It includes clear guidance and illustrative case studies that explain how care workers visiting multiple homes in one day should use PPE.

■ Hospices: Coronavirus

Catherine McKinnell:

[\[41452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish guidance on how children's hospices should provide care and support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Working with key stakeholders, NHS England and NHS improvement have developed a standard operating procedure (SOP), for palliative care for children and young people in community and hospice settings during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is due to be published shortly.

The SOP is aimed at supporting staff who are providing care or supporting children and young people, and their families, who have palliative and/or end of life care needs in the community, including home and hospice care. Palliative care will include some children and young people who have life-limiting long-term conditions and complex health needs. It encourages all providers of children's palliative care (statutory and voluntary sector) to work collaboratively and flexibly across health settings to support this group of children and young people and keep them safe during the pandemic.

■ Hospital Beds: Private Sector

Gavin Robinson:

[\[41469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2020 to Question 38931 on Hospital Beds: Private Sector, if he will set out the (a) costs and (b) number of beds that have been used.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: National Health Service patients are benefitting from an unprecedented partnership with private hospitals in the United Kingdom as we battle the COVID-19 outbreak. The NHS is accessing these facilities at cost, with those costs judged by an independent auditor. Reimbursements to the independent sector will be for reasonable and narrowly-defined costs only.

As it is not currently known how extensively and for how long this extra capacity will be used, it is not possible to estimate the cost to the public purse, nor the number of beds that will have been used.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Rosie Cooper:

[\[40535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of surgical theatres have been repurposed to tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: NHS England does not currently collect this information from National Health Service provider trusts.

■ Intensive Care: Northern Ireland

Ian Paisley: [\[40609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department has made on ensuring adequate critical care capacity in hospitals in Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Department is working closely with the devolved administrations, coordinating and sharing information as appropriate, to ensure all four nations can respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19. Health is a devolved matter and the Northern Ireland Department of Health would be best placed to respond to questions regarding capacity in Northern Ireland hospitals.

■ Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust Independent Review

Rosie Cooper: [\[41400\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to lay before Parliament the terms of reference for the independent investigation into historic patient safety incidents at Liverpool Community Health NHS Trust.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 27 April 2020 to Question [37528](#).

■ NHS: Computer Software

Afzal Khan: [\[40757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether use of the NHS contact-tracing app will be voluntary; what progress has been made in the development of that app; and if he will make a statement.

Afzal Khan: [\[40758\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of whether the NHS contact-tracing app meets the requirements set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.

Afzal Khan: [\[40759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the roll-out of the NHS contact-tracing app on people who not have access to a smartphone.

Afzal Khan: [\[40760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for the roll-out of the NHS contact-tracing app; and whether that app will be used as part of the exit plan from the lockdown.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The app will give the public a simple way to make a difference and to help keep themselves and their families safe. It will be one of a number of tools we use in the fight against COVID-19 but it will be voluntary. People will have the choice of whether or not to download the app and they will be able to delete it whenever they like. We intend to withdraw the app once the epidemic is over.

We will always comply with the law around the use of data and we will be publishing a Data Protection Impact Assessment in due course.

Everyone will benefit from the app because – if enough people with smartphones do download it – it will help to stop the spread. We are working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that as many people as possible can access and benefit from the app.

We are reviewing when the app will be available nationally. It will be part of a wider approach that will involve traditional contact tracing and testing.

■ NHS: Coronavirus**Geraint Davies:**[\[37385\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the level of absence among NHS workers who are self-isolated and have not been tested for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

No assessment has been made of the level of absence among National Health Service workers who are self-isolated and have not been tested for COVID-19.

Alex Norris:[\[38584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many oncologists (a) in total and (b) by NHS trust have been diverted to respond directly to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department does not hold the data requested.

Saqib Bhatti:[\[902196\]](#)

What steps his Department is taking to support the mental health of NHS staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have commissioned NHS England to develop a comprehensive emotional, psychological and practical support package for all National Health Service staff. The first line of support focuses on team behaviours – ensuring good line management and team practices, reflecting on daily events – backed up by good local occupational health support. Nationally, all NHS staff now have free access to a helpline and text service for counselling and support, a dedicated bereavement helpline and a range of well-being apps.

■ NHS: Finance**Ian Paisley:** [\[40615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure NHS providers have the financial support they need during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

We are taking significant steps to ease operational pressures and provide financial support to National Health Service providers, so they are able to focus on the response to the outbreak.

These include an additional payment for 2019-20 at year-end to reflect any initial costs reported due to COVID-19. Additionally, NHS England and NHS Improvement have suspended the operational planning process for 2020-21. In replacement, simplified block contracts have been agreed between commissioners and NHS providers which will guarantee a nationally calculated monthly payment, between the period 1 April 2020 to 31 July 2020 to cover costs.

■ Nurses: Higher Education**Judith Cummins:** [\[40647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reimburse tuition fees for student nurses volunteering as part of the response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: There are currently no plans to reimburse tuition fees and students will continue to be required to pay fees for their final term.

The Government is extremely grateful to all students who are choosing to opt in to work in the National Health Service during this extremely difficult time and will be ensuring all students who do so are rewarded fairly for their hard work. Nursing students who opt in will receive a salary and automatic NHS pension entitlement at the appropriate band. They will also still receive their student maintenance loan and Learning Support Fund payments.

■ Protective Clothing**Rachel Reeves:** [\[39550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the level of stock was of (a) FFP3 masks, (b) FFP2 masks, (c) fluid-repellent gowns, (d) fluid-resistant gowns and (e) protective visors on 1 January 2020 and in each fortnight since that date.

Jo Churchill:

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in England we held around 50,000 pallets of medicines and consumables, including personal protective equipment (PPE), to enable us to respond to a United Kingdom pandemic, with the devolved

administrations holding their own stockpiles. About 25,000 of those pallets held PPE and hygiene products.

Between 25 February and 26 April, we delivered over 997 million items of PPE across the health and social care system in England, with tens of millions more being distributed by the devolved administrations. This figure includes the following: 143 million masks; 163 million aprons; 1.8 million gowns; and 547 million gloves.

Unprecedented efforts are being undertaken to replenish and distribute PPE evenly across the UK, to ensure demand is met and the right equipment reaches our frontline.

■ Social Services: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[40523]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reimbursing care sector employers for the cost of employees that have been advised by healthcare professionals to shield for beyond two weeks.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We stated in our social care action plan that where social care workers are unable to work for a long period of time, because they are in a high-risk group, or because they are shielding during the outbreak, employers can furlough these workers, to ensure that they continue to receive 80% of their normal income.

Employers who choose to furlough staff in this way would therefore not need to be reimbursed, as the wages would already be funded through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

We have also provided local authorities with £1.6 billion of additional funding, which includes the cost of backfilling care shifts while as far as possible maintaining income for those that are unable to work as a result of the public health advice and wider social distancing measures. This funding would apply to any employers choosing not to furlough staff.

Peter Kyle:

[902212]

What steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of deaths in the social care sector as a result of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

Every death from COVID-19 is a tragedy and the full weight of the Government is behind the effort to help the social care sector protect the most vulnerable in society. We have published a comprehensive action plan, including ramping up testing, overhauling the way personal protective equipment is delivered to care homes, and minimising the spread of the virus through cohorting and infection control. We continually review our policies in line with the best scientific advice.

■ Social Services: Finance**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[902197\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to introduce a new (a) living wage and (b) financial settlement for social care workers.

Helen Whately:

We have now made £3.2 billion available to local authorities to address the pressures on local services caused by the pandemic. This funding can be used to cover the cost of pay for care workers who are currently unable to work because they may be shielding (if they are among the clinically extremely vulnerable) or self-isolating – and this has been included in guidance to local authorities.

My department is working with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to confirm that funding provided to local authorities has been distributed to social care providers, and on to the workforce, in accordance with this guidance.

■ Social Services: Life Insurance**Justin Madders:** [\[41082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether social care staff in the private sector will be eligible for the life assurance scheme announced in response to covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The Government is in the process of setting up a life assurance scheme for frontline health and social care staff who contract COVID-19 during the course of their work.

The scheme provides a benefit to the families of staff who are supporting the delivery of publicly funded services.

Staff are covered by the scheme providing their employer is in receipt of public funding for providing services. The majority of adult social care providers are private employers in receipt of some public funding.

The social care sector is complex, and we want to continue to work with the sector to fully understand any issues around eligibility.

■ Social Services: Staff**Selaine Saxby:** [\[902192\]](#)

What steps he is taking to help ensure the adequacy of staffing levels in the social care sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

Social care workers are at the frontline of our battle with COVID-19. We are grateful to all care workers, caring for our loved ones every day.

Care workers must follow the guidance on isolating if they or a household member have COVID-19 symptoms - which means that there are higher absence levels than normal – but there must also be enough staff to provide essential care.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has been monitoring staff absence rates to see where there are particular risks. The CQC is sharing this information with local authorities and the Government has provided them with guidance on supporting care providers. We are encouraging returning health and social care professionals to work in social care and we have launched a national recruitment campaign with the ambition to attract 20,000 people into adult social care.

■ Social Workers: Finance

Dan Carden:

[\[902203\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to introduce a new (a) living wage and (b) financial settlement for social care workers.

Helen Whately:

We have now made £3.2 billion available to local authorities to address the pressures on local services caused by the pandemic. This funding can be used to cover the cost of pay for care workers who are currently unable to work because they may be shielding (if they are among the clinically extremely vulnerable) or self-isolating – and this has been included in guidance to local authorities.

My department is working with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to confirm that funding provided to local authorities has been distributed to social care providers, and on to the workforce, in accordance with this guidance.

■ Surgery

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[41036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the NHS plans to resume urgent elective surgery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[41037\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to resume urgent elective surgery in the NHS as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: To help ensure that sufficient capacity was in place to help deal with the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, every hospital in England suspended non-urgent elective operations to help free up additional capacity. The suspension did not apply to clinically urgent care, such as emergency admissions and cancer treatment.

With evidence now suggesting that we have reached the peak of this wave of COVID-19, and with the National Health Service well-placed to provide world-leading

care for those who do still have the virus, we have started to reset suspended services. The approach to this will be flexed at local level according to capacity and demand in different parts of the country, and will be gradual, over the coming weeks.

■ Surgery: Standards

Olivia Blake: [\[41198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many elective operations have been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and what the average length is of those delays.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The collection of information on cancelled operations has been suspended to free up capacity within the health system during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Olivia Blake: [\[41199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to tackle the backlog of elective surgical procedures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Olivia Blake: [\[41200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that elective surgical procedures are able to recommence safely and efficiently after the peak of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: With evidence now suggesting that we have reached the peak of this wave of COVID-19, and with the National Health Service well-placed to provide world-leading care for those who do still have the virus, we have started to reset services, including non-urgent elective care. These services had previously been suspended as part of ensuring sufficient capacity was in place to manage the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The approach to this will be flexed at local level according to capacity and demand in different parts of the country, and will be gradual, over the coming weeks. We will work on the principle that the most urgent treatments, including mental health support, should be brought back first and this will be driven by local demands on the system.

■ Telemedicine: Prisons

Neil Coyle: [\[39610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that health professionals working in prisons have adequate provision to employ telemedicine when appropriate.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In the past 12 months, NHS England has helped to support the adoption of digital technology and solutions including the use of telemedicine across the secure and detained estate. A cross-Government digital working group to support the digital strategy has been set up which includes representatives from the Department, NHS England, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice.

In response to COVID-19, telemedicine is expected to be deployed at speed across the English secure and detained estate, including prisons, over the next few weeks. Each site will have a telehealth starter pack which includes a licence to access telehealth approved software within prisons as well as some hardware to support. This solution will enable video calling for primary care, secondary care and mental health appointments within the dedicated healthcare facility.

Vitamin B12**Jane Stevenson:**[\[41586\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what his Department's policy is on the treatment of cobalamin deficiency during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The British Committee for Standards in Haematology (BCSH), document, 'Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of Cobalamin and Folate disorders' sets out best practice on the treatment of cobalamin (Vitamin B12) deficiency. The guidance sets out that the majority of patients affected can be successfully treated with a quarterly intramuscular injection of vitamin B12. The BCSH operates independently of Department and NHS England and produces evidence-based guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of haematological disease.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the BCSH has provided published a range of general and specific hematology guidance for clinicians. This includes new guidance on the management of both dietary and non-dietary B12 deficiency. Both sets of guidance can be found at the following links:

b-s-h.org.uk/guidelines/guidelines/diagnosis-of-b12-and-folate-deficiency/b-s-h.org.uk/media/18259/bsh-guidance-b12-replacement-covid-1924042020finalversion2020-4-3.pdf

HOME OFFICE**Armed Forces: Commonwealth****Stephen Farry:**[\[40796\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on removal visa charges for former Commonwealth UK Armed Forces personnel and their immediate families when applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Kevin Foster:

The Government highly values the service of all members of HM Forces, including Commonwealth nationals.

We are committed to upholding our obligations under the Armed Forces Covenant, to ensure that no one who is serving, or who has served, or their family members are disadvantaged as a result of their service.

The Ministry of Defence make clear to foreign and Commonwealth recruits into the Forces the process by which they and their families can attain settlement in the UK, and the costs involved.

Business: Crime Prevention

Rosie Duffield: [\[40729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of providing financial support to Business Crime Reduction Partnerships whose funding has been reduced as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

Provisional data from police forces in England and Wales shows a reduction in crime during the Coronavirus outbreak and, as a result, the Government has made no assessment of the potential merits of providing financial support to Business Crime Reduction Partnerships as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Catalytic Converters: Theft

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[37779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to address the rise of catalytic converter theft.

Kit Malthouse:

We recognise the distress and disruption that this type of crime can cause, and the effect it can have on victims, including on people who rely on their vehicle to earn a living.

We continue to work to understand what more we can do to tackle this and other vehicle-related theft, which is why, in May I will be meeting representatives of the motor industry to discuss vehicle crime, including the theft of catalytic converters.

Coronavirus: Disease Control

Gavin Robinson: [\[38933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance she has published to reinforce social distancing since the clap for key workers that took place on Westminster Bridge on 16 April 2020.

Kit Malthouse:

Social distancing measures should be followed in order to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The guidance was published on the 26th March 2020 and is available at:

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

■ **Crime: Coronavirus**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[37609]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of crime.

Kit Malthouse:

The National Police Chiefs Council reported on its website on 15 April 2020 that provisional data from police forces in England and Wales shows a reduction in crime during Coronavirus outbreak and that the vast majority of the public are following government regulations enacted in response to the crisis. NPCC chair Martin Hewitt said that: "With reductions in crime, policing is in a strong, resilient position due to the brilliant commitment of officers and staff and the extra hours of our police volunteers."

Police recorded crime statistics and Crime Survey of England and Wales data covering March 2020 will be released in July.

■ **Detention Centres: Coronavirus**

Barry Gardiner:

[40458]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) detainees and (b) staff of immigration detention centres have been tested for covid-19.

Barry Gardiner:

[40459]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many detainees in immigration detention centres have tested positive for covid-19.

Barry Gardiner:

[40460]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people have been released from immigration detention centres since social distancing measures were introduced.

Chris Philp:

The health of those in immigration removal centres is of the utmost importance but we remain committed to removing foreign national offenders or those who violate our immigration rules. Detention plays a key role in securing our borders and maintaining effective immigration control and it is only right that we protect the public from high-harm individuals, which is why the vast majority of those in detention are foreign national offenders.

Decisions to detain an individual are based on all of the information known at the time. As circumstances change, temporary release may then become the most appropriate option.

We are following all Public Health England guidance and have robust contingency plans in place. Measures such as protective isolation will be considered to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading to vulnerable groups in the immigration detention estate.

All immigration removal centres have dedicated health facilities run by doctors and nurses which are managed by the NHS or appropriate providers.

There are currently no cases of Coronavirus, in detainees, in immigration removal centres.

Provisional management information indicates that as of 27 April four members of IRC supplier staff have tested positive for COVID-19, one of whom has now fully recovered and returned to duty. In addition, there have been two confirmed cases of COVID-19 in detainees. A third individual was identified but after his release from detention had been agreed. Whilst in the IRC the individual was in isolation. He was released as there was no immediate prospect of removal. No other detainees have tested positive for COVID-19.

■ **Drugs: Organised Crime**

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[37762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to dismantle the operations of the county lines drugs gangs in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove.

Kit Malthouse:

We are investing £25 million over two years to crack down on the county lines drugs gangs exploiting our children and terrorising our communities.

Last year we invested £5m of this into operational use, with a number of law enforcement operations resulting directly from it taking place. This included county lines intelligence development by Staffordshire Police as part of Operation Engaged, led by West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit. The Home Office has established a County Lines Task and Finish Group through which we work with operational partners to monitor progress.

We are also bolstering our law enforcement response by putting 20,000 new police officers on our streets over three years, and we will continue to take action until we eradicate this abhorrent crime.

■ **EU Nationals: Immigration**

Hywel Williams:

[\[41393\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) extending the deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme beyond 30 June 2021 and (b) making the EU settlement scheme an automatic registration system in response to additional pressures on the Civil Service resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

There are no plans to extend the deadline for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme or to replace it with an automatic registration system. There is still over a year before the deadline of 30 June 2021 and the latest published statistics, to 31 March 2020, show the scheme is performing well, with more than 3.4 million applications having been received and over 3.1 million concluded. The Home Office has continued to receive and process applications throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

EU citizens can apply online, free of charge, simply by completing three key steps: proving their identity, showing they live in the UK and declaring any criminal convictions. There is support available online, by email and by telephone from our assisted digital provider.

Where a person eligible for leave under the scheme has reasonable grounds for missing the application deadline, they will be given a further opportunity to apply. Our compassionate and flexible approach will ensure that individuals who miss the deadline through no fault of their own can still obtain lawful status in the UK. We will publish clear guidance for caseworkers in due course to ensure consistency of approach.

■ Immigrants: Health Services**Zarah Sultana:**[\[40775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much money has accrued to the public purse from (a) NHS trusts, (b) organisations that provide social care (c) universities and other higher education institutions and (d) state-funded primary and secondary schools paying the Immigration Health Surcharge on behalf of their employees in each year since 2015.

Zarah Sultana:[\[40776\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much money has accrued to the public purse from (a) NHS trusts, (b) organisations that provide social care, (c) universities and other higher education institutions and (d) state-funded primary and secondary schools paying the Immigration Skills Charge on behalf of their employees in each year since 2015.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not collate or publish the information requested.

Immigration Skills Charge data is broken down between large and small and charitable employers but not by sector.

Income generated by Immigration Health Surcharge payments goes directly to NHS services, helping to protect and sustain our world-class healthcare system for everyone who uses it. Income collected from the Immigration Skills charge is used to address skills gaps in the UK workforce, which will be of benefit to businesses in the long term.

■ Immigration: Married People**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[39648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of applications from the non-EEA (a) spouse and (b) partner of a UK citizens to (a) extend their leave and (b) apply for indefinite leave to remain that will be made in the next 12 months.

Kevin Foster:

As part of UK Visa & Immigration's ongoing operational forecasting activities we regularly review and refresh the number of applications we expect from all routes including non-EEA spouses and partners of UK Citizens.

The Home Office publishes data on decisions on applications for leave to remain and indefinite leave to remain in the '[Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release](#)' available on GOV.UK

■ National Wildlife Crime Unit: Finance**Sir Roger Gale:** [\[38862\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will (a) place funding for the national wildlife crime unit on a permanent basis and (b) allocate to that unit sufficient funding to support the effective investigation of wildlife crimes.

Kit Malthouse:

The Home Office is providing funding of £136,000 to support the work of the National Wildlife Crime Unit in 2020/21. This will be in addition to the funding central Government is providing to police forces in England and Wales to tackle all types of crime, including wildlife crime.

Decisions about Home Office funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit beyond March 2021 will be taken as part of the Spending Review.

Kerry McCarthy: [\[40529\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will bring forward plans for permanent funding of the National Wildlife Crime Unit from a single budget in time for the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

Kit Malthouse:

In line with other government funded bodies, decisions about Home Office funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit beyond March 2021 will be taken as part of the next Spending Review.

■ Police: Coronavirus**Neil Coyle:** [\[41057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that police officers and PCSOs are prioritised for covid-19 testing in the event they are attacked by someone claiming to have that virus.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recently announced the expansion of COVID-19 testing to more key workers, including the Police. The Department for Health and Social Care have now extended COVID-19 testing to asymptomatic NHS staff. We will therefore continue to work closely with them to ensure the Police are provided with the support they need.

Refugees: Children**Barry Gardiner:**[\[40461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of child refugees approved for family reunification in the UK are detained in refugee camps in Greece following the cancellation of flights during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not hold detailed information on the location of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children within European Member States.

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, the UK remains fully committed to meeting our obligations under the Dublin III Regulation. The Home Office continues to process Dublin cases, including children, as far as we are able given the current circumstances and remains open to receiving transfers into the UK.

Arrangements to complete a transfer have always been and still are the responsibility of the sending State. We continue to liaise with our counterparts in Member States so that we can effect transfers as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

Retail Trade: Coronavirus**Alex Cunningham:**[\[40593\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect retail workers from abusive or violent behaviour during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Cunningham:[\[40594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of incidents of abusive or violent behaviour towards retail workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Cunningham:[\[40596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when she plans to publish a response to her Department's call for evidence on abuse and violence towards shop staff; and if she will bring forward legislative proposals to make assaults against retail workers aggravated.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the damaging impact that violence and abuse can have on victims, businesses, and the wider community; and we are committed to tackling

this issue. Any incident of violent or abusive behaviour towards retail workers is completely unacceptable and especially so in current circumstances during the covid-19 outbreak. Everyone has the right to feel safe at work.

The Government does not hold data on the number of incidents of abusive or violent behaviour towards retail workers during the covid-19 outbreak period, however the Home Office is working closely with police and retail industry to monitor and understand these types of incidents during the current period.

We launched a call for evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff to help strengthen our understanding of the scale and extent of the issue. The call for evidence has now closed and my intention had been to publish the Government response before the end of March. As the Government must focus its communications on tackling covid-19, the publication of the Government response has been delayed and will be published in due course.

■ Retail Trade: Crime

Alex Cunningham:

[\[40595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of retail crime.

Kit Malthouse:

The Government recognises the damaging impact that retail crime can have on victims, businesses, and the wider community. Shops are the lifeblood of our communities and neighbourhoods, and it is important that businesses should be free to trade without fear of crime or disorder, particularly in these unprecedented times.

Following Government announcements on 23rd March, much of the retail sector has closed outlets to customers and those that have remained open have implemented social distancing measures. Together these were expected to lead to a reduction in the level of retail crime. Provisional figures published by the NPCC have indicated that shoplifting reported to and recorded by the police has fallen by 54% in the 4 weeks ending 12th April.

I am working closely with the police and industry to continue to monitor these types of incidents during this challenging period.

■ Visas: Coronavirus

Hywel Williams:

[\[40514\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the Government will waive the requirement for applicants for Indefinite Leave to Remain not to have spent more than 90 days outside the UK in circumstances where applicants are unable to return to the UK due to travel restrictions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Individuals who hold leave in categories including Tier 2, Start-up and Global Talent are allowed a maximum of 180 days absence from the UK without breaking their

continuous residence. However, the published guidance confirms that applicants may exceed the 180 days in the event of serious or compelling circumstances. This would include travel disruption caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

A full list of categories covered by this exemption is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/indefinite-leave-to-remain-calculating-continuous-period-in-uk

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Disease Control: Coronavirus

Henry Smith: [40580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many people classified by the NHS as extremely vulnerable people who have been asked to shield at home have (a) requested and (b) received support from (i) community hubs as announced on 21 March 2020 and (ii) supermarkets.

Christopher Pincher:

MHCLG continues to work closely with local authorities to manage the impacts of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable in our society.

Government provides food parcels directly to those identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus if they do not have alternative means of accessing support. Over 280,000 clinically extremely vulnerable people have requested support and Government has delivered over 800,000 food parcels directly to people's doorsteps since March.

Local councils across the country have set up local authority hubs and have local systems and processes to provide those who are medically vulnerable in their area with additional support, over and above that provided centrally.

Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals who have requested essential supplies through the gov.uk website have had their details passed onto supermarkets and the Government continues to work with supermarkets to support the prioritisation of clinically extremely vulnerable people for delivery slots.

■ Domestic Abuse: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire: [40671]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to ensure that victims of domestic violence are not housed in the same temporary provision of additional emergency accommodation as perpetrators of domestic violence during the covid-19 crisis.

Luke Hall:

A key priority for my Department during the current Covid-19 pandemic is to keep refuges open to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are able to access the support they need.

My officials have been liaising closely with the refuge sector from the start of the lockdown to monitor how demand is changing.

We are looking carefully at all safe and appropriate additional accommodation options for supporting victims of domestic abuse and their children.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40495\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he has taken to provide food and support to people classified by the NHS as the most vulnerable in society.

Christopher Pincher:

On 22 March, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asked clinically extremely vulnerable individuals to shield and announced steps to support them to stay at home.

To support these individuals, we are working with local authorities, the food industry, local resilience and emergency partners, and voluntary groups to ensure these individuals have both support and access to essential items such as groceries and medicines through deliveries and priority supermarket delivery slots, if they do not have alternative means of accessing these.

The system to deliver food packages is now up and running and capacity is building in line with current demand.

■ Homelessness: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40501\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress the Government is making on providing support to homeless people during the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) the UK.

Luke Hall:

Over 90 per cent of those on the streets and in communal night shelters known to local authorities at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis have now been made offers of safe accommodation – ensuring some of the most vulnerable in society are protected from the pandemic.

On 18 April we announced that councils across England will receive another £1.6 billion in additional funding to enable them to respond to other Covid-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, stepping up support for services helping the most vulnerable, including homeless people. This takes the total funding to support councils to respond to the pandemic to over £3.2 billion. This is in addition to £3.2 million in targeted funding for councils to support vulnerable rough sleepers.

Of the £3.2 billion Covid-19 funding for councils, the nine Lincolnshire local authorities received £10,661,483 in the first tranche of and £16,703,507 in the second tranche.

All nine Lincolnshire authorities have responded proactively and have informed us they have secured accommodation offers for all people who were previously rough sleeping or living in shared sleeping accommodation at the start of the crisis. Local authorities in Lincolnshire are increasingly looking at longer-term housing options for people placed in temporary accommodation, including social housing and private rented.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[40670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people who have become homeless since the announcement of support for local authorities to accommodate rough sleepers temporarily.

Luke Hall:

Local authorities collect data on the actions they take under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 on a quarterly basis and report them to the Government. These data collections are released quarterly as homelessness statistics. The most recent homelessness statistical release was on 19 March 2020. Local authorities are still required to provide this data throughout the Covid-19 outbreak.

We recognise the challenges that local authorities will face in providing accommodation as they fulfil their homelessness duties during this pandemic. This is why we have announced that councils across England will receive another £1.6 billion in additional funding to enable them to respond to Covid-19 pressures across the services they deliver, stepping up support for services helping the most vulnerable, including homeless people. This takes the total funding to support councils to respond to the pandemic to £3.2 billion.

This is in addition to £3.2 million targeted funding to ensure that we minimise the risk to those rough sleepers currently unable to self-isolate. This funding will assist local authorities with providing accommodation and support to vulnerable people who are at risk of, or who have been diagnosed with, Covid-19.

■ Local Government Finance

Tom Hunt:

[\[40773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to ensure the allocation of the additional £1.6 billion support for local authorities is adequate for borough councils in two-tier systems.

Mr Simon Clarke:

MHCLG continues to work with local agencies, including local authorities, on their preparedness to manage a Covid-19 outbreak.

Allocations of the additional £1.6 billion support for councils to respond to coronavirus were announced on Tuesday 28 April. This is a significant package of support which responds to the range of pressures councils have told us they are facing and takes the total amount provided to local councils to over £3.2 billion. Across both waves of

funding, almost 70 per cent of district councils will receive £1 million or more in support, whilst 90 per cent of the funding will go to social care authorities. These allocations provide more funding to lower tier authorities than the first wave of funding.

■ **Local Government Finance: Coronavirus**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40498\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of additional support required by local government in (a) Lincolnshire and (b) the UK in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Allocations of the £1.6 billion support for councils to respond to Covid-19 were announced on Tuesday 28 April. This is a significant package of support which responds to the range of pressures councils have told us they are facing, and takes the total amount provided to local councils to over £3.2 billion. Across both waves of funding, almost 70 per cent of district councils will receive £1 million or more in support, whilst 90 per cent of the funding will go to social care authorities.

Of this, Lincolnshire County Council has received over £35 million, and district councils in Lincolnshire have also received funding: South Holland has received over £1 million across both waves of funding, for example.

■ **Local Government: Coronavirus**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[39670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions his Department has had with Local Resilience Forums to ensure that local authorities are responding effectively to the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Since early February there has been regular contact between MHCLG and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in England to manage the response to Covid-19. This has included involvement in Strategic Coordination Groups held by each LRF, weekly calls with LRF Chairs and individual engagement with LRFs by Ministers and senior officials.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40496\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made on allowing councils to meet remotely.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We have made and laid *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020* before Parliament under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

These regulations, which came into effect on 4 April 2020, enable all local authority meetings before 7 May 2021 to be held remotely, including allowing remote access by members of the public and press by electronic means, including by telephone conference, video conference, live webcasts, and live interactive streaming.

Sir John Hayes:

[40497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress has made on establishing local co-ordination centres to mitigate disruption to logistics as a result of the covid-19 outbreak throughout the UK.

Christopher Pincher:

Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) are the principal mechanisms at the local level in England for planning multi-agency responses to mitigate disruption from emergencies. During an emergency, LRFs can stand up Strategic Coordination Groups (SCGs) to enhance coordination. Since early February there has been regular contact between MHCLG and LRFs in England to manage the response to Covid-19. This has included involvement in Strategic Coordination Groups held by each LRF, weekly calls with LRF Chairs and individual engagement with LRFs by Ministers and senior officials. The devolved administrations are responsible for establishing local co-ordination centres within their areas.

Mr Geoffrey Cox:

[40533]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the increased costs that local authorities will incur as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

I have engaged closely with councils from across the country, and across different tiers, since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. This new allocation is based on our latest and best assessment of the distribution of additional Covid-19 pressures. We have now provided over £3.2 billion to councils in England to support local authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Rupa Huq:

[40704]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure local resilience forums and local authorities can meet the needs of (a) shielding and (b) non-shielded vulnerable individuals as part of its response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

To support those who have been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus, we are working with local authorities, the food industry, local resilience and emergency partners, and voluntary groups to ensure these individuals have both support and access to essential items such as groceries and medicines through deliveries and priority supermarket delivery slots, if they do not have alternative means of accessing these.

We are sharing data with local authorities on deliveries, including on planned deliveries in their area; where individuals have unmet basic care needs; or where individuals require assistance lifting food into their homes. Guidance has been issued to local authorities, most recently on 24 April.

The Government is also supporting local authorities to identify and support vulnerable people who fall outside the shielding programme. We have enabled local authorities to use NHS volunteers who registered with the GoodSam app. The system is also now open for self-referrals. The Government and local authorities are also working with supermarkets so they can offer priority delivery slots to non-shielded vulnerable people.

In addition, we have provided over £3.2 billion for local councils to manage the immediate impacts of coronavirus.

Paul Bristow:

[40781]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government has taken to help ensure that local resilience forums and local authorities engage with the local voluntary and community sector to ensure effective support is available to people affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

MHCLG continues to work with local agencies, including the local voluntary and community sector (VCS), to manage the Covid-19 pandemic.

The local voluntary and community sector, and volunteers, are essential partners for many local support services – both in ‘normal’ times and even more so in the Covid-19 response.

Local resilience forums and local authorities have well established structures in place to work with the voluntary and community sector and, in response to Covid-19, are working alongside VCS partners and are coordinating volunteer support. This includes volunteer hubs or centres in some areas.

To support local engagement of the VCS, the Government has provided support and guidance on partnership working, as well as announcing a £750 million support package to assist voluntary and community sector organisations. The NHS Volunteer Responders are also open to referrals from local authorities and local resilience forums.

Steve Reed:

[41466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he has had with local authorities on the development of government policy for local recovery following the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: This Department has ensured that there has been regular and significant contact between Ministers, regional mayors and council leaders throughout this crisis to respond to the Covid-19 emergency.

This includes calls between the Communities Secretary and Ministers, and regional mayors, as well as regular teleconferences hosted by the Communities Secretary for all local government leaders and chief executives, with other Ministers present to answer questions. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is also discussing priorities and support measures with councils in each of the nine English regions, alongside a Ministerial-led Covid19 local delivery board with councillors. Further to this, a Ministerial-led Economic Recovery Working Group has been established, made up of local government leaders from across England including several Metro Mayors to help inform Government's plans for economic recovery.

■ **Sleeping Rough: Coronavirus**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[40663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department plans to provide to local authorities to ensure that rough sleepers currently in emergency accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak do not return to rough sleeping when that provision ends.

Luke Hall:

Over 90 per cent of those on the streets and in communal night shelters known to local authorities at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis have now been made offers of safe accommodation – ensuring some of the most vulnerable in society are protected from the pandemic.

We announced that councils across England will receive another £1.6 billion in additional funding to enable them to respond to other COVID-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, stepping up support for services helping the most vulnerable, including homeless people. This takes the total funding to support councils to respond to the pandemic to over £3.2 billion. This is in addition to £3.2 million in targeted funding for councils to support vulnerable rough sleepers.

On 2 May 2020 the Secretary of State announced that Dame Louise Casey will lead the Government Taskforce on the response to rough sleeping during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Taskforce will focus on next steps of emergency response to support vulnerable rough sleepers during the pandemic.

The taskforce will work hand-in-hand with councils across the country on plans to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the Government announced a further £112 million fund for the RSI across England in 2020/21 to help 276 areas tackle rough sleeping. The funding is a 30 per cent increase on the previous year and will be used to introduce and expand a range of measures, including street-based services, first stage accommodation, housing support and housing-led solutions, as well as specialist support workers.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[40664]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the evidential basis is for his Department's 18 April 2020 statement that 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to local authorities at the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak have been made offers of accommodation.

Luke Hall:

My Department asked all local authorities to provide information on their rough sleeping cohort in order to support local authorities to make offers of accommodation to as many people who required it to reduce the risk faced by some of the most vulnerable in society.

At the beginning of this crisis, local authorities across England provided an estimate of the total number of people sleeping rough and in accommodation with communal sleeping spaces, such as night shelters, and have then updated us on the total number of people who have had offers of accommodation made available to them.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[40665]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that rough sleepers (a) not known to local authorities at and (b) who have become homeless since the beginning of the crisis can access (i) emergency accommodation and (ii) adequate support.

Luke Hall:

We recognise the challenges that local authorities will face in providing assistance to vulnerable people as they fulfil their homelessness duties during this pandemic. This is why we have announced that councils across England will receive another £1.6 billion in additional funding to enable them to respond to COVID-19 pressures across the services they deliver, stepping up support for services helping the most vulnerable, including homeless people. This takes the total funding to support councils to respond to the pandemic to £3.2 billion. This is in addition to £3.2 million targeted funding to ensure that we minimise the risk to those rough sleepers currently unable to self-isolate.

The Government has introduced a package of measures to protect renters affected by coronavirus aimed in part at preventing any increase in homelessness. With these in force, no renter in either social or private accommodation will be forced out of their home. Landlords must give all renters 3 months' notice if they intend to seek possession.

Additionally, we have increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that they are set at the 30th percentile of market rents. This means that from April 2020 many people renting in the Private Rented Sector will have seen an increase in their housing support.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40486\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to protect SMEs from eviction as a result of financial difficulties caused by the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We have been working quickly to support the UK's businesses through the crisis, providing an initial £330 billion. This has included support through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Corporate Financing Facility. This package of support also includes £13 billion of grant funding schemes, the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF).

Government is also deferring Value Added Tax (VAT) payments for the next quarter so businesses will not pay any VAT until the end of June - representing a £30 billion injection into the economy. This is to help support businesses with their cash flows, and support individuals' employment.

We have also introduced temporary new measures to protect businesses from aggressive forms of rent recovery: we have legislated to enact a moratorium on commercial forfeitures due to non-payment of rent, due to end on 30 June; Statutory demands and winding up petitions issued to commercial tenants will be temporarily voided; and changes have been made to the use of Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery.

■ Temporary Accommodation: Coronavirus

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[40666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the suitability of hostels and other temporary accommodation with shared facilities in the event that a resident of that accommodation needs to (a) self-isolate because of covid-19 symptoms or (b) be shielded.

Luke Hall:

Temporary accommodation is an important way of ensuring no family is without a roof over their head while dealing with the impacts of Covid-19. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation for the household in the first instance until suitable long-term accommodation can be offered to them. They must ensure this temporary accommodation is suitable and there is a right of appeal.

People who are living in accommodation which they share with other people, or in which they share facilities with other people should follow current PHE guidance on self-isolation and social distancing within the home.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**■ Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

James Murray: [\[41611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she holds information on the proportion of humanitarian assistance sent to Gaza which is delivered through non-governmental organisations.

James Cleverly:

DFID provides support to the health system in Gaza and contributes to the provision of emergency food aid for around 1.2 million vulnerable people.

DFID does not hold information on what proportion of overall humanitarian assistance is delivered through NGOs.

■ Greece: Refugees

Hywel Williams: [\[40999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what financial support his Department is offering to support humanitarian assistance to migrants along the Greek-Turkish border.

James Cleverly:

The UK has a strong relationship with Greece on migration that was enhanced on 22 April 2020 in a joint migration action plan. We continue to offer support to the Greek Government to alleviate pressure and deliver sustainable improvements in the Greek migration system. We support vital search and rescue operations in the Aegean and have provided funding for emergency winter supplies for migrants in the Greek islands.

The UK has a similarly strong relationship with the Turkish government. We continue to contribute to the €6 billion Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which supports Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey. Through the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) we work to strengthen Turkey's national migration institutions and their migration policies. We do not have specific humanitarian programmes focused on the Greek-Turkish border.

■ Humanitarian Aid: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[40724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on ensuring humanitarian access remains in states which have taken lockdown measures in response to the covid -19 outbreak.

James Cleverly:

The Secretary of State for International Development and the Foreign Secretary are working closely together to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

The UK is using all available diplomatic channels, including its position in multilateral organisations, such as the UN, to ensure that international humanitarian law and global commitments regarding humanitarian access, and the protection of refugees and other vulnerable groups are maintained during this crisis.

The UK is also a key contributor to the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which supports humanitarian access through securing the continuity of the supply chains for essential commodities and services, and supporting the most vulnerable, including refugees, internally displaced peoples, migrants and host communities.

To date, the UK has committed £744 million to support global efforts to combat COVID-19. This includes significant support to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to help National Societies meet the needs of people in hard to reach areas. DFID is also supporting governments and other partners to ensure that supply chains remain open and assistance is targeted to those who need it the most.

■ Pakistan: Minority Groups

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[41077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent steps she has taken to ensure that religious minorities are not disproportionately adversely affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

The UK Government works to ensure that all aid reaches the most vulnerable including those from religious minorities. Vulnerable populations will experience COVID-19 outbreaks differently. COVID-19 is likely to reinforce their marginalised position in society, their experience of discrimination, violence and stigma, and further limit their access to essential support and services. For this reason, on 9 April, guidance was circulated across DFID highlighting that inclusion must be central to our response and the specific contexts and needs of all religious minorities should be taken into account when developing practical programmes to tackle COVID-19.

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[41078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the validity of reports that religious minorities in Pakistan are being denied adequate support during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

DFID is paying close attention to ensure that all COVID-19 assistance is inclusive and does not discriminate on religious grounds.

DFID is actively engaged with the Government of Pakistan to shape their COVID-19 response so that those most at risk of being left behind, including religious and other minority groups, can receive assistance. We are currently looking at how we can best support vulnerable groups through the crisis.

We are concerned by media reports of incidents where minorities in Sindh were refused assistance. We therefore welcome the establishment of initiatives like the government's Ehsaas Rashan Portal, which seeks to prevent some of these inequities by connecting the private sector and civil society organisations with those most in need of assistance.

■ **Palestinians: Coronavirus**

Mr David Jones: [\[41399\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support her Department is providing to the Palestinian Authority to tackle the covid-19 pandemic in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

James Murray: [\[41610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the effect of Israel's blockade of Gaza on Gaza's capacity to respond to the covid-19 outbreak.

James Cleverly:

The UK has pledged £744 million to support the global humanitarian response to COVID-19. We have delivered additional vital support in the Occupied Palestinian Territories by providing funding to WHO and UNICEF to purchase and co-ordinate the delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline public health personnel and scale up laboratory testing capacity.

The UN assesses that although the current number of detected cases remains relatively low, the capacity of the Palestinian health system to cope with an expected increase in COVID-19 cases is poor. The situation is particularly severe in Gaza, where the health system has shortages in specialised staff, drugs and equipment. We continue to monitor the situation and are working closely with the UN and the international community to ensure a co-ordinated response.

■ **Yemen: Humanitarian Aid**

Chris Law: [\[41064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to (a) enhance and (b) maintain humanitarian access in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

The UK is extremely concerned that Houthi restrictions and interference in the delivery of humanitarian assistance is now forcing humanitarian agencies, such as the World Food Programme, to scale back their assistance in northern Yemen. In line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2451, we are calling on all parties to facilitate unhindered access for humanitarian actors and agencies and ensure that humanitarian workers are able to conduct their work safely and without harm.

Ministers and officials continue to engage closely with other donors and humanitarian agencies to ensure a coordinated international approach on how we adjust the way we all give aid, to ensure it gets to those in need.

Chris Law:

[\[41065\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on planned funding levels for a humanitarian response in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

As reported by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, in his UN Security Council briefing of Monday 16 April, UN agencies estimate that they need more than \$900 million to enable them to continue their operations in Yemen until July.

On Thursday 23 April, DFID's acting Permanent Secretary discussed ways of improving humanitarian funding levels in Yemen with Mark Lowcock.

The Secretary of State also discussed Yemen funding with the Executive Director of the World Food Programme on Friday 17 April and UK officials remain in close contact with other major donors such as Saudi Arabia, the US and Germany.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ World Trade Organisation

Bill Esterson:

[\[40591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the importance for UK interests of the World Trade Organisation holding meetings during the covid-19 pandemic; and what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of those meetings being held remotely.

Greg Hands:

COVID -19 is a global challenge and requires a coordinated global response. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has a key role to play in this effort.

The UK welcomes the use of virtual meetings for informal meetings and exchanges of views. We recently participated in the written procedure for the multilateral negotiation on fisheries subsidies and found this useful.

We have encouraged the WTO Secretariat to continue working with Members quickly to establish accessible and inclusive virtual ways of working, to allow WTO discussions to continue. The UK is prepared to support developing country participation across these virtual processes.

JUSTICE■ **Brian Healless****Rosie Cooper:**[\[41005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reasons Brian Healless was sent to a mental health institution rather than a prison following his sentencing on 24 March 2020.

Chris Philp:

I understand that officials have written to the Honourable Member, providing a full explanation of the decisions taken in the case of Mr Healless.

The Mental Health Act 1983 (the 1983 Act) provides powers for the Court to divert people during trial or at the point of sentencing away from the criminal justice system to hospital for assessment and/or treatment for their condition. Alternatively, if a convicted (or remanded) prisoner becomes unwell or experiences a relapse in an existing condition while in prison custody, the 1983 Act also provides for the Secretary of State for Justice to direct that the prisoner be transferred to a secure hospital for treatment. The 1983 Act stipulates the criteria which must be met before the Secretary of State may authorise detention in a secure hospital - namely that on the recommendation of two psychiatrists, the prisoner is suffering of a mental disorder of a nature or degree that warrants hospital detention. Any such transfer does not alter the sentence of the Court, including where the sentence is mandatory life imprisonment for murder.

At the point a prisoner who has been transferred to hospital responds positively to treatment and no longer meets the criteria for detention under the 1983 Act, he will return to prison to serve the remainder of their custodial sentence. In the case of a prisoner serving a life sentence, he will be eligible for release only where he has completed the minimum term set by the Court. He will only then be released if an independent Parole Board has assessed that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public for the offender to remain confined.

Where prisoners are transferred to hospital for treatment under the 1983 Act, they are most likely to be subject to a restriction order. This means that certain decisions about the management of that patient, for instance decisions over leave and transfer, are subject to the consent of the Secretary of State. This function exists to ensure public protection is upheld.

■ **County Courts: Coronavirus****Stephen McPartland:**[\[39541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of suspending the issue of county court judgments to small businesses during the covid-19 outbreak to help ensure that those businesses are able to receive and respond efficiently to those judgments.

Chris Philp:

The Government is taking a number of measures to support businesses, landlords and other parties during the coronavirus pandemic. The Coronavirus Act 2020 implemented a moratorium on the forfeiture of commercial leases for unpaid rent until 30 June 2020 (with the option to extend through secondary legislation).

MoJ has also worked with BEIS and MHCLG to restrict the use of commercial rent arrears recovery (CRAR) while the moratorium is in place, and on Thursday 23 April BEIS announced that they will be introducing further measures to protect businesses against aggressive debt recovery actions, including statutory demands and winding up petitions.

The Ministry of Justice has not made an assessment of the merits of suspending county court judgments to small businesses during the Covid-19 outbreak but we continue to keep the situation under review.

More generally, as a further measure to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lord Chancellor and the Master of the Rolls have agreed a Practice Direction to allow parties to extend time limits in most civil cases by up to 56 days without formally notifying the court (rather than the current 28 days).

Courts: Coronavirus**Nick Smith:**[\[39678\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he has taken to ensure that court hearings proceed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

Our courts provide a vital public service and it is important that justice is delivered wherever possible. We are working closely with the courts and judiciary to ensure that cases are progressed through the system as quickly as possible, including through greater use of audio and video hearings.

The courts are expediting sentencing hearings and prioritising remand hearings to ensure that public protection remains a core goal. Magistrates' court trials are now being listed wherever it is safe to do so and every effort is being made to resume Crown Court trials. Representatives from across the criminal justice system are working at pace to agree the best way of doing this safely.

Alex Cunningham:[\[41040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps have been taken to ensure that virtual court hearings during the covid-19 outbreak are accessible for people with disabilities.

Chris Philp:

In response to the current pandemic HMCTS have increased the capacity for telephone and video hearings so that hearings can take place remotely where appropriate. We are clear that audio and video hearings provide an additional channel for conducting a hearing and should be as accessible as possible. However,

they may not be suitable for everyone. The decision to hold a hearing by telephone or video is for the judge, panel or magistrate, taking into account the needs of the parties, including any disability or difficulties with access.

We ask participants to tell the court or tribunal if they need support or cannot participate effectively in the telephone or video hearing. The judiciary can then determine how to proceed, and whether to change the method of the hearing or put in place reasonable adjustments or alternative arrangements to ensure disabled users can participate.

We are working with the advice sector to fully understand the impacts on vulnerable people, reasonable adjustments, and reflecting up to date advice from the sector in our processes for court users to join hearings and related staff guidance. We have updated our GOV.UK content and have set up a technical support phone line for remote hearings and included additional information in hearing notices.

Alex Cunningham:

[41041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that every person taking part in virtual court hearings during the covid-19 outbreak has adequate technology to do so.

Chris Philp:

In response to the current pandemic HMCTS have increased the capacity for telephone and video hearings so that hearings can take place remotely where appropriate. We are clear that audio and video hearings provide an additional channel for conducting a hearing and should be as accessible as possible. However, they may not be suitable for everyone. The decision to hold a hearing by telephone or video is for the judge, panel or magistrate, taking into account the needs of the parties, including their ability to access and use the right technology.

The technology used by HMCTS should be accessible for many people. The teleconferencing technology, BTMeetMe, requires a phone. The video technology (Skype for Business and the Cloud Video Platform) needs a stable internet connection and internet enabled device with a camera and microphone. In order to join Skype for Business calls as a guest, users will need to download the Skype Meetings web app or the Skype for Business desktop app. These are both free, and straight forward processes.

HMCTS provides information and guidance on joining a remote hearing in hearing notices and on GOV.UK. HMCTS has created staff guidance and learning products so that staff can support users over the phone and set up a technical support line for remote hearings.

Court users can inform HMCTS if they need support or cannot participate effectively in a telephone or video hearing. The judiciary can then determine how to proceed, and whether to change the method of the hearing or put in place reasonable adjustments for disabled people or alternative arrangements to ensure users can participate. For example, it is possible to dial someone into a video hearing if needed.

HMCTS is working with the advice sector who are advising us on the impacts on users including impacts relating to access to technology.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[41042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing retired judges back into employment to tackle the backlog of court cases that has accumulated since the beginning of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The statutory retirement age for most judges is 70. The Lord Chief Justice (or in some instances the Senior President of Tribunals) may, with the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor, extend the appointment of judges below the High Court following their compulsory retirement date for a period of one year and for further one-year periods up to the point at which the judge turns 75 where it is in the public interest to do so.

The work that the judiciary are doing to prioritise the most urgent cases alongside court and tribunal staff, is keeping our justice system running in the most challenging of circumstances. The full resumption of cases will depend a great deal on the wider approach to social distancing to keep our judiciary, staff and court users safe and we continue to explore options to help with this.

■ Courts: Video Conferencing

Alex Cunningham:

[\[41443\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the suitability of virtual court hearings for people with mental health conditions.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS have increased the capacity for telephone and video hearings so that hearings can take place remotely where appropriate. We are clear that audio and video hearings provide an additional channel for conducting a hearing and should be as accessible as possible. The decision to hold a hearing by telephone or video is for the judge, panel or magistrate, taking into account the needs of the parties, including any disability or difficulties with access.

Hearings in the mental health tribunal are taking place by audio and video, and the President and Deputy President of the Health, Education and Social Care chamber have issued guidance on these hearings.

We work with the advice sector to fully understand the impacts on vulnerable people, reasonable adjustments, and reflecting up to date advice from the sector in our processes for court users to join hearings and related staff guidance. We are also planning an evaluation of the use of remote hearings during the Covid-19 outbreak. This includes exploring how remote hearing processes were implemented and worked in practice, and how experiences varied for different user groups.

■ Crimes of Violence: Retail Trade

Alexander Stafford: [\[38628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to (a) protect shop workers from violent attacks and (b) ensure that offenders are prosecuted.

Alexander Stafford: [\[38629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to increase sentences for violent offences against shop workers.

Chris Philp:

Everyone has the right to feel safe at work and assaults on shop workers are unacceptable.

In April 2019, the Home Office launched a call for evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff to help gather evidence to strengthen their understanding of the scale and extent of such abuse against retail workers. The Government's response to that call for evidence is anticipated to be published shortly.

There are already a range of offences that cover assaults against any worker including those in the retail sector. It is for our independent courts to determine the sentence in each individual case based on the full circumstances of the offence and offender, and in line with relevant sentencing guidelines – which are issued by the independent Sentencing Council. The most serious violent offences against shop workers can be punishable by sentences up to life imprisonment. The average custodial sentence length for, assault occasioning actual bodily harm (ABH) and assault occasioning grievous bodily harm (GBH) has increased over the last decade.

Sentencing guidelines on assault include an aggravating factor of 'offence committed against those working in the public sector or providing a service to the public'. In its supplementary guidance issued in 2019, the Sentencing Council was clear that this could apply to those working in the private as well as the public sector. This aggravating factor is taken into account by the courts, when deciding what sentence to impose. The Sentencing Council is reviewing its guidelines on assault and has published a consultation on a revised assault guideline on 16 April 2020.

■ Prisoners: Coronavirus

Dr James Davies: [\[40679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what his policy is on protecting prisoners with underlying health conditions from covid-19.

Lucy Frazer:

To protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19 and reduce transmission of infection, new cohorting strategies were developed by Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service advised by the Public Health Authorities and implemented from March 31. As a result, prisons are in the process of implementing units to isolate the sick, shield the vulnerable (including those with underlying health conditions) and cohort new arrivals to reduce risk.

In addition, prisoners identified as 'extremely vulnerable' as defined in the NHS guidelines will merit consideration for Release on Temporary License (ROTL). Any prisoners released on temporary license must abide by the provisions of that licence; the licence can be revoked for breach of a condition or for any other reason. All prisoners released under ROTL will be returned to prison once the justification for temporary compassionate release ends, provided they are still serving the custodial element of their sentence at that point.

More widely, the Prison Service is creating extra cells, restricting regimes, limiting prisoner movement and releasing some prisoners early. The strong measures the Prison Service is taking are successfully limiting the transmission of the virus.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Lee Anderson:

[\[40765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure social distancing measures are being effectively implemented in prisons in order to ensure the safety of private security staff operating in those environments.

Lucy Frazer:

Restricted regimes are currently in place in prisons, meaning that prisoners are spending more of their time in their cells to support social distancing as recommended by Public Health England guidance. When allowed out of their cells, for example for exercise or showering, it is on a rota basis in small manageable groups, supervised by officers, allowing for social distancing to be maintained.

These measures are essential for protecting prisoners and all staff working in prisons.

■ Probate Service: Standards

Sarah Olney:

[\[39713\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps is he taking to ensure that the Probate Registry can process the current high level of cases.

Chris Philp:

Her Majesty's Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) has continued to process applications for grant of probate during the coronavirus pandemic. The digital online probate service is available for both citizens and legal professionals and this means that both the applicant, and where necessary, HMCTS can administer grants remotely.

Paper applications from citizens have been digitised, through the introduction of a bulk scanning, since January 2020. This will shortly be extended to legal professional applications for those who are not yet using the online service. This also increases the ability of HMCTS to continue to work and process high levels of probate applications.

In addition, HMCTS has introduced a number of temporary measures to assist applicants in making their applications during the current circumstances, such as

allowing statements of truth in place of affidavits, enabling electronic signatures on applications and providing guidance on witnessing renunciations and Powers of Attorneys whilst social distancing measures are in place.

TRANSPORT

■ Airports: Coronavirus

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[\[40479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to introduce pre-boarding covid-19 testing at airports.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Airlines and airports have already implemented additional measures in response to COVID-19 in line with advice from PHE, SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Airports are displaying posters and digital signage relaying Government information about COVID-19. Passengers arriving into UK airports are being given a leaflet with information about the measures in place in the UK, and announcements are made on aircraft an hour before landing.

Our approach is being kept under review as the pandemic develops. This may mean that measures and procedures change as we control the spread of, and understand more about, the virus. Any changes to our approach will be led by advice from SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Protecting the health of the UK public will always come first.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers:

[\[40530\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the risk of covid-19 being spread in the UK by people arriving from overseas into UK airports.

Kelly Tolhurst:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Airlines and airports have implemented additional measures in response to COVID-19 in line with advice from PHE, SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Airports are displaying posters and digital signage relaying Government information about COVID-19. Passengers arriving into UK airports are being given a leaflet with information about the measures in place in the UK, and announcements are made on aircraft an hour before landing.

Targeted screening measures were carried out at UK airports for inbound passengers during the containment phase of the pandemic when the aim was to prevent the virus coming in to the UK.

Whilst there is community transmission within the UK, the role played by imported cases is less significant and so our focus in the current delay phase has not been on screening measures at the border.

As you would expect our approach is being kept under review as the pandemic develops. This may mean that measures and procedures change as we control the spread of, and understand more about, the virus. Any changes to our approach will be led by advice from SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Protecting the health of the UK public will always come first.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[40597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with UK airlines on issuing refunds to customers whose travel arrangements were cancelled as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[40598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with travel agents including on-line agents on their roll in issuing refunds to customers that have booked flights through those agents which have subsequently been cancelled as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Government recognises the challenges businesses and consumers are experiencing regarding refunds for cancelled holidays and flights. Airlines are working hard to answer the high call volumes and to process the very large number of applications for refunds.

The Government appreciates the distress and frustration consumers may be experiencing. The Department for Transport is in regular conversation with UK airlines and wider membership bodies. The Department is working closely with the sector, the regulator and consumer groups to help ensure airlines deliver on their commitments.

■ **Great Western Railway: Coronavirus**

Stephen Doughty:

[\[40629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what financial and other support he is providing to the operator of the Great Western Railway franchise to ensure the continuance of services on the Great Western mainline.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

To bring stability and certainty to the industry during this turbulent time, all DfT-franchised train operating companies (excluding LNER and Northern Trains) have seen a temporary suspension of their existing franchise agreements financial mechanisms, and all revenue and cost risk has been transferred to the Government. These arrangements allow us to ensure that trains operate for those who cannot work from home, and essential travel can continue. We continue to manage rail services with close scrutiny of costs, to ensure efficiency and good value for the taxpayer.

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Coronavirus**Louise Haigh:****[42107]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to announce proposals on supporting hauliers in Northern Ireland to manage the covid-19 pandemic.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has made available £330 billion of support through loans and guarantees to support UK businesses. Changes have been made to some of the schemes to ensure that more businesses, particularly those that are SMEs like many road haulage companies, can benefit from them.

The Department is aware of the issues faced by the logistics industry in Northern Ireland. That is why on 24 April we announced a package of funding to support the movement of critical goods on up to 31 RoRo freight routes, including between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Up to £17 million of funding will be available to support up to five routes over the next two months, with the Northern Ireland Executive contributing 40 percent. Officials continue to work closely with the Northern Ireland Executive to gather evidence on the scale of the problem and any further support needed.

■ Road Traffic Control: Coronavirus**Mr Ben Bradshaw:****[40476]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to ensure social distancing by reallocating road space to pedestrians and cyclists during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I welcome appropriate changes to roads to give cyclists and pedestrians more space to enable social distancing. The details are for local authorities as they are responsible for managing their roads, but I am pleased to see that some local authorities have already begun to consider such changes.

There is a well-established range of traffic management measures already available to local authorities. Some measures, such as road closures to enable filtering for different traffic types, require Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to make them legal and enforceable, and we are aware that parts of that process are difficult for local authorities to comply with during the current situation. To assist with this, the Department has published temporary guidance, which suggests ways in which authorities can continue to make TROs, whilst still complying with the intention of the legislation.

This guidance has been circulated to local authorities already and will be kept under review. It will be withdrawn when circumstances allow. It is available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-orders-advertising-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Travel: Coronavirus

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[40478]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect on the airline and travel industries of imposing a 14 day quarantine on people arriving in the UK from other countries.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Airlines and airports have implemented additional measures in response to COVID-19 in line with advice from PHE, SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Airports are displaying posters and digital signage relaying Government information about COVID-19. Passengers arriving into UK airports are being given a leaflet with information about the measures in place in the UK, and announcements are made on aircraft an hour before landing.

Our approach is being kept under review as the pandemic develops. This may mean that measures and procedures change as we control the spread of, and understand more about, the virus. Any changes to our approach will be led by advice from SAGE and the Chief Medical Officer. Protecting the health of the UK public will always come first.

TREASURY

■ Catering and Leisure: Coronavirus

Mr Geoffrey Cox:

[40531]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending further support to the hospitality, leisure, and tourism industries if the current suspension of commercial activity continues beyond June 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

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 hospitality, leisure and tourism.

That is why the Government has announced unprecedented support for individuals and businesses to protect against the current economic emergency. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, a business rates holiday, 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). Together these schemes ensure almost all viable UK businesses can apply for a government backed loan.

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.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Caroline Lucas:

[\[40551\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has carried out an impact assessment on (a) the cost to HM Treasury and (b) the benefits for businesses of allowing people eligible for the coronavirus job retention scheme to furlough staff for one week at a time.

Jesse Norman:

Employees must remain on furlough for a minimum of three weeks under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The Government has made the difficult decision that there can be no exceptions to this so that the scheme is consistent with public health guidance, which seeks to minimise the number of people regularly outside their homes. It also protects employees by providing some certainty over their working arrangements. However, it is important to note that employees can be placed on furlough more than once while the scheme is open, and employers may rotate staff on furlough (for the minimum of three weeks each) if they choose.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[40694\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support he will extend to people who started new jobs on or before 19 March 2020 but who are ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme as an RTI submission had not been made for them by the cut-off date.

Selaine Saxby:

[\[40797\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to support employees who are not eligible to be furloughed following the change of cut off date for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The eligibility cut-off date for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was pushed back from 28 February 2020 to 19 March 2020. This means that employees who were originally ineligible can now participate in the scheme. This change makes the scheme more generous while keeping the significant fraud risks under control.

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 did not have RTI data by 19 March 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 be able to access other support that the 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.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[40726]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the requirement that employers applying for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) make a real time information submission to HMRC notifying payment by 19 March 2020, what assessment the Government has made of the number of new starters from the 1 March 2020 who would otherwise be eligible to be furloughed with the CJRS but are not due to that requirement.

Jesse Norman:

Complete data on new starters in March 2020 is not yet available as some people starting work in March will not be paid until April 2020 and so may not have been included on a PAYE RTI submission received to date by HMRC.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has had to be set up to operate at significant scale and with limited manual intervention. The Government has prioritised helping the greatest number of people as quickly as possible. The scheme will enable millions of people to remain employed. Requiring eligible employees to be notified on an RTI submission on or before 19 March 2020 allows as many people as possible to be included by going right up to the day before the announcement, and balances the risk of fraud that exists as soon as the scheme became public.

■ **Coronavirus job retention scheme: Company Voluntary Arrangements**

Caroline Lucas:

[40552]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has held discussions with his EU counterparts on the Government's decision to prevent companies in CVA from benefitting from the coronavirus job retention scheme; and for what reasons that decision was made in relation state aid rules.

Jesse Norman:

Any entity with a UK payroll can apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). To be eligible they must have:

- created and started a PAYE payroll scheme on or before 19 March 2020
- enrolled for PAYE online
- a UK bank account

If companies in Company Voluntary Arrangements meet these eligibility criteria they can access the scheme. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme grants are not classed as state aid.

Full guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>.

■ Credit Cards: Coronavirus

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[40569\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the equity of interest rates charged by credit card companies deferring payments on loans as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

On 14 April, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published guidance that sets out what it expects firms to do for customers facing payment difficulties due to the exceptional circumstances arising from COVID-19.

In relation to credit cards, the guidance states that firms should exercise forbearance in the form of suspending, reducing, waiving, or cancelling any further interest or charges, deferring payment of arrears, or accepting token payments for a reasonable period of time.

The guidance also covers credit card rates, with the expectation that firms review their prices to consider whether they are consistent with the obligation to treat customers fairly and to ensure that they do not pose unjustifiable burdens on customers who may be experiencing temporary payment difficulties.

The Government is committed to doing whatever it takes to get our nation through the impacts of COVID-19 and will continue to work closely with the FCA and industry. The Government stands ready to announce further action wherever necessary.

■ Directors: Pay

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[40524\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to support people who earn the majority of their income through dividends as directors of limited companies, and who are ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages, and is not eligible for support. 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.

Individuals who are not eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme may be able to access other support Government is providing, including the Bounce Back Loans Scheme for small businesses, 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/

■ PAYE

Rachael Maskell: [40677]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of UK employers had submitted their Full Payment Submission to HMRC on or before 19 March 2019.

Rachael Maskell: [41100]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of employers submitted their Real-Time Information payment submissions to HMRC (a) on and (b) before 19 March 2019.

Jesse Norman:

For Pay As You Earn schemes (not including occupational pension schemes) that made Real Time Information submissions relating to payments to employees in March 2019, 46% had sent at least one RTI Full Payment Submission by end of 18 March 2019. The equivalent figure for 19 March 2019 was 49%. Three per cent of schemes sent their first submission relating to payments in March 2019 on 19 March 2019.

The equivalent figures for March 2020 are also 46% by 18 March and 49% by 19 March 2020 and 3% on 19 March 2020.

However, employees in the remaining schemes would not necessarily be ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Alongside other conditions, for an employee to be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, an RTI submission to HMRC notifying payment in respect of that employee must have been made on or before 19 March 2020. The submission does not have to relate to a payment in March to meet this criterion and could relate to an earlier month. This means, for example, that employees that had RTI submissions submitted in February but not in March would be eligible for the scheme provided other eligibility criteria are met.

■ Pension Funds: Coronavirus

Kirsten Oswald: [40658]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allowing people aged under fifty-five whose income has been affected by the covid-19 outbreak to access some of their pension funds.

John Glen:

The government has introduced an unprecedented package of measures to help individuals and businesses affected by the crisis, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, changes to Universal Credit and Statutory Sick Pay that make it quicker and easier to access support as well as more generous, the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, a business rates holiday, grants to smaller businesses, and a package of government-backed and guaranteed loans.

The government wishes to encourage pension saving. This is why, for the majority of savers, pension contributions are tax-free. This makes pensions tax relief one of the most expensive reliefs in the personal tax system. In 2017/18 income tax and employer National Insurance Contributions relief cost £54 billion.

The government therefore imposes a charge on early withdrawals, which can be from 40% to 55% depending on the circumstances, both to recoup its investment through tax relief and to provide individuals with a strong incentive to save through their pension for the long-term. There are no plans to change this aspect of tax policy.

■ **Public Expenditure: Wales**

Jonathan Edwards: [\[40565\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding from the public purse will be allocated to Wales under the Barnett consequential following expenditure on the Manchester light rail project.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[40566\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much funding in Barnett consequential the Welsh Government will receive as a result of funding allocated to the Sheffield light rail project.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[40567\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Barnett consequential are for Wales from the West Midlands light rail project.

Jonathan Edwards: [\[40568\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the Barnett consequential are for Wales from the Nottingham light rail project.

Steve Barclay:

The Barnett formula is being applied in the normal way to any planned changes in the Department for Transport's budget, as set out in the Statement of Funding Policy.

Full details of any Barnett consequential for the Welsh Government will be set out at future fiscal events, estimates rounds and spending reviews.

The UKG has so far announced almost £7 billion in Barnett consequential to the devolved administrations in response to Covid-19.

This means £2.1 billion for the Welsh Government to support people, business and public services in Wales. This includes over £200m of Barnett consequential in relation to Covid-19 funding announced by the UK government for railway services in England.

■ Small Business Grants Fund

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[39566\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending eligibility for the Small Business Grant Fund to include small businesses which are not registered for business rates because they rent a space within a larger property and pay a proportion of business rates to the landlord.

Steve Barclay:

The Small Business Grant Fund has been designed to support the smallest businesses which have been affected by the measures taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The SBGF has 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.

Extending the scheme to businesses outside of the business rates system, such as businesses which rent a space within a larger property or which pay a proportion of business rates to their landlord, would not be practicable as it would require Local Authorities to create an entirely new system and to put in place appropriate anti-fraud checks. This would significantly increase Local Authorities' workloads at a time when they are already working under pressure to support struggling businesses as quickly as possible.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Mr Geoffrey Cox:

[\[40532\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to support small business owners that receive their income primarily through dividend payments rather than salary.

John Glen:

HMRC are not able to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources, so do not have a clear mechanism through which to support dividend income from an individual's own company, without also supporting dividend income from other investments. Dividends are taxed at a low rate and are paid in respect of the individual's role as a shareholder in their own business. It would not be right therefore for the Government to reimburse shareholders' dividend income.

However, individuals paying themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme, including salaried company directors, are able to apply for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), subject to their abiding by the requirements of the scheme. Those who pay tax on their trading profits through Income Tax Self-Assessment may instead be eligible for the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS). The SEISS will provide grants to those who are self-employed, or members of

partnerships, worth 80% of their trading profits/partnership trading profits, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month. SEISS is available to those who generate majority of their income from self-employment and who earn less than £50k.

Small business owners may also benefit from a range of other support measures including:

- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England
- Small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for SMEs
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months
- Through the Time To Pay scheme, businesses in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, can receive support with their tax affairs
- Protection for commercial leaseholders against automatic forfeiture for non-payment until June 30, 2020

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>.

■ Tax Avoidance

Gareth Bacon:

[40787]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of reviewing HMRC's agreement with debtors that monies already paid cannot be reclaimed, in the event that the Loan Charge is suspended or revoked.

Jesse Norman:

The Government accepted all but one of the 20 recommendations made by Sir Amyas Morse in December 2019 following his Independent Review of the Loan Charge policy.

The Independent Review assessed the impact of the policy on affected taxpayers and found that it was right for the Government to try to ensure that the tax was collected and that the Loan Charge should remain in force.

There was no recommendation to suspend or revoke the policy and the Government agrees it should remain in force.

The Government has included legislation required to implement the recommendations in the Finance Bill.

Implementing these recommendations is estimated to benefit more than 30,000 people subject to the Loan Charge, including about 11,000 people who will be taken out of paying it altogether.

Gareth Bacon:

[41187]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment his Department has made of the compatibility of the 2019 Loan Charge with the Rees rules on tax retrospectivity.

Jesse Norman:

Sir Amyas Morse conducted an independent review of the Loan Charge. His report was published in December 2019 and the Government welcomed his finding that the Loan Charge was a justified policy to draw a line under use of disguised remuneration tax avoidance.

The Government accepted all but one of the Review's 20 recommendations. This included a recommendation that the Loan Charge should only apply to disguised remuneration loans which were entered into after 9 December 2010, the date from which Sir Amyas considered that the law as to the tax treatment of loan schemes was clear.

The 2019 Loan Charge is not retrospective. It is a new charge on disguised remuneration loan balances outstanding at 5 April 2019 and was announced three years before the legislation took effect.

The Rees Rules have no bearing on the Loan Charge.

■ **Uniforms: Coronavirus**

Paul Girvan:

[40738]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to increase the Uniform Tax Rebate rate for NHS staff and other workers who have had to wash their uniforms at higher temperatures than usually expected as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is proud of the extraordinary commitment shown by all health and care staff in the fight against COVID-19.

More than one million NHS workers continue to benefit from the three-year Agenda for Change pay deal, under which the starting pay for a newly qualified nurse has increased by over 12% since 2017/18.

Flat rate expenses for uniforms are based on the average cost of cleaning a uniform and vary by profession. Individuals may claim for actual expenses if this is more beneficial.

■ Veterinary Services: Coronavirus**Ben Lake:** [\[40733\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the need to introduce a package of financial support for veterinary practices in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

Veterinary practices are eligible for a number of the business support schemes the Government has launched in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. These include VAT deferrals, Small Business Grant Funding, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans, and the Job Retention Scheme.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs continues to engage with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, British Veterinary Association and other key stakeholders to ensure that we understand any potential economic impacts to veterinary practices following the Covid-19 outbreak.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Equality Act 2010****Thangam Debbonaire:** [\[39526\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, when the Government plans to commence section 36 of the Equalities Act 2010.

Elizabeth Truss:

Section 36 of the Equality Act 2010 was commenced in part following Royal Assent to that Act. An announcement will be made in due course on commencement of the remaining parts of this Section.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Food Banks: NHS****Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[41423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment her Department has made of the extent of the use of food banks by NHS workers.

Will Quince:

No such assessment had been made; the Government does not collect data on the number of food parcels distributed by food banks and there is no official data on food bank use in the UK.

■ Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Alexander Stafford:

[40820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that family members of people who have underlying industrial diseases, but who die from covid-19, are allowed to put in posthumous claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit.

Justin Tomlinson:

Under existing rules, the dependants of anyone who dies after being diagnosed with a prescribed disease may make a posthumous claim for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, provided that they do so within one year of the issue of the deceased's death certificate.

For an award to be made, the death does not need to be in respect of the prescribed disease but may be from any cause, including for example where COVID-19 was a contributory factor. Payments to dependants usually equate to up to 3 months' worth of benefit, but may sometimes be higher.

Alexander Stafford:

[40822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have put in claims for Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit in (a) England, (b) Yorkshire, (c) the borough of Rotherham and (d) Rother Valley constituency in the last calendar year.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department publishes quarterly statistics on claims and assessments under the Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) scheme here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/industrial-injuries-disablement-benefit-quarterly-statistics>

The claims information, published by Region, is available in table 1.6.

The other geographical breakdowns are not readily available and to provide them would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Jobseeker's Allowance: Coronavirus

Patrick Grady:

[37934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Government's announcement of 20 March 2020 that the rate of universal credit standard allowance will be increased in response to the covid-19 outbreak, whether the Government plans to increase the rate of jobseeker's allowance.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: There are no current plans to increase the amount of Jobseeker's Allowance due to COVID19. Of course these benefits were increased by 1.7% from 6 April, following the Government announcement to end the benefits freeze in November 2019.

DWP and HMRC are experiencing significant increased demand and the Government has to prioritise the safety and stability of the benefits system overall, announcing measures that can be quickly and effectively operationalised.

Taken together, DWP's measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system and, along with the other job and business support programmes announced by the Chancellor, represent one of the most comprehensive packages of support introduced by an advanced economy in response to COVID19.

■ Local Housing Allowance

Stephen Timms: [\[19744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what percentile of local rents the maximum local housing allowance rate is for each (a) home size and (b) broad rental market area.

John Healey: [\[3143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Written Statement of 13 January 2020, Welfare Update, what estimate he has made of the proportion of properties in each broad rental market area that will be affordable to local housing allowance claimants from April 2020.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 27 February 2020]: In response to COVID-19, this Department has increased Local Housing Allowance (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.

This means that 30% of properties in each broad rental market area (BRMA) in England, Scotland and Wales are within the LHA rate with the exception of 15 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%.

The proportion of properties in central and inner London that are within the LHA rate are set out below:

BRMA	ROOM	1 BED	2 BED	3 BED	4 BED
Central London	30%				
Inner East London	30%	15%-20%	25%-30%	15%-20%	30%
Inner North London	30%	15%-20%	20%-25%	15%-20%	20%-25%
Inner South East London	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Inner South West London	30%	25%-30%	30%	25%-30%	20%-25%
Inner West London	30%	30%	30%	25%-30%	30%

■ Social Security Benefits

Kate Green:

[40592]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claims have been received for (a) contributions-based employment and support allowance and (b) contributions-based jobseekers' allowance in each of the last 12 months.

Mims Davies:

The information on the number of claimants who receive contribution-based employment and support allowance, including those in the assessment phase, by month of claim, is published and can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml>

Guidance for users is available at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

The information on number of all on-flows to Jobseeker's Allowance can be found at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>

Guidance for users can be found at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/newuser.asp>

Patrick Grady:

[41083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants had their social security payments limited by the application of the two child rule in (a) January (b) February (c) March and (d) April 2020 in each region of the UK

Will Quince:

The information requested is currently not available. They will be issued in an official statistics release in accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[37442]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to provide financial support for low-income households affected by the covid-19 outbreak; and whether her Department has plans to suspend the use of benefit sanctions during that period.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 28 April 2020]: DWP took the decision to temporarily suspend both the requirement to attend a face to face appointments and to conduct checks on conditionality compliance with work search for 3 months from 19 th March 2020. This means no sanctions will be applied for these reasons for the 3 month period, though DWP still encourages people who can work to seek work.

For people that are unable to access or use digital services, assistance to make and maintain their Universal Credit claim is available via the Freephone Universal Credit helpline.

The Government has been clear in its commitment to support those affected in these difficult times and we have made a number of changes to the welfare system to ensure people are receiving the support they need. These changes include:

- making it easier to access benefits. Those applying for Contributory ESA will be able to claim from day 1 – as opposed to day 8 - and we have removed the need for face-to-face assessment. Both Universal Credit and Contributory ESA can now be claimed by phone or online;
- increasing the standard rate of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by around £1000 per year;
- temporarily relaxing the application of the Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for all self-employed claimants affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 to ensure that the self-employed can access UC at a more generous rate;
- making Statutory Sick Pay available from day 1 – as opposed to day 4 - where an eligible individual is sick or self-isolating; and
- increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers at least 30% of the market rents in an area – which is on average £600 in people's pockets.

Taken together, these measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system and, along with other job and business support programmes announced by the Chancellor, represent one of the most comprehensive packages of support introduced by an advanced economy in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

We currently have no plans to cancel or suspend pre-existing sanctions. Claimants who were sanctioned before Covid 19 can continue to apply for hardship payments and are no worse off as a result of the pandemic. We continue to review our policies as the situation evolves.

■ Universal Credit

Thangam Debbonaire:

[40669]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the proportion of new claimants of universal credit whose housing costs are not covered by the local housing allowance set at the 30th percentile.

Will Quince:

No such assessment has been made.

Neil Gray:

[41471]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to ensure that claimants are aware that making a claim for universal credit could automatically stop existing benefits.

Will Quince:

(During the coronavirus) The Department has prioritised ensuring people have the information they need to understand the benefits and employment support they may be eligible for, including launching a new website to help people navigate the range of support available and apply for it.

Although neither HMRC nor DWP can advise tax credit claimants whether they should claim UC, we have actively encouraged them to use benefit calculators to check their eligibility for Universal Credit before applying, and have explained that applying for UC will stop their tax credit claim. This includes adding information to HMRC's Interactive Voice Response for people calling on the phone, and updating GOV.UK pages. We have used the DWP Twitter and Facebook channels to share messages for tax credit claimants, and used paid media to ensure we reach millions of people.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Covid-19 Update

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): [\[HCWS222\]](#)

Yesterday we launched the NHS Covid-19 app ("the app") for initial rollout on the Isle of Wight over the next two weeks.

This is the first phase in the development and roll out of a national 'test and trace' programme which will bring together the app, expanded web and phone-based contact tracing, and swab testing for those with potential Covid-19 symptoms. This is a vital part of our plans as we move towards the second phase in our battle against Covid-19.

The app has been built by a team including world-leading doctors, scientists and tech experts. If someone installs the app, it will start logging the distance between their phone and other phones nearby that also have the app installed. If a person becomes unwell with symptoms of Covid-19, they can report this through the app, which will then anonymously alert other app users that they have come into significant contact with over the previous few days and provide appropriate advice. The app, which takes full consideration of privacy and security, has already been tested in closed conditions at an RAF base.

This initial rollout will provide valuable insights into how the public respond to and use the app and how we can improve it further. There will be no changes to social distancing measures during this initial rollout phase.

Using the app is voluntary but the more residents who download the app, the more informed our national response will be. The Isle of Wight is leading the way for the UK, for which we thank them.

The more rapidly we can identify people at risk of infection and provide them with advice on what action they should take, the more effectively we can reduce the spread of the virus. The test and trace programme will play an increasingly important part in our wider strategy to save lives and protect the health and care system.

Further details of the national roll out will be available soon.

HOME OFFICE

■ Publication of the 2nd Annual Report of the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group

The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and the Fire Service (Kit Malthouse):
[\[HCWS223\]](#)

My Noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement:

Today I am pleased to announce the publication of the 2nd annual report of the Biometrics and Forensic Ethics Group. The Group provides Ministers with independent advice on matters relating to data ethics and ethical issues in forensic science and biometrics.

I would like to thank the Group for their strategic advice concerning the use and retention of biometric identifiers and for their advice on the development and testing of new biometric technologies.

The group have made four recommendations covering; the testing and use of Live Facial Recognition technologies by police forces; the design and implementation of Data Privacy Impact Assessments with the Home Office; and the use of familial DNA analysis results in assessing the value of genetic genealogy techniques for law enforcement.

In addition, the group continue to recommend a review of biometric retention and deletion schedules, particularly regarding custody images.

The Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group annual report can be viewed on the website of the Group at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/biometrics-and-forensics-ethics-group> and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.