



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 6 May 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:49 P.M., 06 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

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ Crime: Victims

Peter Kyle:

[\[42135\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what steps his Department is taking to protect victims of crime from the suspects of those crimes that have been released from remand following delays to their trial as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service is working to protect the interests of victims and witnesses by ensuring that defendants properly remanded in custody remain in custody.

Custody Time Limits (CTLs) apply to all cases in which a defendant has been remanded in custody pending trial. Those time limits can be extended if the courts are satisfied that there is good and sufficient cause and if the prosecution have acted with all due diligence and expedition. The adjournment of criminal trials may require an extension of a CTL.

Following the suspension of jury trials the CPS agreed a Protocol for Custody Time Limit Cases with the Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales and Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS). The Protocol is a temporary framework during the Coronavirus pandemic for the efficient handling of cases that involve a custody time limit. The Protocol sets out an agreed process for the listing and handling of CTL cases; an agreed understanding of the law in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic; and arrangements for information sharing.

The courts consider the issue of bail at each hearing and on any application for bail made by a defendant. Should the court decide to grant bail, whether at the end of any CTL or at another hearing, the court can impose conditions to ensure that a suspect does not interfere with witnesses or obstruct the course of justice, including the electronic monitoring of suspects.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Construction: Coronavirus

James Murray:

[\[42207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to his Answer to Question 39781 on Construction: Coronavirus, how the Health and Safety Executive will be made aware of whether construction sites have considered introducing staggered start and finish times.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for ensuring that Public Health England (PHE) social distancing guidance is implemented on construction sites. It is not the role of the HSE to seek information about whether sites have considered staggered start times. The Site Operating Procedures recommend that the firms responsible for managing sites should consider staggering start and finish times to reduce pressure on public transport. However, this is not mandated by Government guidance.

The HSE has powers to take enforcement action if a site is not consistently implementing PHE guidance. Individuals can report problems to the HSE via an online form, or by telephone.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Owen Thompson:**[\[41541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to end the consideration by lenders of a business's historic losses when conducting forward credit checks to assess Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme applications.

Paul Scully:

A business is eligible for a loan under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme if:

- Its business's activity is UK-based, with turnover of no more than £45 million per year;
- It has a borrowing proposal which, were it not for the current pandemic, would be considered viable by the lender;
- It can self-certify that the business has been adversely impacted by the Coronavirus (Covid-19).

Government has removed 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.

Owen Thompson:[\[41542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure that new businesses that are not yet profitable do not have their applications to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme rejected as a result of losses in their initial years of operation.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme is for businesses with turnover of up to £45m. For start-ups, or SMEs which have traded for less than 12 months, the lender should estimate turnover based upon the SME's forecasted turnover for the first 12 months of trading. Turnover need not be generated with the intention of making a profit – charities and non-profit entities are potentially eligible for support.

Government has removed 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.

On Monday 20 April we announced a new £1.25 billion support package to protect start-ups and businesses driving research and development, which are one of our great economic strengths and will help power our growth out of the coronavirus crisis.

This package includes a £500 million investment fund for high-growth companies impacted by the crisis, made up of funding from government and the private sector, and £750 million of grants and loans for SMEs focusing on research and development.

Owen Thompson:

[41543]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the most prevalent reasons for businesses being rejected for a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan.

Paul Scully:

Accredited lenders are responsible for providing loans under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). Decision-making on whether a business is eligible to access the CBILS are fully delegated to the accredited lenders, and individual lending decisions remain at the discretion of these lenders.

Since launch, the Government has received a lot of feedback on how the scheme has been working. 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 to ensure that companies feel the full benefits of this support.

To date, the Government has responded rapidly by:

- Extending the scheme so that all viable small businesses affected by Covid-19, and not just those unable to secure regular commercial financing;
- 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;
- Removing the forward-looking viability test; and
- Removing the per lender portfolio cap.

The Government will continue to monitor the scheme as a whole.

Owen Thompson:

[\[41544\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to take steps to ensure that fewer businesses are rejected from Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans.

Paul Scully:

Accredited lenders are responsible for providing loans under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). Decision-making on whether a business is eligible to access the CBILS are fully delegated to the accredited lenders, and individual lending decisions remain at the discretion of these lenders.

The Government has responded rapidly to feedback to ensure that companies feel the full benefits of available support through the 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 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;
- Removing the forward-looking viability test; and
- Removing the per lender portfolio cap.

In addition to the above, the Government:

- Launched the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) on 20 April to help businesses with an annual turnover of over £45m to access the finance they need.
- Announced the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, which will ensure that the smallest businesses can access loans of up to £50,000 in a matter of days. This Scheme launched on 4 May.

The Government will continue to monitor the schemes.

Owen Thompson:

[\[42113\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what guidance his Department has issued to lenders on the reasons for rejecting applications for a loan under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The British Business Bank has issued guidance to all accredited lenders on assessing eligibility for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

You are eligible for the scheme if:

- Your business's activity is UK-based, with turnover of no more than £45 million per year;
- You have a borrowing proposal which, were it not for the current pandemic, would be considered viable by the lender; and
- You can self-certify that your business has been adversely impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

For facilities above £30k, lenders are required to gain comfort that a SME is not an 'Undertaking in Difficulty', but this includes the option for lenders to rely on self-certification.

Decision-making on whether a business is eligible to access the CBILS is fully delegated to accredited lenders, using the guidance above, and individual lending decisions remain at the discretion of these lenders.

The Secretary of State continues to hold a regular dialogue with each of the biggest CBILS lenders to monitor its implementation and ensure that companies receive the full benefits of the support being provided.

The new Bounce Back Loans Scheme launched on May 4 to help the smallest SMEs to access loans from £2000 up to 25% of a business' turnover, with maximum loan amount of £50,000. To apply for the scheme businesses will be able to complete a short, simple, online application form, meaning that applications can be submitted and processed rapidly and businesses can access loans within a matter of days. The Government will provide lenders with a 100% guarantee on each loan to give them the confidence they need to support the smallest businesses in the country.

■ Government Assistance: Coronavirus

Sir Bernard Jenkin:

[\[41874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which covid-19 Government support schemes are (a) subject to the European Commission's Temporary Framework for State Aid; (b) subject to the De Minimis Framework for State Aid; and (b) not subject to State Aid rules.

Paul Scully:

Although the UK has left the EU, under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, the EU State Aid rules continue to apply in the UK during the Transition Period. The European Commission has introduced some flexibilities into the rules to deal address the impacts of the Coronavirus, in the form of a Temporary Framework, which the UK has taken advantage of.

The UK has two schemes that have been approved by the European Commission under its Temporary Framework: the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), and the COVID-19 Temporary Framework for UK authorities. Information about these schemes is available on DG Competition's Coronavirus pages. The COVID-19 Temporary Framework for UK authorities allows public authorities to introduce their own aid measures without the necessity of obtaining an

individual Commission approval. This provides cover for measures such as the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme (RHLGF) and CBILS for large business.

The UK is not required under State Aid rules to maintain a database of De Minimis aid, or of non-aid measures, but has used introduced measures on these bases to support affected business. For example, the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF), operates on a De Minimis basis, while the Job Retention schemes and business rate reliefs, which are key elements of the Government's support package, do not involve State Aid at all.

Patrick Grady:

[\[42095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether businesses are eligible to (a) apply for and (b) be approved for loans through the Bounce Back Loan scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme at the same time.

Paul Scully:

A borrower is not able to take out a loan under the Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBL) if they have been approved for a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loans Scheme (CBILS) facility, and vice versa.

However, a business that has already taken out a CBILS facility can apply to transfer to a BBL facility if the BBL facility will refinance the CBILS facility in full. All accredited lenders who have approved CBILS loans so far will allow customers to refinance their loan into the BBL where appropriate, however, borrower protections under these schemes differ, and businesses should discuss these with their lender.

Businesses do not need to request the transfer immediately. In order to enable lenders to focus on dealing with new applications first, there will be a window for transfer requests until 4 November 2020.

■ Non-domestic Rates

Stephen Hammond:

[\[41939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the (a) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and (b) Small Business Grants Fund so that businesses that pay business rates through their rent can directly benefit.

Paul Scully:

Businesses are eligible for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund if they are based in England with a property that has a rateable value of up to £51,000 and is wholly or mainly being used for the purposes of retail, hospitality and/or leisure. The Small Business Grant Fund is available to businesses with a property that on the 11 March 2020 were eligible for Small Business Rate Relief Scheme or Rural Rate Relief Scheme.

The Government has announced an additional discretionary fund to support small businesses that fall outside the scope of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants

Fund and the Small Business Grants Fund, including those in shared spaces who do not have their own business rates assessment, which have under 50 employees and have seen a significant drop of income due to Coronavirus restriction measures.

■ **Non-domestic Rates and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund**

Stephen Hammond:

[41940]

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 to all businesses involved in the retail, hospitality and leisure supply chain during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Businesses are eligible for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund and the business rate holiday scheme if they are based in England with a property that is wholly or mainly being used for the purposes of retail, hospitality and/or leisure.

The Government has announced an additional discretionary fund to support small businesses that fall outside the scope of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund and the Small Business Grants Fund, which have under 50 employees and have seen a significant drop of income due to Coronavirus restriction measures.

The Government is also providing an unprecedented package of wider support available to SMEs. This includes business interruption loan schemes, job retention and self-employed income support schemes, as well as a bounce back loan scheme. The full details of all these measures have been published at:

<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/>.

■ **Postal Services: Universal Service Obligation**

Dan Jarvis:

[42038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Royal Mail on the retention of the universal service obligation.

Paul Scully:

The Universal Service Obligation is set out in the Postal Services Act 2011.

Ministers have no role in temporary changes to the service level. The regulatory conditions that require Royal Mail to deliver letters 6 days a week as part of the universal postal service also provide that Royal Mail is not required to sustain these services without interruption, suspension or restriction in the event of an emergency. Ofcom has acknowledged in this context that the COVID-19 pandemic is an emergency.

There is a clear and transparent process for how longer-term changes to service standards would be considered and any changes would need to be made through secondary legislation and agreed by Parliament. Ministers and officials have regular discussions with Ofcom and Royal Mail on matters relating to postal services.

■ Raw Materials

Bill Esterson:

[\[42001\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of availability of raw materials for manufacturing industries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Manufacturing is a critical part of our economy. The Department is engaging with industry to ensure that we can support our manufacturing sectors during and after the Covid-19 crisis. The Government has introduced an unprecedented package of support to help businesses continue, and to give manufacturers and their suppliers the support they need to help them get back up and running after the Covid-19 crisis.

The Department is in regular contact with businesses who provide raw materials, such as recycled scrap metal, and with the manufacturers themselves, to understand the demand requirements of raw materials. To date, we have not received any indication that the supply of imported raw materials has been impacted. However, we are aware of tighter supplies of waste materials used for feedstock in steel, aluminium, and paper sectors, and we remain in close contact with impacted sectors to monitor the ongoing situation.

We also recognise that freight operators and their workforce (including all those working in supply chains) are vital to the continued flow of critical goods. Freight is currently moving effectively across borders into the UK.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[42165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions has he had with representatives from the British Retail Consortium on the potential risks of easing of the lockdown.

Paul Scully:

Ministers and officials have regular engagement with a large number of businesses, representative organisations and trade unions across all sectors including the British Retail Consortium, in advance of easing the lockdown.

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 to consider what might be needed to adapt workplaces to further improve the safety of these places and thereby minimise the risk of transmission as much as possible.

I host a weekly call with non-food retailers and business representative organisations including the British Retail Consortium with the most recent call taking place on 30th April. The next one is scheduled for 7th May.

We welcome the publication of jointly agreed advice by the British Retail Consortium and the Union for Shop Distributive and Allied Workers on the recommended implementation of social distancing practices for non-food retail stores.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[42166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that discussions are held with representatives of the retail sector in advance of easing the lockdown.

Paul Scully:

Ministers and officials have regular engagement with a large number of businesses, representative organisations and trade unions across all sectors including the British Retail Consortium, in advance of easing the lockdown.

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 to consider what might be needed to adapt workplaces to further improve the safety of these places and thereby minimise the risk of transmission as much as possible.

I host a weekly call with non-food retailers and business representative organisations including the British Retail Consortium with the most recent call taking place on 30th April. The next one is scheduled for 7th May.

We welcome the publication of jointly agreed advice by the British Retail Consortium and the Union for Shop Distributive and Allied Workers on the recommended implementation of social distancing practices for non-food retail stores.

■ **Small Businesses: Non-domestic Rates**

Nadia Whittome:

[\[42251\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to ensure that small companies that pay business rates indirectly through rent payments to a multi-tenanted facility are eligible for support from the Small Business Grants Fund in the same way as if they paid business rates directly.

Paul Scully:

The two existing business grants schemes have helped supported many thousands of small businesses. However, we are aware that many small businesses which are facing high fixed costs are finding themselves excluded from the existing grants schemes because the way they interact with the current business rates system means they are not eligible for the grants schemes.

To ensure that Local Authorities can help these businesses, on 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that a further up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants. 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. It is our intention that 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.

Local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need and subject to those businesses meeting the specific eligibility criteria.

■ Takeovers

Bill Esterson:

[\[41999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the adequacy of existing legislation on preventing hostile takeovers.

Paul Scully:

Under the Enterprise Act 2002, the Government may intervene in certain takeovers for three public interest reasons – national security, media plurality and financial stability.

In December 2019, the Queen’s Speech lobby pack confirmed the Government’s intention to legislate to “strengthen the Government’s existing powers to scrutinise and intervene in business transactions to protect national security”.

The Government continues to monitor the market closely during the covid-19 pandemic.

CABINET OFFICE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Ben Everitt:

[\[902095\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on protecting the most vulnerable in society during the covid-19 outbreak.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Cabinet Office is in regular contact with the Secretary of State and his department, including through the Cabinet Committee chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has increased funding to local authorities, is providing accommodation and support for rough sleepers and is

co-ordinating the distribution network of food to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[41909]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what proportion of people that died from covid-19 were aged (a) up to 30, (b) 31 to 60 and (c) over 60 between 1 March 2020 and 10 April 2020.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. [UKSA Response](#) [PQ41909.pdf]

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Dr Rupa Huq:

[40703]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to co-ordinate the Government's response to the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to ensure that holistic person-centred support is provided to all shielded and non-shielded vulnerable individuals affected by covid-19.

Martyn Day:

[41549]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that Government Departments are providing co-ordinated support to (a) shielded and (b) non-shielded vulnerable people affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Penny Mordaunt:

Four ministerial implementation committees focusing on health, public sector preparedness, economy, and our international response, have been established to coordinate, prioritise, and respond to the pandemic.

Shielding of the extremely vulnerable - those who suffer from the most serious underlying health conditions - is one of the Government's top priorities. This work is being led by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Communities Secretary outlined some of this support recently and details are available here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/communities-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-2-may-2020--2>)

In terms of our work to support other vulnerable people, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster outlined some of this work to the House of Commons last week, details of which are available here <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-04-28/debates/6B80ADC6-5AE0-404A-BF91-3924FAD111CE/PublicServices>.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS■ **Churches: VE Day****Chris Loder:****[43168]**

To ask the Right Hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to fly Union Flags on its churches for the 75th Anniversary of VE Day.

Andrew Selous:

The House of Bishops revised their guidance on access to churches on the 5th May 2020. The new guidance can be read here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/house-bishops-backs-phased-approach-revising-access-church-buildings>

Government guidance states that 'a minister of religion or worship leader may leave their home to travel to their place of worship'. In most cases, they will do so in order to pray or to stream a service of worship. If clergy wish to mark VE Day by ringing a church bell or flying a flag from their church buildings, that is within government guidance. This advice does not extend to bell-ringers, sextons or other church officers or volunteers.

The parish church would usually be central to local commemorations of events such as Victory in Europe Day, but for this anniversary they will be honouring the sacrifice of all those who were involved in World War Two in a new way. Archbishops, Bishops and clergy will be participating in local and national virtual services to mark VE Day. The Church of England has released national resources for worship and prayer which can be used by local communities: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/worship-resources-ve-day-2020>

Additional resources have been released by Westminster Abbey to help churches shape their services over the anniversary weekend which can be found here: [Service of Thanksgiving to mark the 70th Anniversary of VE Day](#)

DEFENCE■ **AWACS: Procurement****Mr Kevan Jones:****[41918]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the Defence and Equipment Plan 2019-2029, published on 27 February 2020, for what reasons the cost of the UK's 5 E-7 Wedgetail AWACS has increased by from £1.51 billion to £2.16 billion since the announcement of the purchase of that aircraft in March 2019.

Jeremy Quin:

The cost of the acquisition of the E-7 Wedgetail aircraft has not increased. The figure of £1.51 billion relates to the value of the aircraft procurement contract, whereas the figure of £2.16 billion refers to the approved project costs, the scope of which covers

more than just the acquisition of the aircraft including work on infrastructure and training and on future support/sustainment, hence the larger amount.

■ **Bomb Disposal: Northern Ireland**

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[41910\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, on how many occasions Army bomb disposal units were called out in Northern Ireland between 1 July 2019 and 1 January 2020.

James Heapey:

Northern Ireland Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) call outs from 1 July 2019 to 31 December 2019

MONTH	TOTAL IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE DISPOSAL (IEDD) TASKS	TOTAL CONVENTIONAL MUNITION DISPOSAL (CMD)TASKS
Jul 19	24	4
Aug 19	12	1
Sep 19	22	3
Oct 19	10	4
Nov 19	13	3
Dec 19	9	5
Total	90	20

■ **Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[41914\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the Government has signed contracts for (a) sonarbuoys, (b) harpoon anti-ship missiles and (c) Mark 54 Torpedoes systems on the RAF P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The P-8A Poseidon aircraft is being procured under a Foreign Military Sale with the US Government. With Government-to-Government agreements, there are no contracts as such; parties enter into binding arrangements instead. In the case of P-8A Poseidon, the scope of this agreement covers aircraft acquisition, initial spares and support, initial training (in the USA), procurement of training devices and initial sonobuoy and weapons procurement.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus

John Spellar: [\[40968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has received a request from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for the use of the RAF Voyager fleet to repatriate British nationals during the covid-19 pandemic.

John Spellar: [\[40970\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has offered the use of funded flying hours from the RAF Voyager fleet to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to repatriate UK nationals during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Heapey:

As part of the Government's COVID-19 response effort, the Ministry of Defence has so far provided places on 11 pre-scheduled flights on Military Aircraft to repatriate British Nationals at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's request, which has included the use of Voyager Aircraft where appropriate.

John Spellar: [\[40969\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department has offered the use of (a) the RAF Voyager fleet and (b) civil-registered aircraft from the non-core Voyager fleet to the Department of Health and Social Care for the long-distance transport of personal protective equipment to the UK during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Heapey:

As part of the Government's COVID-19 response, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has provided military aircraft to transport personal protective equipment on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care. The MOD deploys the most appropriate aircraft for each task in line with Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) principles. In this case, A400M and C-17 aircraft have been used but Voyager aircraft have not.

■ Type 23 Frigates

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[41912\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many days each Type 23 Frigate was at sea in 2019, by individual vessel.

Jeremy Quin:

The information will take time to collate and I will write to the hon. Member when it is available.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Angling: Coronavirus****Hywel Williams:**[\[41908\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of permitting recreational fishing as a form of permissible physical exercise while covid-19 social distancing measures are in place.

Nigel Huddleston:

It is vital that people continue to be active during the Covid-19 outbreak to support their physical and mental health

Government advice on how people can remain active is clear. People are able to leave home for basic exercise once a day, for example for a walk, a cycle or a run, provided it is done in a way that meets the latest guidance on social distancing and advice on unnecessary social contact. This means it can be done by people on their own or with their households, not in groups. It is important that people do not go outside unless they have to, and that when they do, they are spending as little time outside as possible, and avoiding unnecessary travel.

Government is carefully reviewing the lockdown guidance over the coming days and weeks.

■ Arts: Coronavirus**Rosie Duffield:**[\[42160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on providing further financial support for self-employed people working in the creative industries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Secretary of State has spoken with the Chancellor on several occasions to ensure that the full spectrum of government support reaches all the sectors for which this department is responsible, including the UK's world-leading creative industries. My officials are in regular contact with their Treasury colleagues to ensure there is a good understanding of the way the government support schemes are working for DCMS sectors, including the creative industries.

■ Charities: Coronavirus**Barbara Keeley:**[\[41942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 37546 on Charities: Coronavirus, what proportion of the £160 million emergency fund managed by Arts Council England was funded from (a) existing National Lottery and Arts Council England reserves, (b) future National Lottery income, (c) Government funding allocated to his Department prior to March 2020, (d)

Government funding not allocated to his Department prior to March 2020 and (e) other sources.

Caroline Dinenage:

The £160 million emergency fund was funded via the following means; £106million was allocated from existing National Lottery and Arts Council Reserves, £50 million was from future National Lottery income and £4 million of grant in aid allocated by the Government prior to March 2020. No other funding sources were used to create this fund.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Remote Working**

Margaret Ferrier: [\[41486\]](#)

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

Caroline Dinenage:

All DCMS staff have formal arrangements in place and are able to work remotely.

■ **Disinformation: Coronavirus**

Henry Smith: [\[39666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to prevent false information on covid-19 being spread on the internet.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government takes the issue of misinformation and disinformation very seriously. It is vitally important that the public has accurate information.

The Counter Disinformation Unit brings together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities. The Unit's primary function is to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and impact of disinformation and misinformation regarding Covid-19.

We are working closely with social media platforms to help them identify and remove incorrect claims about the virus, in line with their terms and conditions, as well as promote authoritative sources of information. We are also working with strategic communications experts to ensure that we are prepared to respond to disinformation campaigns where necessary.

The Government is also running a counter disinformation communications campaign, which aims to increase audience resilience by educating and empowering those who see, inadvertently share and are affected by false and misleading information.

■ **Electronic Equipment and Internet: Vulnerable Adults**

Julie Elliott: [\[42033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 38575, what funding his Department has made

available to organisations to provide devices and connectivity to the vulnerable adult population who have been asked to shield by Government during the covid-19 outbreak.

Julie Elliott:

[\[42034\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 38575 what offers of support his Department has made to initiatives to support their mission to equip vulnerable adults with devices and connectivity during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenge:

The government has worked with telecoms providers to agree a package of measures to support vulnerable consumers through Covid-19, including those who have been asked to shield. We have not, so far, provided funding specifically for the purchase of devices or connectivity for vulnerable adults asked to shield, but as previously mentioned in answer 38575, 38576, 38577 we continue to assess what needs to be done to address issues faced by vulnerable people who may also be digitally excluded.

My Department has been promoting the DevicesDotNow campaign, which is working with community organisations to distribute devices to vulnerable adults and help them get online. The aim is to enable elderly and vulnerable people, particularly those to who are shielding, to communicate with the outside world and get access to vital services. The Minister for Digital and Culture wrote to a number of industry Chief Executives to raise awareness of the campaign and to encourage them to donate tablets and laptops.

■ Huawei

Mr David Davis:

[\[41381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he has plans in place for allocating the cost of removing and replacing Huawei equipment in the event that its installation is prohibited.

Matt Warman:

On 28 January, the Government announced the final conclusions of the Telecoms Supply Chain Review in relation to high risk vendors. It was announced that equipment from high risk vendors should be excluded from the core parts of the 5G and full fibre networks that are critical to security, and their presence limited to 35% in the rest of the network. We expect the cost of meeting restrictions on the presence of equipment from high risk vendors to be met by the operators using that equipment.

■ Internet: Safety

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[42080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, when the Government plans to publish a full response to the Online Harms White Paper.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government is committed to making the UK the safest place to be online. We intend to publish a full Government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation later this year, and will follow this with legislation once parliamentary time allows.

■ **Local Press: Coronavirus****Matthew Pennycook:**[\[42144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to provide financial support to independent community news publications during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises the vital role of independent community newspapers in supporting particular groups and isolated individuals by ensuring the provision of reliable, high-quality information throughout the current pandemic. Safeguarding the UK's news media at this time of financial instability is a key priority for the government and we are in regular dialogue with publishers to ensure that our response to the challenges they are facing is as effective as it can be.

To date, the government has issued guidance to local authorities on the importance of newspaper delivery, which has been critical to ensuring the continued dissemination of printed public interest news. We have also clarified that journalists and other ancillary staff are 'key workers' for the purposes of access to childcare and educational places.

The government has sought to maximise advertising opportunities for the news publishing sector through a public information campaign across many national and local titles. The current partnership brings together over 600 national, regional and local titles across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to reach 49 million people a month. All titles utilised in the campaign have been selected by our media planning and buying agency, OmniGOV. As with any media planning approach, titles are selected on their ability to engage with audiences and to ensure value for money, reach and targeting efficacy. The vast majority of titles are local papers and additional titles have been selected in order to further reach priority audiences including BAME and older men. In parallel, we have taken steps to ensure the use of 'keyword blocklisting' technology does not inadvertently damage news publishers' online advertising revenues for Covid-19 related stories. Dialogue with the relevant technology companies has helped to protect publishers against the ad-blocking of coronavirus-related terms.

Most recently, the Chancellor also brought forward the zero rating of VAT on all e-publications to the 1st May - seven months ahead of schedule. The government expects the tax relief to be passed on to consumers in the form of reduced prices, and publishers should benefit from increased sales. Independent publishers may also benefit from several measures included in our unprecedented business support

package, such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Job Retention Scheme, Bounce Back Loans, VAT deferrals, and coverage of statutory sick pay costs.

The government will continue to consider all possible options in the interests of promoting and sustaining high-quality news journalism. Never have the activities of journalists been more popular and critical; providing quality news to all, including those self-isolating, and binding communities together, a fundamental function of our modern day democracy.

EDUCATION

■ Children: Disadvantaged

Sarah Jones: [\[902247\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers does not widen during the covid-19 outbreak.

Taiwo Owatemi: [\[902250\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers does not widen during the covid-19 outbreak.

Feryal Clark: [\[902255\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers does not widen during the covid-19 outbreak.

Lucy Powell: [\[902259\]](#)

What steps he is taking to ensure that the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers does not widen during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The government has already committed over £100 million to boost remote education, including by providing devices and internet access to vulnerable children who need it most.

Schools also continue to receive the pupil premium – worth around £2.4 billion annually – to help them support their disadvantaged pupils.

■ Education: Assessments

Ian Levy: [\[902256\]](#)

What steps he is taking with Ofqual to ensure that students due to sit exams in summer 2020 will receive fair grades.

Nick Gibb:

Ofqual is working with awarding organisations to develop a robust process for awarding grades. Wherever possible, schools, colleges and other institutions will produce fair and objective centre assessment grades, which will be externally

standardised to ensure consistency. Our aim is that the arrangements deliver the fairest possible outcomes for students.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Alex Cunningham: [\[42022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will fund the centrally-funded national voucher scheme to support free school meal provision during the covid-19 outbreak for families of pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals in the Whitsun school holiday week in May 2020.

Vicky Ford:

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

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 during term time weeks. 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.

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

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Seema Malhotra: [\[41051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support schools that wish to access free school meal vouchers from a retailer that is not listed as part of the free school meals voucher scheme.

Seema Malhotra: [\[41052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools that wish to access free school meals vouchers from retailers that are not listed as part of the free school meals voucher scheme will be reimbursed for the costs of purchasing those vouchers.

Vicky Ford:

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

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.

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 were 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.

Where none of these supermarkets are convenient for families, schools can directly purchase vouchers for alternative supermarkets and be reimbursed for the costs.

Full details are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

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

Ian Mearns:

[41994]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the Government's agreement with Edenred for the provision of the free school meal voucher scheme contains an exclusivity clause which prevents his Department engaging alternative or additional suppliers.

Vicky Ford:

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

We are encouraging schools to use existing catering arrangements to provide meals or food parcels to pupils who are eligible for free school meals while they are staying at home. Where this is not possible, the Department for Education has developed a national voucher scheme as an alternative.

The government's contract agreement with Edenred for the provision of the free school meal voucher scheme does not include an exclusivity clause and we are able to engage with alternative or additional suppliers, should this be required. We have no plans to do this at this time.

Schools are best placed to determine what's most appropriate locally, and are free to make their own arrangements outside the national voucher scheme. Our guidance for schools sets out that they can be reimbursed for costs incurred where that scheme is not suitable for their families, including where none of the eight participating supermarkets have branches nearby.

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

Rachael Maskell: [\[42106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason there is a premium charge on calls to the telephone number for free school meal vouchers; and if he will make calls to that number free.

Vicky Ford:

An Edenred phone number (0333 400 5932) has been set up specifically for the national voucher scheme for free school meals. Calling this number should cost no more than the national rate, and therefore is included within phone contract 'inclusive minutes' and charged at the national rate thereafter.

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

Richard Burgon: [\[42126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of children eligible for free school meals have received vouchers since that scheme was opened in (a) Leeds, (b) Yorkshire & the Humber and (c) the UK.

Richard Burgon: [\[42127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what average waiting time is for schools to access the website to obtain free school meal vouchers in (a) Leeds, (b) Yorkshire & the Humber and (c) the UK.

Richard Burgon: [\[42128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average time has been from order to delivery for free school meals vouchers since the scheme was introduced in (a) Leeds, (b) Yorkshire & the Humber and (c) the UK.

Richard Burgon: [\[42129\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average time has been for Edenred to respond to emails from (a) schools and (b) parents in relation to free school meal vouchers in (a) Leeds, (b) Yorkshire & the Humber and (c) the UK.

Vicky Ford:

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

Around 1.3 million children are eligible for and claiming benefits-related free school meals. During this period, we are asking schools to support these children 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.

We are monitoring the use of the scheme on a daily basis. As of 28 April, our supplier Edenred reported that over 16,500 schools had placed orders for the scheme, and as of 4 May, Edenred reported that more than £47 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme. We do not hold the specific data requested for the scheme at a local or regional level.

Once an eCode has been ordered, it will be sent within four days. Edenred is keeping schools informed of the status of orders once they have been placed. Schools can choose to 'bulk order' eCodes for regular distribution (e.g. on a weekly basis), in which case the eCode will be sent on or before the date specified. The eCodes must then be redeemed to create an eGift card, which will be received within 24 hours. We continue to work closely with our supplier and with schools to increase the speed at which orders can be processed.

On 4 May, Edenred reported that on the previous day, the average wait time for families and schools accessing the website to redeem their voucher codes was under 30 minutes. Edenred are aiming to respond to all email queries within 2 working days. We are very grateful to families and schools for their understanding and patience while Edenred upgrade this service to meet increased demand.

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

■ Further Education: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[40989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the role of the further education sector in supporting economic recovery following the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

The further education (FE) sector is vital to providing the highly skilled workforce that we need to support economic recovery following the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have therefore provided an extensive range of support to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and retain capacity within the FE sector. 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.

Our latest guidance on COVID-19 for the FE sector and all other educational settings is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>.

■ GCE A-level and GCSE: Coronavirus**Catherine McKinnell:** [\[42031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) GCSE and (b) A-level exams sat by pupils in the Autumn term 2020 will be modified to reflect the break in teaching during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is discussing arrangement for the autumn GCSE and A level examination series with Ofqual, the independent qualifications regulator. Ofqual will set out further proposals for consultation as soon as possible.

■ GCE A-level: Coronavirus**Catherine McKinnell:** [\[42030\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the cancellation by the Government of A-levels in 2020 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak, if he will make it his policy to enable schools to consider pupils' raw GCSE scores when determining their centre assessment grades and rankings at A-level.

Catherine McKinnell: [\[42032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether schools may request (a) non-exam assessments and (b) coursework not yet submitted by pupils to help determine (i) GCSE and (ii) A-level grades and rankings for the 2020 cohorts.

Nick Gibb:

This is a matter for Ofqual, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. I have asked its Chief Regulator, Sally Collier, to write the hon. Member and a copy of her reply will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

■ Home Education: Coronavirus**Jamie Stone:** [\[902251\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of children's access to (a) laptops, (b) a reliable internet connection and (c) other remote learning equipment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Bambos Charalambous: [\[902258\]](#)

What recent progress his Department has made on identifying and delivering essential IT equipment to children who need additional support with online learning at home.

Nick Gibb:

We want to do everything we can to support schools and families to continue children's education while they are at home. We have committed over £100 million to boost remote education, including providing laptops, tablets and internet access for those who need it most.

On Friday 24 April, the Department wrote to local authorities, trusts and other relevant organisations overseeing schools and children's social care outlining the process for requesting devices.

■ Nurseries: Coronavirus

Stephen Hammond:

[\[41937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to support nursery schools which are experiencing a reduction in their dedicated schools grant money as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government has announced unprecedented support for businesses, including the early years sector, to protect against the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

On 21 April the Department for Education announced that local authorities could use their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the free early education entitlement funding differently and redistribute it in exceptional cases. This is only as a last resort and should be in a focussed and targeted way in order to secure childcare for children of critical workers and for vulnerable children, where their usual arrangements are no longer possible. Guidance on using DSG funding during coronavirus (COVID-19) be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

If a provider sees their early years DSG income reduced by their local authority in order to fund childcare places elsewhere, they may be able to increase the proportion of their salary bill eligible for Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in the next furlough period.

Guidance for the early years sector on the interaction between early years entitlements funding and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care#sector-specific-guidance>.

Further guidance on the support available for early years providers is available at:

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

■ Students: Coronavirus**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** [\[42158\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the provision of laptops to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people during the covid-19 outbreak to university students.

Michelle Donelan:

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

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

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

■ Supply Teachers**Layla Moran:** [\[42171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) supply teaching agencies, (b) schools or (c) the his Department is responsible for ensuring that supply teachers receive a secure income during the covid-19 outbreak.

Layla Moran: [\[42172\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent (a) discussion and (b) other engagement he has with supply teaching agencies on support for supply teachers since the closure of schools in March 2020.

Layla Moran: [\[42173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to communicate to supply teachers (a) where they can access support and (b) who they should contact to access that support.

Nick Gibb:

The support available to supply teachers, and who provides this support, is dependent on whether supply teachers are employed directly by schools or employed

by agencies. The Department has developed school workforce guidance on COVID-19, including financial support available to supply teachers:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#supply-teachers-and-other-contingent-workers>.

The Department has also developed further guidance on financial support for all education institutions, which is set out below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care>.

The Department is communicating regularly, via a number of channels, with schools, supply agencies and teaching unions on the support available for supply staff during the COVID-19 outbreak.

These are rapidly developing circumstances. We continue to keep the situation under review and will keep Parliament updated accordingly.

■ Universities: Coronavirus

Kate Osborne:

[33667]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, whether he has plans to provide financial support to students that are required to pay private rent for their accommodation after being encouraged by their university to return home.

Michelle Donelan:

[Holding answer 27 March 2020]: Students will continue to receive scheduled payments of loans towards their living costs for the remainder of the current, 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.

We understand that, to date, 75 higher education providers have waived or refunded rents with 3 more making rent adjustments on a case-by-case basis.

Catherine West:

[33720]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has had discussions with the university sector on the potential for rent refunds for students leaving campuses following the suspension of teaching as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: We expect universities to communicate clearly with residential students on rents for this period and administer accommodation provision

in a fair manner. Department officials, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education and I are in regular contact with universities and their representative bodies to learn about what they are doing to support students at this time and to guide as appropriate.

We are aware that a number of universities have waived rents for their students who were due to be staying in university halls for the summer term but will now not be doing so.

It is important to stress that accommodation providers should not have instructed any student to return home. 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 will continue to receive scheduled payments of loans towards their living costs for the remainder of the current, 2019/20, academic year. I have asked institutions to 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 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.

To ensure universities can support students who need it most, the Office for Students has relaxed rules on the student premium to top up hardship funds.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Dogs: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[41911]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether (a) professional dog walkers and (b) kennels are able to walk their dogs more than once a day under the social distancing measures announced by the Government on 23 March 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government has issued guidance which sets out which businesses must close, and clarifies that “Other businesses can remain open, their employees can travel for work purposes if they cannot work from home”, and “it is important for other businesses to carry on”. Dog walking businesses and kennels are not required to close by the Government. These businesses should make every effort to comply with social distancing and hygiene guidelines; otherwise they should carry on with their normal day to day routines.

The Canine and Feline Sector Group, which advises both the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England and Defra Ministers, has issued its own guidance to pet businesses, including professional dog walkers and boarding kennels, on how they can continue to operate under current restrictions, including how to exercise dogs,

and in line with guidance around social distancing and hygiene.

<http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/CFSG%20Animal%20Business%20Guidance%2007.0>

■ Domestic Waste: Recycling

Steve Reed:

[42051]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what guidance his Department has issued to local authorities on ensuring staff safety at household waste recycling centres when those centres re-open after the covid-19 outbreak.

Rebecca Pow:

It is legal for household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs) to remain open during the Coronavirus pandemic. However, we know that some local authorities are finding this challenging, which is why on 5 May Defra published some guidance to help local authorities do this.

We worked with industry, local authorities and other Government departments, including Public Health England, on developing the guidance which includes a section on workforce safety. The key principle of the guidance is that human health must be protected while maintaining safe systems of working. Social distancing must also be observed by both staff and visitors to HWRCs wherever possible. The guidance makes it clear that residents must only visit HWRCs if they cannot store safely at home the items they wish to dispose of.

Here is a link to the guidance on the GOV.UK website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-to-local-authorities-on-prioritising-waste-collections/managing-household-waste-and-recycling-centres-hwracs-in-england-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic

■ Recreation Spaces: Coronavirus

Lee Anderson:

[40766]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether businesses that own private fields for use as dog walking areas for the general public are allowed to continue to operate under the guidance on covid-19 announced on 23 March 2019.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government's message to the public is clear: stay at home, in order to protect the NHS and save lives. To reduce social contact, the Government has ordered certain businesses and venues to close. A full list of those businesses required to close, and exemptions, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance#businesses-and-premises-that-must-remain-closed>

Dog walking businesses are not explicitly referred to as businesses that are required to close. Indeed, dog walking businesses play a key role in ensuring the welfare of the nation's pets and can operate within the strict advice on social distancing and hygiene. Businesses that own private fields for dog walking are allowed to continue to operate.

The Canine and Feline Sector Group, which advises both the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England and Defra Ministers, has issued its own guidance to pet businesses on how they can continue to operate under current restrictions and in line with guidance around social distancing and hygiene.

<http://www.cfsg.org.uk/coronavirus/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/CFSG%20Animal%20Business%20Guidance%2007.04.20.pdf>

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:

[\[42161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what medical criteria his Department is using to prioritise UK nationals overseas for Government commissioned flights for repatriation.

Nigel Adams:

The UK 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 from priority countries, focused on helping the most vulnerable travellers.

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.

■ Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[42210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran's regional activity.

James Cleverly:

We remain concerned about the destabilising activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, including its financial and military support to militant and proscribed groups around the region in contravention of UN Security Council resolutions. This support directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting peace in the region. We call on Iran urgently to cease all forms of destabilising activity and instead to play a constructive role in the region.

■ Pakistan: Coronavirus**John Spellar:**[\[38869\]](#)

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

Nigel Adams:

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

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.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**■ Chickenpox****Jim Shannon:**[\[37650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) children and (b) adults have been hospitalised as a result of chickenpox in each of the last five years.

Jo Churchill:

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

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

Attachments:

1. [Attachment](#) [PQ37650_data_table.xlsx]

Jim Shannon: [37652]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate his Department has made of the financial effect of chickenpox on (a) NHS hospitals, (b) primary care and (c) families in each of the last three years.

Jo Churchill:

Data on the financial effect of chickenpox on National Health Service hospitals, primary care and families are not routinely collected.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is currently reviewing its advice on routine varicella (chickenpox) vaccination. The Committee's current advice on varicella vaccination can be found at the following link:

https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120907095410/http://www.dh.gov.uk/ab/JCVI/DH_094744

Jim Shannon: [37653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons chickenpox is listed as a notifiable disease in Northern Ireland but not the rest of the UK.

Jo Churchill:

Health is a devolved matter. The diseases which are listed as notifiable are outlined under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 in England, and Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 in Northern Ireland. Both have been subject to subsequent amendments and orders.

In England, under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010, the addition of chickenpox was considered, however, it was not included. This is because a provision is in place requiring notification of any infectious diseases which may pose a significant risk to human health. This was deemed to cover exceptional cases where public health action would be needed.

The Department keeps the diseases which are notifiable in England under review.

■ Chickenpox: Disease Control

Jim Shannon: [37654]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to mitigate the effect of outbreaks of chickenpox on (a) the availability of GP appointments, (b) hospital admissions, (c) transmission of that virus to healthcare workers.

Jo Churchill:

In most cases, chickenpox (varicella) is a self-limiting condition which can safely be managed at home. We expect all families to follow the advice on the NHS.uk website.¹ The advice on NHS.uk includes at-risk populations and advises them to call 111. Chapter 34 of the Green Book² provides information on the management of at-risk individuals following significant exposure to chickenpox, including those who may transmit infections to those at risk (e.g. healthcare workers).

Notes:

[1]<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chickenpox/>

[2]<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/varicella-the-green-book-chapter-34>

Jim Shannon:

[37655]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations contained in Public Health England's guidance entitled Varicella: the green book, chapter 34, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that recommendations for the management of at-risk populations after exposure are followed by the NHS.

Jo Churchill:

In most cases, chickenpox (varicella) is a self-limiting condition which can be safely managed at home. Post-exposure management using varicella zoster immunoglobulin is used to protect individuals at high risk of suffering from severe chickenpox.

The guidance in the 'Green Book' ¹ is based on advice from Public Health England, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the standards expected of health and care professionals by their regulatory bodies. It is the responsibility of all health and care professionals to keep themselves informed of any such developments that may have bearing on their area of practice.

Note:

[1]<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book#the-green-book>

■ Chickenpox: Health Services

Jim Shannon:

[37649]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of chickenpox infections on (a) NHS hospitals and (b) primary care in the UK.

Jo Churchill:

The Department has not made any assessments on the potential effects of chickenpox on National Health Service hospitals or primary care providers as most cases are self-limiting and safely managed at home. We would expect families to follow the advice on the NHS.uk website.¹ Since chickenpox is so common in childhood, 90% of adults raised in the United Kingdom are immune.²

Notes:

¹<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chickenpox/>

²https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/456562/Green_Book_Chapter_34_v3_0.pdf

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control

Afzal Khan: [\[38944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the change in the level of funding for public health in the last 10 years on the effectiveness of the Government's response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

We have not made a specific assessment of the effect of the change in the level of funding for public health on the COVID-19 outbreak. At the time of the Spending Round 2019, the Government announced that the public health grant would rise in real terms, enabling local government to continue to invest in the services it funds. As part of the response to COVID-19, the Government has announced that it is making a further £1.6 billion available to councils, in addition to the £1.6 billion already announced in March, to help support their efforts to keep communities as safe as possible.

■ Coronavirus: Medical Equipment

Kate Osborne: [\[33668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the UK will join EU schemes to share medical equipment and advice throughout Europe during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kate Osborne: [\[33669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the UK is participating in information sharing exercises on covid-19 with other European countries.

Catherine West: [\[33762\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he is having discussions with his counterparts in the EU on securing key medical equipment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 21 April 2020]: The United Kingdom Government is working with Chief Medical Officers and Health Ministers across the four nations on personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance and supply.

In response to COVID-19, the UK continues to attend EU Health Security Committee (HSC) meetings and share information through the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS).

The UK will participate in the European Union Joint Procurement scheme on therapeutics that is soon to launch and will consider participating in other future schemes on the basis of public health requirements, including any on PPE.

Participating in any future EU procurements will complement the enormous domestic efforts we are already undertaking to tackle this outbreak, both independently and in direct collaboration with European countries and other international partners.

■ Disease Control

Justin Madders:

[\[38613\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has undertaken since 2010 of the pandemic planning exercises commissioned between 2005 and 2010.

Jo Churchill:

Lessons identified by preparedness exercises undertaken prior to 2009 informed the response to the 2009 H1N1 ("Swine Flu") pandemic.

An independent review into the United Kingdom's strategic response to the 2009 swine flu pandemic was subsequently published. The recommendations of this review and expert advice were reflected in The UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011.

We routinely test our pandemic plans. Learning the lessons from preparedness exercises, as well as other sources of expertise, has ensured that the UK remains well prepared for infectious disease outbreaks.

Afzal Khan:

[\[38636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department have taken to prepare for a pandemic in each of the last 10 years.

Jo Churchill:

The UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 provides a United Kingdom-wide strategic approach to planning for and responding to the demands of an influenza pandemic. The approach set out in this strategy is multi-faceted and evidence-based. It is referred to as 'defence in depth'.

Over the last 10 years we have worked to develop, or maintain, all elements of this defence strategy:

- surveillance and modelling systems;
- arrangements to secure access to an influenza vaccine (when available);
- supplies of clinical countermeasures such as antiviral medicines to treat influenza and personal protective equipment for front-line healthcare workers; and
- tried and tested surge plans and mechanisms to reduce pressures on primary care services.

Justin Madders:

[\[38999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish all pandemic preparation recommendations produced by departmental bodies in the last 10 years.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not routinely publish such information.

■ NHS: Protective Clothing**Sir David Evennett:****[30686]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure NHS staff have sufficient personal protective equipment to remain safe during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

There is currently adequate national supply of personal protection equipment in line with Public Health England's recommended usage, and the pandemic influenza stockpile has now been released. Millions more items of personal protective equipment for frontline staff have been delivered over the last few days to hospitals.

There are well-established procedures to deal with supply issues, should they arise, by working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to help prevent shortages. We are constantly monitoring this and working to manage demand and secure additional stocks to further enhance our preparedness.

Sam Tarry:**[30915]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when supplies of personal protective equipment will be increased to meet the added demand in the NHS resulting from covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

There is currently adequate national supply of personal protection equipment (PPE) in line with Public Health England's recommended usage, and the pandemic influenza stockpile has now been released. Millions more items of personal protective equipment for frontline staff have been delivered over the last few days to hospitals.

There are well-established procedures to deal with supply issues, should they arise, by working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to help prevent shortages. We are constantly monitoring this and working to manage demand and secure additional stocks to further enhance our preparedness.

The army and Clipper are now supporting the effort to manage and offload supplies in busy NHS settings, helping to distribute and deliver urgent PPE supplies directly to the frontline.

Gareth Thomas:**[31425]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to issue guidance to the Chief Executives of all NHS Trusts on the provision of personal protective equipment to all front line staff; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The Department published 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): personal protective equipment (PPE) plan' on 10 April which sets out the steps taken towards three strands of work: guidance; delivery; and future supply. The plan is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe-plan>

■ Vaccination

Rosie Cooper: [\[37537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when his Department plans to publish the vaccination strategy announced by the Government on 18 August 2019.

Anne Marie Morris: [\[37683\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to publish the Government's vaccine strategy.

Jo Churchill:

The forthcoming vaccine strategy, as announced in the Green Paper 'Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s', will consider all vaccination programmes over the life-course.

Due to re-prioritisation necessary as part of the health and care system's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, publication has been delayed, but is expected in due course.

HOME OFFICE

■ Animal Experiments: Animal Welfare

Caroline Lucas: [\[38457\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate her Department has made of the number of occasions animal testing laboratories have been compelled to euthanise animals because staff are (a) working from home, self-isolating, sick or furloughed and (b) as a result of reduced demand for testing; and what guidance her Department has issued in this respect.

Victoria Atkins:

Each establishment licence holder has the responsibility at all times for the welfare of the animals within their establishment, which includes ensuring appropriate level of staffing for the care of the animals held. The Home Office has made clear that establishments should continue to document the processes used and decisions made to comply with licences held under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.

Establishment animal care and welfare staff, named people and scientists are, within the Government measures, able to attend work as required to fulfil their duties.

The Home Office does not hold information on, nor does it estimate, the number of occasions that laboratory animals have been euthanised as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, neither is information held regarding the reduction in demand for animals.

Caroline Lucas: [\[38458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department has plans to ensure that animals in laboratories where staff are self-isolating, sick, working

from home or on reduced hours receive (a) care and (b) protection through (i) continued inspection of the testing facilities in those laboratories and (ii) other means.

Victoria Atkins:

Establishments are responsible for the welfare of animals in their care. The Home Office has published guidance on Business Continuity Planning for Establishments, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-the-operation-of-the-animals-scientific-procedures-act-1986#business-continuity-planning-guidance>.

The Animals in Science Regulation ASRU has currently suspended on-site inspection visits. Inspection activities to assess compliance are being continued remotely, for example by telephone and email. There may be occasions where inspection visits need to be considered. Any such inspections will be planned on a case by case basis in accordance with official advice. Inspectors have specifically inspected establishments for preparedness for the care and protection of animals during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Caroline Lucas:

[38459]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the effect of social distancing measures for covid-19 on the staffing of animal testing laboratories, what steps she plans to take to ensure that euthanasia of animals in those laboratories occurs (a) as a last resort and (b) after adoption and relocation of those animals has been explored.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government encourages all establishments that are licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (1986) (ASPA) to consider the re-homing of animals used in scientific research, whether by adoption or relocation, when it is in the best interests of the welfare of the animal, when there is no risk to public or animal health, or risk to the environment. The re-homing policy is published at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/660241/Advice_Note_Rehoming_setting_free.pdf.

All establishments have been contacted by the Animals in Science Regulation Unit to be reminded of their responsibilities under ASPA, which have not changed during the covid-19 outbreak, and include the consideration of re-homing.

■ **Crimes of Violence: Females**

Jess Phillips:

[42062]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her Department's strategy entitled Ending Violence against Women and Girls 2016-2020, when she plans to publish a new version of that strategy.

Victoria Atkins:

Protecting women and girls from violence remains a key priority of this Government. In March 2019 we published a refreshed Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Strategy and Male Victims' Position Statement to update and reinforce our commitment to tackling VAWG and our manifesto committed to continuing this fight.

We are taking steps to renew the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and will outline our plans soon.

■ **Entry Clearances: Overseas Students**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[40794\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to relax visa-based barriers to work for students who may need to remain longer in the UK to complete their studies as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Work related restrictions for Tier 4 students who are employed or volunteering in NHS Trusts as Doctors, Nurses and Paramedics have been relaxed. Students who are working in these roles for an NHS trust are currently able to work full-time.

Students who aren't working for the NHS can also work full-time where their sponsoring institution has suspended all studies. If an institution is continuing to offer tuition via distance learning, students continue to be restricted in working hours in the normal way.

Where students are unable to complete their courses within the initial validity of their leave, they will be able to apply for further leave within the UK to complete their studies and will be exempt from demonstrating the academic progression requirement.

■ **Immigrants: Detainees**

Olivia Blake:

[\[42219\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy to suspend the detention of migrants in detention centres during the covid-19 outbreak.

Olivia Blake:

[\[42220\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her Department's policy is on placing people in detention centres during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps she is taking to protect detainees in those centres from the spread of covid-19.

Chris Philp:

The health and safety 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.

There is a general presumption of liberty for all individuals. Detention is used only when necessary, and decisions to detain an individual are made on a case by case basis and are based on all of the information known at the time of the review. As

circumstances of the case change, detention is reviewed in light of these changes and release may then become appropriate.

The Home Office is following all Public Health England guidance and have robust contingency plans in place including measures such as protective isolation and shielding to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading in the immigration detention estate. All detainees are seen by a nurse within two hours of arrival in an immigration removal centre and have the option to see a doctor within 24 hours of arrival.

Additionally, all those who fall into the Public Health England 'high risk' cohort receive personal care plans. Further measures including reverse cohorting, single occupancy rooms and the cessation of social visits have been introduced in line with the Government direction on social distancing.

Basic hygiene is a key part of tackling COVID-19. Handwashing facilities are available in all immigration removal centres and we are working closely with suppliers to ensure we have an adequate supply of soap and cleaning materials. In addition, each centre has posters and leaflets to inform staff and detainees about the importance of both personal hygiene and social distancing to minimise the risk from COVID-19. Detainees are also able to speak to staff directly for advice on the protective measures in place.

■ Immigrants: Finance

Stephen Timms: [\[41881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her letter dated 28 April 2020 to the Chairs of the Work and Pensions and Home Affairs Select Committees, what evidence her Department is considering in keeping under review whether the no recourse to public funds condition should be suspended.

Stephen Timms: [\[41882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether people whose leave to remain in the UK is subject to no recourse to public funds are entitled to support from Local Welfare Assistance Schemes; and if she will make a statement.

Stephen Timms: [\[41883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her letter dated 28 April 2020 to the Chairs of the Work and Pensions and Home Affairs Select Committees, what steps her Department is taking to obtain evidence from local authorities in order to keep under review whether the no recourse to public funds condition should be suspended.

Stephen Timms: [\[41884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her letter dated 28 April 2020 to the Chairs of the Work and Pensions and Home Affairs Select Committees, what steps her Department is taking to obtain evidence from (a) foodbanks and (b) other charities in order to keep under review whether the no recourse to public funds condition should be suspended.

Stephen Timms:

[41885]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her letter dated 28 April 2020 to the Chairs of the Work and Pensions and Home Affairs Select Committees, what criteria her Department will take account of in determining whether the no recourse to public funds condition should be suspended.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is working closely with other government departments, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care to support people, including migrants with NRPF, through this crisis. Departments are sharing what they are learning from other bodies and charities with each other to ensure we continue to take a compassionate and pragmatic approach to an unprecedented situation

Many of the wide-ranging Covid-19 measures the Government has put in place are not public funds and are available to migrants with NRPF as described in the Home Secretary's letter of 28 April to the Chairs of the Work and Pensions and Home Affairs Select Committee. Furthermore, the Government has published advice and information about the support available to migrants living here, including where they are subject to NRPF. This information covers statutory sick pay, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>

Local Welfare Assistance Schemes are classed as public funds and so not available to migrants with NRPF. Local authorities can, however, provide basic safety net support if it is established there is a care need which does not arise solely from destitution, for example, where there are community care needs, migrants with serious health problems or family cases where the wellbeing of a child is in question. The Government has provided more than £3.2 billion of funding to local authorities in England, and additional funding under the Barnett formula to the devolved administrations to enable them to respond to Covid-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including services helping the most vulnerable.

In addition, on the 8th April the Chancellor announced an additional £750m package of support for charities across the UK to ensure they can continue their vital work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In light of the support available, we do not believe it is necessary to suspend the NRPF condition. We will keep the situation under review and consider further measures if needed.

■ Offences Against Children

Jonathan Gullis:

[37763]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to protect children from sexual abuse during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

We are acutely aware that the necessary guidelines about social distancing and self-isolation may leave the victims of hidden crime, such as child sexual abuse, feeling especially vulnerable. For some children, home is not the safe-haven it should be and more time spent online means children may be at increased risk of harm.

In response, we are working across Government with the National Crime Agency (NCA), National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) the UK Intelligence Community (UKIC), local safeguarding partners and the third sector to assess the child sexual abuse threat during COVID-19 and ensure they have the resources they need to tackle offending and protect vulnerable children.

As part of this the Government has made £1.6 million available immediately for the NSPCC to expand and promote its national helpline for adults. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has also announced an extra £750 million funding for charities providing key frontline services and supporting vulnerable people during the crisis. The Home Office is working closely with other government departments and the third sector to ensure that this funding is prioritised and that charities who need this support receive it as soon as possible.

We are further working across government and agencies to ensure that teachers, parents and carers have access to the support they need to help keep children safe online. As part of this the National Crime Agency have launched the #OnlineSafetyAtHome campaign, the Department for Education has published interim safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges encouraging them to disseminate advice on online safety and we have published guidance for parents and carers on gov.uk. We have also worked with our Five Country partners to galvanise industry action; in response, key industry partners have developed a campaign targeting parents, carers and children with information and advice on staying safe online.

We are also determined to ensure that all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, whether they are a child or an adult, can access the specialist support they need. Last week, we launched a funding competition for the Support for Victims and Survivors of CSA fund (SVSCSA). The SVSCSA, which we have doubled to £1.2 million, funds voluntary sector organisations providing support to victims and survivors at a national level, including through support lines, online resources and remote counselling.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Food Supply: Coronavirus****Mr Kevan Jones:****[41913]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2020 to Question 39481 on food supply: coronavirus, whether the essential food supplies referred to in that answer are the same as the free food packages.

Christopher Pincher:

In my answer of 29 April 2020 to Question UIN 39481, the essential food supplies referred to are the same as the free food packages shielded individuals request - these are received at their doorsteps weekly.

High Rise Flats: Fire Prevention**Mike Amesbury:**[\[42175\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's 2 April 2020 policy paper entitled Government update on building safety, for what reason the regulatory regime will apply to all multi-occupied residential buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or more than six storeys (whichever is reached first), rather than the previous threshold of 18 metres high or six storeys.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government intends to start the scope of the new regulatory regime to cover: all multi-occupied residential buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or more than six stories – whichever is reached first. The reason for using both height and number of storeys is to address concerns, raised during the public consultation, regarding the potential for developers to build just under the height threshold. The Government intends to expand the scope of the regime over time, based on evidence of risk.

High Rise Flats: Insulation**Shabana Mahmood:**[\[41949\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the provision of financial support to leaseholders of properties clad in non-ACM flammable materials that have seen significant increases to insurance premiums following the Grenfell fire.

Christopher Pincher:

My Department is aware that some high rise residential blocks are experiencing difficulties in securing buildings insurance and that premiums have often substantially increased. Decisions concerning the pricing and availability of insurance remain commercial decisions for lenders. Engaging with an insurance provider or broker as early as possible is the best route to ensuring correctly priced insurance cover. However, the Government does recognise the impact which increased premiums is having on residents of some high rise residential buildings and will continue to explore what steps can be taken to deal with this issue.

Housing: Domestic Abuse**Jess Phillips:**[\[42060\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to ensure that councils that have received emergency funding for emergency accommodation for victims of domestic abuse during the covid-19 outbreak will be able to continue to access that fund after the lockdown.

Luke Hall:

A total of £3.2 billion of additional funding has been recently announced for local government to help them respond to COVID-19 pressures across the services they deliver. This includes increasing support for services helping the most vulnerable, such as victims of domestic abuse.

On 2 May, the Government also announced an unprecedented £76 million package of support to ensure the most vulnerable in society get the support they need during the pandemic.

A change to the rules will also mean that those fleeing domestic abuse and facing homelessness as a result will be automatically considered as priority by their council for housing – ensuring more survivors of domestic abuse have access to a safe home.

To understand how the funding is meeting the local needs and pressures across the country, vital data is being provided by local authorities. This data is enabling us to monitor the use of the funds and will inform our wider conversations within Government.

We will continue to work with councils to ensure they are managing as the pandemic progresses.

Local Government Finance: Coronavirus**Maria Eagle:**[\[41899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the criteria for allocating the second tranche of the £1.6 billion of emergency funding to local authorities as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Maria Eagle:[\[41900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what changes he has made since allocating the first tranche of emergency covid-19 funding to local authorities that will determine how the second tranche of that funding is allocated.

Clive Lewis:[\[42132\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what formula his Department used to calculate the allocation of funding to local authorities for covid-19; and whether that allocation was made on a per capita basis.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Following the Government's announcement on 18 March of an initial wave of £1.6 billion of funding to respond to COVID-19 impacts on local councils, we continued to keep funding pressures under review, using both data collection and ongoing conversations with councils to refine our assessment.

On 28 April, the Secretary of State announced allocations of an additional £1.6 billion to individual local authorities.

Whereas the first funding allocation was primarily allocated to local authorities through the Adult Social Care Relative Needs Formula, in recognition that the greatest immediate pressures would fall on local authorities with social care responsibilities, this second wave of funding was allocated on a per capita basis. This reflects our latest understanding of the distribution of additional covid-related pressures, which are likely to be distributed in a way that is different from pre-existing needs. The 65:35 split in this per capita allocation between counties and districts in two-tier shire areas provides more funding to district councils than the first wave of funding, whilst providing significant support to social care authorities.

It is important that these two waves of funding are seen together and that false comparisons between the two are avoided. Across both waves, almost 70 per cent of district councils will receive £1 million or more in support, whilst more than 90 per cent of the funding will go to social care authorities.

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[41901\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason his Department changed the funding allocation formula for local authorities during the covid-19 outbreak from the cost of social care needs to population figures.

Mr Simon Clarke:

MHCLG continues to work closely with local authorities to manage the impacts of Covid-19 on the most vulnerable in our society.

We are supporting authorities in the fight against coronavirus with over £3.2 billion of additional funding. Our engagement with local councils and latest assessment shows that Covid-19 pressures are not necessarily related to pre-existing needs. The per capita allocation for the second wave of funding represents a fair and balanced response to the national effort in tackling coronavirus. Furthermore, both waves of allocations need to be seen together.

Ms Angela Eagle:

[\[41902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions his Department has had with representatives from Wirral Council on the provision of additional funding during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We announced on 18 April an additional £1.6 billion of funding to support councils delivering essential frontline services, taking the total to over £3.2 billion of additional funding. To date, Wirral Council has received £20.8 million of additional funding to support their response to Covid-19. Last month (April), Wirral Council also received an upfront payment of 3 months of social care grants, totalling £2.8 million.

We have continued to engage with local authorities across the sector to develop our understanding of how the additional funding is being used by local authorities, using both monthly data collections and ongoing conversations with councils to refine our assessment. The Department issued a monitoring return to all local authorities, including Wirral Council, on 7 April, and we will issue a second monitoring return later

this month. This has been supported by engagement with Local Resilience Forums, councils and their representatives, including our local Delivery Board with Councillors from across the country.

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[41903\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to provide support to (a) Liverpool City Region and (b) Wirral Council in response to the (a) reduction in income and (b) increase in expenditure as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We are supporting authorities in the fight against coronavirus with over £3.2 billion of additional funding. Across both tranches of funding, Liverpool City Region has received £102 million extra to fight this pandemic, whilst Wirral Council has received over £20 million. This funding is unringfenced to allow councils to respond to local priorities, and is in addition to that from other departments – for example to support bus services, Fire and Rescue authorities and local businesses – and the most recent local government finance settlement which provides access to the largest year-on-year increase in Core Spending Power in a decade.

Ms Angela Eagle: [\[41905\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent estimate he has made of the increase in the costs incurred by Wirral Council as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The additional £20 million for Wirral Council to fight the coronavirus pandemic is expected to cover cost pressures incurred in the first phase of the response. This funding follows the most recent local government finance settlement in which Wirral's Core Spending Power rose by 6.6 per cent.

Steve Reed: [\[42050\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what criteria his Department used to determine that £1.6 billion was required by local authorities in emergency covid-19 funding.

Mr Simon Clarke:

This Government has now made £3.2 billion available to local authorities through an un-ringfenced grant so they can address any pressures they are facing in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, across all service areas.

Since we announced an initial £1.6 billion on 18 March we have kept funding needs under review, using monthly data collections and our conversations with councils and their representative bodies to refine our assessment.

The additional £1.6 billion announced on 18 April is based on our latest and best assessment of the distribution of additional Covid-19 pressures. The additional

funding is un-ringfenced, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major Covid-19 service pressures in their local area.

■ **Local Government: Coronavirus**

Steve Reed:

[\[42052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to involve local authority employed environmental health officers in Government organised contact-tracing of covid-19.

Mr Simon Clarke:

MHCLG continues to work closely with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and local authorities to manage the impacts of COVID-19.

DHSC are in the process of recruiting 18,000 staff, and that number will be increased if needed. Local authority membership bodies are helping to design the model and authorities will be asked if they can contribute staff to this collective effort. The recruitment process is underway and staff will of course receive training and support for the role they are given.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Mr John Baron:

[\[41907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter of 16 April 2020 from the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay and others on Basildon Borough Council.

Mr Simon Clarke:

A response to the letter has been dispatched and a copy emailed to the office of the hon Member.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ **Department for International Development: Remote Working**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[41492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how many staff in her Department have formal arrangements to work from home during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Adams:

Approximately 98% of DFID UK based staff are working from home.

In line with UK Government guidelines, both UK headquarter buildings have been closed, with only essential staff working in the premises. All staff based in the UK have the ability to work remotely.

Our overseas office situation varies across the countries we have a presence in, and we work in conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to adopt working from home arrangements on a case by case basis. The vast majority of DFID staff in

overseas locations have the ability to work remotely and have been instructed to do so, in line with UK Government advice.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[41565\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 21 April 2020 to Question 35022, on Overseas Aid: Coronavirus, whether she has plans to allocate funding to civil society organisations in countries in the Global South that are (a) affected and (b) at risk of being affected by the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

Civil society organisations (CSOs) in the global south are key partners for DFID. Many of DFID's programmes support local CSOs in order to deliver humanitarian and development outcomes, including providing humanitarian support to tackle the spread and consequences of COVID-19. As DFID's programming adapts to respond to COVID-19, we are also considering what work needs to be adapted or paused as our partners are affected by the pandemic, either directly or in response to the risk.

DFID's recent announcement of £200 million of funding to the global response, brings the total announced funding to £744 million to support the global efforts to combat the outbreak of the pandemic. This includes £20 million directly to CSOs to support them on humanitarian response, the majority of which will go through the Rapid Response Facility. It also includes £130 million for the UN agencies. CSOs based in the global south will be able to access some of this funding as downstream partners. We are encouraging the UN to channel the funding as quickly as possible, including to CSOs. Extra funding opportunities will also be available through DFID's new partnership with Unilever to support hygiene practices in developing countries.

Much of DFID's work is delivered through our extensive country office network and we know CSOs play a key role in delivery of our COVID-19 response through our country programmes. We are reviewing our programme portfolio in light of the COVID-19 response which will enable us to identify existing activities which can already support the response and others which can be adapted or scaled up, such as our support to health systems and humanitarian crises.

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

■ Developing Countries: Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[41566\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 21 April 2020 to Question 35017, on Overseas Aid: Developing Countries, what recent

assessment she has made of the overall financial health of supply partners; and which organisations are at risk as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

DFID is actively monitoring the overall financial health of our supply partners to understand the impact of COVID-19 on our supplier base and delivery capacity.

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

We have also assessed the Business Continuity Plans of our strategic supply partners and commissioned a weekly survey of 300 private sector and civil society suppliers to give us a heat map of impacts at programme, portfolio, and sector levels. Some supply partners are at greater risk, but it would not be appropriate to name specific organisations. We will consider financial data as part of our response to any request for supply partner relief.

■ **Non-governmental Organisations: Finance**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[41417\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the eligibility of UK INGOs to receive emergency funding from the £750 million covid-19 charity support package; and if she will establish a Stabilisation Fund to provide urgent financial support to INGOs to cover their core organisational costs during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

DFID has been in touch with HM Treasury to confirm that the £750 million support package is for UK-based charities focussing on the domestic response to COVID-19. However, civil society organisations (CSOs) are key partners for DFID in our response to COVID-19 and we have pledged new funding specifically for civil society, including UK-based CSOs, to support the response. This includes funding which will be allocated through the Rapid Response Facility, significant funding through the DFID Unilever COVID-19 Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition and £55 million allocated to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to protect and assist some of the people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and their impacts, such as those affected by armed conflict. In addition, International Non-Government Organisations will receive funding through multilateral organisations as downstream partners as part of the UK's response. As DFID's country network adapts programming to respond to COVID-19, country teams are considering how they can do this through partners, including through CSOs. For example, in Sudan and Nepal, preparedness and response plans will support both UN and CSO operations.

We are working flexibly with existing civil society partners to respond to the pandemic, maintain delivery of essential programmes and manage the impacts on

organisations and staff. DFID is also offering support to all suppliers, including civil society, in line with the provisions of the Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Note and associated guidance for grants, which allows for relief on services and goods provided in the UK, to DFID aid programmes as a last resort and on a case-by-case basis for DFID contracts and grants. UK-based CSOs are also eligible for the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. We are not currently considering a specific civil society sector resilience fund or loans to CSOs.

■ Overseas Aid: Females

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[41951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of paragraph 8 of the National Audit Office report entitled, Improving the lives of women and girls overseas, published on 29 April 2020.

Wendy Morton:

As acknowledged by the National Audit Office, DFID's ambition on gender equality is high, evidence-based and widely welcomed by experts on the issue.

The development of the Strategic Vision for gender equality was informed by extensive and active consultation, taking place over 12 months. External stakeholders, including academics, civil societies and country offices were a key part of this process. For example, DFID's Chief Scientific Adviser chaired an expert roundtable, and DFID hosted a Ministerial-led event with BOND and the Gender and Development Network, which was attended by representatives of 60-70 Civil Society Organisations.

Importantly, framing our gender equality ambition as a strategic vision has allowed DFID country offices and partners to work flexibly and adapt their work to local circumstances as informed by local expertise, in line with the Strategic Vision. We've had great success with this approach. DFID Sudan's trailblazing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) programme helped to reduce social acceptance of FGM in the country by an estimated 18% in two years. It is now being adopted by the African Union to support efforts to end FGM across the continent.

We continue to be in regular and close contact with DFID country offices and civil society. DFID has also engaged directly with key women's funds and women's rights organisations. Evidence from these sources is now informing our response to the coronavirus crisis. This includes providing £10 million of UK aid to the United Nations Population Fund and £20 million to the UN Children's Fund to scale up protection and support services for women and girls.

Yasmin Qureshi:

[\[41953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the implications for her Department's policies of paragraph 9 of the National Audit Office report entitled, Improving the lives of women and girls overseas, published on 29 April 2020.

Wendy Morton:

DFID is proud of its impact on gender equality, but is not complacent. We welcome the scrutiny of the National Audit Office (NAO) and we are considering this recommendation to further strengthen transparency and accountability on this important agenda.

The NAO rightly recognises the Department's work to promote girls' education, challenge child marriage, end female genital mutilation and tackle sexual violence around the world.

DFID's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality provides a single framework to guide all decisions about DFID and cross-government policies, strategies and funding commitments relating to gender equality. Different areas of work have their own plans which are updated regularly as the global and national contexts change. DFID reviews progress across all its gender equality work, spanning all seven areas of the Strategic Vision, every six months and sets out priority actions for the next six months. This assessment of progress is presented to DFID's Gender Equality Delivery Board, chaired at a Director level within DFID.

This approach has enabled DFID to be flexible and adaptive. It can direct its support to wherever it is needed most at any given time, including critical support to women and girls during the coronavirus crisis. It also allows flexibility to adapt to local circumstances and work with local expertise, in line with the Strategic Vision.

■ Rohingya: Refugees**Yasmin Qureshi:****[41950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the humanitarian needs of the Rohingya refugees reportedly trapped on fishing trawlers in the Bay of Bengal; and what representations she has made to the Governments of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand on providing safe refuge for those refugees.

Nigel Adams:

We continue to monitor the extremely concerning reports of hundreds of Rohingya still at sea and reports of failure to disembark vessels in distress. All men, women and children on board are potentially in serious peril. We are working with UN partners, including the International Organisation for Migration and UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to provide live-saving action where possible and in particular if they are brought to shore.

The Minister for South Asia, Lord Ahmad, has raised this with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister and with the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London. In addition, the British High Commission in Dhaka have raised this issue with the Government of Bangladesh. Officials from the British Embassy in Bangkok have discussed with the Thai government the importance of the provision of humanitarian assistance to Rohingyas aboard vessels that enter Thai waters, including in the last week. The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the situation of the Rohingya community

with the former Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah on 11 February. Our High Commission in Kuala Lumpur has also subsequently continued raised our concerns about the Rohingya community with the Malaysian Government before the COVID-19 crisis. We continue to urge the Governments of Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and other governments in the region to assist boats carrying Rohingya refugees to land. The UK is committed to protecting the Rohingya community, some of the world's most vulnerable people.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Barriers: Medical Equipment

Bill Esterson: [\[42000\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to reduce barriers to trade in medical devices.

Greg Hands:

I refer the Hon.Member for Sefton Central to the answer I gave him on 4 May, UIN 41034.

■ Trade: Freight

Bill Esterson: [\[42002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on support for haulage firms that transport goods internationally.

Greg Hands:

This Department is working closely with the Department for Transport and the Devolved Administrations to support industry and continue the flow of critical freight for the whole of the UK.

On 24 April, the Government announced a package of support <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-package-to-protect-ferry-freight-routes> on up to 31 critical freight routes between Great Britain, Northern Ireland and mainland Europe, which will help to maintain capacity on these vital transport routes. Ministers are working with industry and the Devolved Administrations to keep this scheme under regular review.

■ UK Export Finance

Bill Esterson: [\[42003\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the budgets for UK Export Finance allocated to support projects by world region; and how much was spent from each of those budgets in each of the last five years.

Graham Stuart:

UK Export Finance's (UKEFs) available support for export transactions is not broken down by region or sector. It is used to support UKEFs mission to ensure that no viable UK export fails for want of finance or insurance, while operating at no net cost to the taxpayer. Each export transaction that is supported is considered on a case-by-case basis.

JUSTICE**■ Courts: Coronavirus****Catherine McKinnell:**[\[42029\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many victims of crime have been affected by delays in court proceedings during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps have been taken to communicate with them.

Chris Philp:

HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) is working hard in partnership with the judiciary to keep our justice system functioning during this unprecedented public health emergency. Our priorities are to maintain access to justice and to protect the safety of all who work in the courts and tribunals.

We are continuously reviewing our approach in light of Public Health England advice and to understand impacts on our users. We do not collect information centrally on numbers of victims affected by delays in court proceedings during the outbreak. However, we are committed to ensuring victims continue to receive the support they need during this challenging time, and have robust and flexible plans in place to ensure that we can continue to deliver key services across the justice system, including the support of victims. We have been working across government and with justice partner agencies to ensure that there will be comprehensive support for victims and witnesses across England and Wales.

During the outbreak, magistrates' courts have been covering urgent work and trials are now re-starting. Crown Courts have also been continuing to deal with a range of work, including sentencing hearings. The Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor are currently in close discussion regarding the safe re-start of limited Jury trials, which we hope can be resumed before the end of May. The decision to re-start jury trials is dependent on the system as a whole being ready. This will include HMCTS, the professions, those supporting victims and witnesses, and jurors who should have confidence that trials are able to operate effectively within social distancing guidelines.

■ Prison Accommodation: Wales**Liz Saville Roberts:**[\[42147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2020 to Question 38475 on Prison Accommodation: Wales, how many temporary, single

occupancy cells have been installed in Welsh prisons; how many prisoners have requested to be moved to a single occupancy cell; and how many prisoners have had that request denied.

Lucy Frazer:

As at 4 May 2020 we have not installed any temporary cells at Welsh prisons. Sites in Wales have assessed for temporary accommodation and we are hoping to deploy some additional capacity into some sites in May.

HMPPS does not hold information about how many prisoners have requested to be moved to a single occupancy cells, nor how many prisoners have had that request denied. This is because this information is not recorded centrally.

Upon arrival into custody, all prisoners' suitability to share a cell is risk assessed. These assessments are based on numerous factors including index offence, health concerns and security information (such as beliefs and prejudices). There are benefits to some prisoners sharing cells for the positive impact it has on mental health and stress levels, in addition to many prisoners preferring to share a cell.

■ **Prisoners' Release: Coronavirus**

Peter Kyle: [\[42134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what estimate he has made of the number of suspects that have been released on remand as a result of delays in court proceedings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The requested data is not available at this time. Data relating to releases from prison covering January to March 2020 is planned for publication in July 2020 and data covering April to June 2020 is planned for publication in October 2020.

■ **Prisons: Coronavirus**

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[42148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases of covid-19 have been reported in prisons in Wales, by prison.

Lucy Frazer:

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Welsh prisons, as at 5pm Friday 1st May are provided in the table below.

ESTABLISHMENT	STAFF CASES	PRISONER CASES	TOTAL CASES
Berwyn	4	18	22
Cardiff	10	20	30
Parc	6	7	13
Swansea	8	12	20

ESTABLISHMENT	STAFF CASES	PRISONER CASES	TOTAL CASES
Usk	13	15	28
Prescoed	4	2	6

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ Members: Correspondence

Mr Peter Bone:

[\[41935\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) emails and (b) letters to ministers from hon. Members are answered (i) promptly and (ii) substantially.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

It is important that Ministers respond to correspondence from Hon and Rt Hon members in a timely way, in accordance with their own departmental deadlines.

There have been strains on certain departments owing to the current circumstances and the desire to prioritise COVID-related correspondence. Though this is understandable, departments should of course also endeavour to respond to enquiries in a timely manner. I would be happy to take up any particular concerns the hon. Member has with the relevant government department to ensure he receives a response.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[\[41987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he has made an assessment of the effect of aviation sector problems as a result of covid-19 on (a) regional transport connectivity and (b) the transportation of (i) patients, (ii) medical supplies and (iii) organ donations to and from Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Government has been working closely with the NI Executive to maintain connectivity between GB and NI during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have agreed a generous £5.7m financial support package to maintain the air bridge between GB and NI. This will ensure that critical routes to London from both City of Derry and Belfast City airports remain open to support the movement of key workers and guarantee the continued flow of medical supplies and essential freight.

■ Northern Ireland Government

Louise Haigh: [\[42108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether he consulted (a) parties in the Northern Ireland Executive, (b) the Northern Ireland Justice Minister, (c) the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commissioner, (d) the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland, (e) victims' groups and (f) the Government of Ireland on the proposals in his Written Statement of 18 March 2020 WS168 prior to its publication.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland spoke to the Irish Government and all party leaders before the Government's Written Ministerial Statement was published on 18 March.

The statement set out our high level proposals for dealing with legacy issues, and signalled the beginning of a period of engagement with the Irish Government, the Northern Ireland parties and others, including the NI Human Rights Commissioner, the Victims' Commissioner, and victims groups. We have begun the engagement process and remain committed to making progress on this important issue, whilst being sensitive to the challenging context in which we are all working.

Louise Haigh: [\[42109\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, which victims groups he has held discussions with from his appointment to 18 March 2020.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I, and officials have held discussions with a wide range of victims groups since the Secretary of State was appointed in February 2020. On 18 March, the Secretary of State chaired calls with 'Healing Through Remembering' and 'WAVE', and subsequent calls have since taken place with numerous groups at ministerial and official level.

The Secretary of State recognises the importance of engaging with victims groups, which represent all parts of the community in Northern Ireland, and the department will continue this engagement in the coming weeks and months.

Louise Haigh: [\[42110\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish the titles of the reviews being undertaken by his Department.

Mr Robin Walker:

My Department is not currently undertaking any public reviews.

Louise Haigh: [\[42111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish the titles of the reports commissioned by his Department that remain outstanding.

Mr Robin Walker:

The only outstanding report commissioned by the Northern Ireland Office is the report of the Robert Hamill inquiry, which was completed by Sir Edwin Jowitt in early 2011. At that time it was announced that due to ongoing legal proceedings against three individuals the report would not be published. These proceedings remain ongoing. The report will be published in full as soon as practicable.

SCOTLAND**■ Scotland Office: Remote Working****Margaret Ferrier:**[\[41485\]](#)

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

Mr Alister Jack:

All staff in the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland have formal arrangements to work from home during the covid-19 outbreak.

TRANSPORT**■ Bus Services and Railways: Coronavirus****Ian Mearns:**[\[R\] \[41995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the reduction in passenger capacity that will be required for (a) rail services and (b) bus services to ensure that social distancing can be maintained in event of a resumption of normal passenger timetables during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Officials are working closely with train and bus operators to understand the levels of capacity on trains and buses whilst maintaining social distancing and, in doing so, keeping passengers and staff safe. The reduction in capacity necessary to maintain social distancing will vary according to the layout of each vehicle.

Ian Mearns:[\[R\] \[41996\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of non-essential work on (a) rail and (b) bus services that will be paused to ensure that social distancing can be maintained when normal passenger timetables are resumed following the covid-19 lockdown.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In line with government guidance all rail staff who can work from home are doing so. Where this is not possible, Network Rail and train operators are following Public Health England advice, including ensuring staff who cannot work from home are able to maintain social distancing through adapting working arrangements where possible. This will remain the case for as long as social distancing is necessary.

The Department expects bus operators in England to follow Public Health England guidelines when running services and amend processes as necessary.

■ Buses: Exhaust Emissions

Kerry McCarthy: [\[41924\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the Prime Minister's oral statement of 11 February 2020, Official Report, column 71, what proportion of the £5 billion announced to support bus services will be used to replace diesel with zero emission vehicles.

Rachel Maclean:

The Prime Minister announced £5 billion of new funding to boost bus and cycling links on 11 February, including at least 4,000 new zero emission buses to make greener travel the convenient option, driving forward the UK's progress on its net zero ambitions. The details of the programmes, including how funding will be distributed, will be announced in due course.

■ Electric Scooters: Regulation

Florence Eshalomi: [\[42232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the timeframe is for the commencement of the review entitled, the Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy regulatory review.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport commenced a regulatory review in March 2019, as announced in the Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy.

As stated at that time, we expect the review to take place over a number of years. However we also said that we would not wait until the full process is complete before acting on our most significant and pressing findings.

The call for evidence published on 16 March 2020 is an important milestone in the review. It asks for information and views on micromobility vehicles, flexible bus services and mobility as a service (MaaS). The call for evidence deadline has recently been extended to 3rd July.

■ Motorcycles: Driving Instruction

Greg Clark: [\[41934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to extend the expiry date of motorcycle and moped compulsory basic training certificates due to expire during the lockdown period due to covid-19 to enable key workers and others for whom a motorcycle is their only transport option to continue to make essential journeys.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department for Transport is aware that the compulsory basic training certificate (CBT) for some people has already expired or is due to expire shortly and we are currently considering options on this matter. In the meantime, DVSA are prioritising

motorcycle tests and CBT applications for workers whose jobs are critical to the coronavirus response as set out in government guidelines.

■ Roads: Closures

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[42157]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what powers local authorities have been granted to close roads to create more cycling and pedestrian space during the covid-19 outbreak; and for how road closures can be in place for.

Rachel Maclean:

Local traffic authorities already have powers to close roads and to make changes to their use, including making space for cyclists and pedestrians, through the use of Traffic Orders. My Department has recently published guidance for authorities on how to deal with some practical difficulties with publicising and making orders during current restrictions, for example, publication in local newspapers when these may have either closed or moved online and posting site notices. This guidance has been circulated to local authorities already and will be kept under review. It is temporary and will be withdrawn when circumstances allow. It is available on our website at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-orders-advertising-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

We will continue to consider other assistance and support that we can offer to authorities as part of our response to coronavirus and plans for restart and recovery.

■ Taxis: Licensing

Florence Eshalomi:

[42233]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to introduce national minimum standards for taxi and PHV licensing.

Florence Eshalomi:

[42234]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on cross-border working in the PHV industry.

Florence Eshalomi:

[42235]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to respond to the public consultation on Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing: Protecting Users that was published in February 2019.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government will continue to engage with the sector on our plans for reforming the regulation of taxis and private hire vehicles, including options to introduce new legislation. The Department is supporting licensing authorities to make use of their extensive existing powers through statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards, which will be issued shortly. The Department will consult on updated best practice guidance on other matters later this year.

TREASURY■ **Arts: Coronavirus****Daisy Cooper:****[42192]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 901881 on Arts: Coronavirus, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the proposal from Directors UK to the Treasury on 6 April 2020 on the issue of dividend certificates to (a) limited company directors and (b) freelancers that could be (i) uploaded to a portal linked to HMRC online self-assessments and (b) independently verified by accountants.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is reviewing this proposal. The Government's priority has been to support as many people as it can, as quickly as possible. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) were designed to use information HMRC already holds, in order that the schemes could be delivered in a timely way and that the risk of fraud could be minimised.

Under current reporting mechanisms it is not possible for HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) 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 of these schemes would therefore require HMRC to collect and manually verify new information, which would take much longer to deliver. It could put at risk the other schemes which the Government is committed to delivering as quickly as possible.

These schemes supplement other significant, unprecedented financial support announced for individuals and UK businesses, including: the relaxation of the earnings rules (known as the Minimum Income Floor) in Universal Credit, 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.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme****Liam Byrne:****[41906]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many workers are receiving support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, by region.

Jesse Norman:

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme opened on Monday 20 April. By close 3 May, HMRC had received 800,000 claims representing 6.3m furloughed employments and £8bn.

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

Fleur Anderson:

[\[42204\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to new employees that started work before 19 March 2020 but whose Real Time Information submission was made after that date.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is open to any individual who was on an employer's PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020 and for whom HMRC received an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee on or before the 19 March 2020. Processing claims for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where HMRC 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 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.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Charities**

Theresa Villiers:

[\[41925\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the furlough scheme so that staff furloughed by charities are not prevented from performing voluntary work for them.

Jesse Norman:

The purpose of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is to support people who would otherwise have been made redundant. To prevent fraudulent claims, the Government made it clear that individuals cannot work or volunteer for their organisation.

This aims to protect individuals too; if workers were allowed to volunteer for their employer, the employer could ask them to effectively work full time while only paying them 80% of the wages. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is working with other government departments and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to identify areas where volunteers can contribute to the COVID-19 response.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Directors**

Owen Thompson:

[\[42116\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the director of a limited company in which all employees are furloughed is permitted under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to undertake work that is not revenue generating and is to pursue future sales.

Jesse Norman:

As noted in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme guidance, company directors are bound by the Companies Act 2006 to fulfil their statutory duties. The Government aims to ensure that salaried directors can be furloughed and supported through this scheme, and that they are still able to meet their statutory duties. The guidance is clear that directors should do no more work than would reasonably be judged necessary to meet their statutory requirements, and that they should not do work of a kind they would carry out in normal circumstances to generate commercial revenue, or provide services to or on behalf of their company.

This scheme supplements the other significant support announced for UK businesses, 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/.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Public Sector**Neil Gray:****[42055]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that public sector workers can be furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government expects that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will not be used by many public sector organisations, as most public sector employees are continuing to provide essential public services, or contribute to the response to the coronavirus outbreak. Where employers receive public funding for staff costs, and that funding is continuing, the Government expects employers to use that money to continue to pay staff in the usual fashion, and not to furlough them. This also applies to non-public sector employers who receive public funding for staff costs.

Organisations who are receiving public funding specifically to provide services necessary to respond to coronavirus are not expected to furlough staff. In a small number of cases, for example where organisations are not primarily funded by the Government and whose staff cannot be redeployed to assist with the coronavirus response, the scheme may be appropriate for some staff.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Service Industries**Stephen Doughty:****[42047]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to (a) fully or (b) partially extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for the (i) theatre, (ii) sporting and (iii) leisure sectors in the event that those sectors are required to remain closed for a longer period than others as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has made clear that he will extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if necessary. The Government will keep the length of the scheme under

review, engaging with businesses and representatives. There are a variety of factors that will need to be considered, including public health guidance and the longer-term economic recovery.

The Government's decision on when and how to close down the CJRS will be based on all available evidence. The Government will ensure the approach is coherent with any necessary non-pharmaceutical interventions, while also considering the status of the economy, the affordability of the scheme, and the need to provide certainty to employers and employees.

■ **Credit Unions: Northern Ireland**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[42214\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether Credit Unions in Northern Ireland are able to be accredited lenders under the Bounce Back Loan scheme.

John Glen:

On 27 April, the Chancellor announced the Bounce Back Loans Scheme to ensure that the smallest businesses can access loans in a matter of days. The scheme launched on 4 May, offering loans from £2,000 up to £50,000, capped at 25% of firms' turnover. 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. The Bounce Back Loans Scheme is open to businesses and lenders across the UK. Lenders in Northern Ireland interested in accreditation can enquire through the British Business Bank.

■ **Government Assistance: Coronavirus**

Stephen Hammond:

[\[41938\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending the eligibility cut-off date for the (a) Small Business Grants Fund and (b) Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund to 19 March 2020 to align with the cut-off date for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Kemi Badenoch:

The two business grants schemes were announced on 11 March and 17 March respectively. 11 March was chosen as the cut-off date to avoid creating an incentive for businesses to be created and registered simply for the purposes of being eligible for grants.

In cases where it was factually clear to the Local Authority on 11 March 2020 that the rating list was inaccurate on that date, Local Authorities may withhold or award the grant based on eligibility had the list been accurate. This discretion is only intended to prevent clear errors. Any decisions made after 11 March should not affect eligibility.

■ Iron and Steel: Coronavirus

Stephen Doughty:

[\[42045\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to provide support in the form of loans to the steel sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

Since the outbreak, the government has announced a comprehensive package of support for businesses and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency. The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme will provide a government guarantee of 80% to enable banks to make loans up to £25m to viable firms with a turnover of between £45m and £250m per annum, and loans of up to £50m to viable firms with a turnover over £250m.

This support complements the unprecedented help available for businesses including the CCFF, tax deferrals, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, and covering the cost of statutory sick pay. These measures have also resulted in more than £6.8 billion of funding being allocated to the devolved administrations to deal with Covid 19.

Prior to Covid 19, the government had already begun to take wide-ranging action to support the UK steel industry, including compensation for energy costs, supporting innovation and clean steel production – through the £315m Industrial Energy Transformation Fund and £250m Clean Steel Fund, and working with the industry to introduce steel procurement guidance.

■ Pay: Coronavirus

Neil Gray:

[\[42054\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to top up the wages of workers who have had their normal hours reduced during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

Workers who see a fall in earnings due to a reduction in their work hours may become eligible for support through the welfare system, including through Universal Credit (UC). Existing UC claimants are likely to receive a higher award as a result of a fall in earnings. For employed claimants this will be updated automatically using information from the PAYE system

In response to the crisis, the Government has strengthened the welfare system, including by increasing the UC standard allowance and the Working Tax Credit basic element by £20 per week. In addition, to protect people's jobs and incomes as far as possible during the crisis, the Government has announced a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and a Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

■ **Second Homes: Stamp Duty Land Tax**

Rosie Duffield:

[\[42159\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for the property market of extending the three year window to claim a refund of three per cent of stamp duty on second homes during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are aware of a number of instances where the payment of tax or filing of the necessary returns have been made challenging by COVID-19 and have displayed significant flexibility.

The Government continues to keep all taxes under constant review as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ **Self-employed: Coronavirus**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[42213\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support the Government provides to self employed people that are unable to access the self employed income support scheme as a result of not having the relevant income tax and national insurance contributions.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has designed measures that can be operationalised quickly and effectively under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). It continues to work with stakeholders to make sure funding reaches those who need it most, keeping all policies under review. Some 95% of people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment could benefit from the SEISS and anyone requiring support before the beginning of June should have access to other measures appropriate to their individual circumstances. For example, the self-employed can benefit from the Government's relaxation of the earnings rules (known as the Minimum Income Floor) in Universal Credit. Individuals may also have access to a range of grants and loans depending on their circumstances, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, the Bounce Back Loans Scheme, and the deferral of tax payments.

■ **Small Business Grants Fund**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[42205\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the small business grant to all active businesses not eligible for business rate relief.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Small Business Grant Fund is designed to give additional financial support to those small businesses which are likely to face high fixed building-related costs, such as rent.

However, we are aware that many small businesses which are facing high fixed costs are finding themselves excluded from the existing grants schemes because of the

way they interact with the current business rates system. Government has provided up to an additional £617m for Local Authorities in England to enable them to make grants payments to businesses in these circumstances. This funding will be used by Local Authorities to create a Discretionary Grants Fund.

Local Authorities are responsible for defining precise eligibility for these funds. However, it is our intention that the following businesses should be considered as a priority for these funds:

- Businesses in shared offices;
- 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.

Recipient businesses will also have to meet the following criteria:

- They must be facing high fixed property-related costs;
- They must be able to demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the Covid-19 crisis;
- They must have fewer than 50 employees;
- They must have been trading on or before 11th March.

Businesses will need to apply to their Local Authority in order to receive grants. Each Local Authority will need to create their own process, which may take some time. We encourage businesses to look out for their Local Authority's version of this scheme, and to contact their Local Authority for more information in due course.

Small businesses which are not eligible for business grants should still be able to benefit from other elements of the Government's unprecedented package of support for business, including:

- An option to defer VAT payments by up to twelve months;
- The Bounce Back Loan scheme, which will ensure that small and micro businesses can quickly access loans of up to £50,000 which are 100% guaranteed by the Government;
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, now extended to cover all businesses including those which would be able to access commercial credit;
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, to support businesses with their wage bill;
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

■ Social Services: Vat Zero Rating

Colum Eastwood:

[\[42216\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to enable all care providers to register as zero-rated for VAT.

Jesse Norman:

Many care services provided by charities, public bodies and regulated private welfare institutions to elderly people are exempt from VAT, meaning no VAT is charged on the care service. Organisations offering such services are not required to charge VAT where they are regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

There are no plans to change the VAT treatment of care services at present.

■ Welfare Tax Credits: Coronavirus

Neil Gray:

[\[42056\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of key workers who are in receipt of tax credits and who are taking on additional hours to support the fight against covid-19 on their tax credit payments going forward.

Steve Barclay:

The Tax Credit system has a degree of flexibility built in, in order to help claimants manage changes in income. The Tax Credit disregard means that the first £2,500 of an increase or decrease in household income, compared with the previous tax year is disregarded. Therefore, carers, NHS staff and other key workers who take on additional hours and experience an increase in income of up to £2,500 per year will see no change in their overall Tax Credit award.

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

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

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Drew Hendry:

[\[902294\]](#)

What assessment she has made of whether the covid-19 outbreak has had a disproportionate effect on women's job security.

Paul Scully:

The Government is actively monitoring the impact of Covid-19 on the labour market, including the impact on women and on other groups.

However, it is too early to draw any firm conclusions. The next ONS labour market statistics will be released in May, covering the 3-month period up to the end of March. Analysis of this and other data will provide an indication of early impacts of Covid-19 on the labour market.

Bill Esterson:

[\[902299\]](#)

What recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on access to safe accommodation for domestic abuse victims during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

This Government is committed to ensuring survivors get the support they need. I have regular discussion with colleagues across Whitehall, including my counterparts at the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, and we have been closely informed by the latest data from the sector.

We have announced £3.2 billion to aid local authorities' in their responses to Covid-19 pressures, including providing essential support for victims and their children.

Dr Jamie Wallis:

[\[902305\]](#)

What steps the Government is taking to make it easier for people to share parental leave.

Paul Scully:

We are evaluating our Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme, which will allow us to gather information on the barriers and enablers to take up. We are also working on a digital tool to help parents understand the options available to them and make it easier to access Shared Parental Leave.

■ **Pregnancy: Coronavirus**

Tonia Antoniazzi:

[\[902304\]](#)

What steps the Government has taken to support pregnant women unable to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Covid-19 is particularly challenging for those in vulnerable groups, including pregnant women.

Pregnant women can be furloughed if the employer and employee agree to this. Where this happens, the Government has amended the law to ensure they do not lose out on maternity and parental pay.

Employers should review their risk assessments for pregnant women, considering also the risk of severe illness for the shielding group. In some circumstances, medically suspending the woman may be appropriate.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Access to Work Programme: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[41895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 lockdown on the operation of the Access to Work programme; and if she will make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work is continuing to provide support for people with a disability or health condition whether they are working in the workplace or are working from home. Access to Work service delivery teams are deploying available resources in line with the agreed priority areas and responding flexibly to meet customer demand. DWP remains committed to ensuring disabled people continue to receive support they need to move into and maintain employment and has prioritised payments.

In addition, to support disabled people during COVID-19 Access to Work has introduced various measures, these include:

- Prioritising new applications from key workers and those with jobs starting within the next 4 weeks;
- Extending the timeframe customers have to submit payment claim forms to 9 months ;
- Accepting employer and support worker signatures via email ;
- Extending Support Worker awards that are coming to an end by 6 months;
- Adapting the way our assessments are undertaken to support customers who don't know what support they need and/or where coping strategies are required as part of the Mental Health Support Service.
- Accepting e mail claim forms from customers who request this as a reasonable adjustment

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[41897\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps is she taking to ensure that disabled (a) employees and (b) business owners continue to receive the (i) assistive technology and (ii) other forms of support they need to remain in work during the covid-19 lockdown; and if she she make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

Access to Work is continuing to support disabled employees to access assistive technology and other forms of support they need to remain in work and during the pandemic is adapting existing awards to new working environments. This could include switching from face to face British Sign Language Interpreting to Video

Remote Interpreting services where possible as well as making greater use of assistive technology and software.

For all other forms of support, such as support workers and travel to work (for customers not self-isolating), Access to Work continues to offer support. If support needs or workplaces have changed, Access to Work will work with the customer to understand what support is needed, and adapt the support package accordingly.

In addition, Access to Work is working with employers to ensure assistive technology can be transported from the workplace to support home working. If the support cannot be removed from the workplace, Access to Work may be able to provide the support at home, work with disabled employees to consider new adjustments or support adaptations to standard equipment.

■ **Hearing Impaired: Coronavirus**

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[42188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Government Equalities Office is taking steps to ensure that duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the provision of accessible information for people who (a) deaf and (b) have hearing loss are maintained during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government is committed to ensuring deaf people and people who have hearing loss can fully participate and play a full role in society. We support initiatives aimed at improving understanding of the needs of deaf people and people who have hearing loss and how the barriers they face can be removed, as well as giving them more say in how they access services.

We worked with the BBC to introduce a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter on Monday 16 March to accompany the Prime Minister's daily coronavirus press conference. The BSL interpreter is available on the BBC News Channel and BBC iPlayer. We continue to work with the BBC to ensure there is a BSL interpreter in our daily updates on coronavirus and are prioritising the exploration of additional methods to ensure that all disabled people have access to pertinent communication in accessible formats.

■ **Industrial Health and Safety: Inspections**

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[41945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether there is a statutory limit on the length of a Health and Safety Executive investigation.

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[41946\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what processes are in place to expedite Health and Safety Executive investigations.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[41947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the efficiency of Health and Safety Executive investigations.

Shabana Mahmood:[\[41948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to increase the efficiency of Health and Safety Executive investigations.

Mims Davies:

There is no statutory limit on the length of a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation. HSE has a number of processes in place to expedite investigations including:

- an investigation procedure which includes time periods for the completion of regular reviews of an investigation. Such reviews take into account issues such as timeliness and resources;
- senior management oversight of investigations to monitor progress against key performance indicators; and
- the Work-Related Deaths Protocol which aims to improve co-operation between interested parties including HSE and the police during the investigation of a work-related fatality, thereby improving efficiency.

HSE focuses on investigating the most serious of incidents, particularly those that result in fatalities or major injuries and these can be very complex to investigate. HSE understands that timeliness is important and has strengthened procedures. Since 2013/14 there has been an improvement in the percentage of fatal investigations completed within 12 months of primacy for the investigation passing to HSE from the police, as shown in the table below:

2013/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
43%	61%	63%	73%	75%	56%	75%(p)

The percentage of non-fatal investigations completed within 12 months is shown in the table below:

2013/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
90%	90%	90%	90%	89%	89%	90%(p)

(p) – Provisional and based on live operational information and is therefore subject to change.

HSE's key performance indicators framework includes indicators on the timeliness of completing investigations, in particular 80% of fatal investigations completed within 12 months of primacy and to complete 90% of non-fatal investigations within 12

months. Performance is regularly reviewed by the HSE Board who are appointed by the Secretary of State and figures are published annually in their Annual Report and Accounts.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Medical Examinations

Owen Thompson: [\[42114\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have taken telephone reassessments to transfer from disability living allowance to personal independence payment since the introduction of the covid-19 lockdown.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

Owen Thompson: [\[42115\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many personnel in her Department are currently working on disability living allowance to personal independence payment reassessments.

Justin Tomlinson:

Our priority as a Department is ensuring people get their benefit payments and that we can continue to support those who need us the most. On 23 March we announced that we are automatically extending all awards and reassessments for health and disability benefits. This temporary measure is being taken to ensure the Department's resources are focused on enabling access to financial support for new claimants and reassure claimants about continuity of their benefit during the coronavirus outbreak. We therefore, have around 100 people, dealing with the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to PIP reassessments for those claimants that had started the DLA to PIP process prior to 23 March.

■ Social Security Benefits

Patrick Grady: [\[41084\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants had their social security payments limited by the application of the benefit cap in (a) January (b) February (c) March and (d) April 2020 in each region of the UK.

Seema Malhotra: [\[42040\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many claimants of universal credit were subject to the benefit cap in (a) January, (b) February, (c) March and (d) April 2020.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 5 May 2020]: The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate costs. However, whilst the stats requested are not readily available, as part of a regular publication, new statistics for Benefit

Cap Households to February 2020 are due to be published on Thursday 7th May at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/benefit-cap-statistics>

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Gerald Jones: [\[42133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the length of the timeframe for mandatory reconsideration during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP is continuing to process Mandatory Reconsiderations during the current Covid-19 pandemic and is aiming to avoid delay where possible.

■ Social Security Benefits: Medical Examinations

Chris Stephens: [\[42101\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have been awarded (a) personal independence payment, (b) employment support allowance and (c) the limited capability for work element of universal credit following a (i) telephone and (ii) paper based assessment in (A) the UK, (B) Scotland and (C) Glasgow South West constituency since 19 March 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

The latest available information on assessment outcomes for Personal Independence Payment and Employment and Support Allowance, for various geographical areas, 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>

■ Social Security Benefits: Terminal Illnesses

Jessica Morden: [\[41931\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she will publish the findings from the review, announced in July 2019, on how the welfare system supports people who are terminally ill.

Justin Tomlinson:

The evaluation and supporting people who are terminally ill remains an absolute priority for the Department. However, these are unprecedented times and the Government's immediate focus is on people affected by Covid-19 and getting support to them as quickly as possible. It is important to note that we have always done – and

will continue to do – our utmost to process claims under the special rules as quickly as possible.

■ **Statutory Sick Pay: Coronavirus**

Neil Gray:

[\[42057\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to extend eligibility for statutory sick pay to people who live with someone who needs to shield.

Justin Tomlinson:

The published guidance for people who live with someone who has been advised to shield is clear that other members of the household do not need to start shielding and that they should carefully follow guidance on social distancing. Since someone can follow guidance on social distancing and still work, it would not be appropriate to extend Statutory Sick Pay to them.