



Daily Report

Tuesday, 12 May 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 12 May 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 12 May 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Aluminium: Industry**

Sammy Wilson:

[42255]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps have been taken to support the aluminium industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is in regular contact with the aluminium industry; I recently spoke to representatives of the Aluminium Federation alongside other industry leaders to discuss the impact of COVID-19.

The Government recognises that it is crucial for the aluminium sector to continue providing essential materials to support the economy, and I am grateful to those working in the industry for their contributions to the national effort during this time of extraordinary disruption.

We have put in place an unprecedented package of Government support to help with business continuity and to give manufacturers - including businesses in the aluminium sector - the support they need.

■ **Beer: Non-domestic Rates**

Tom Tugendhat:

[42098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial support is available through the Expanded Retail Discount scheme for breweries which do not have a shop or taproom included within or attached to their premises.

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 breweries. 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/>.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Stuart C McDonald: [\[43955\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy that applications for bounce back loans cannot be refused by lenders on the basis that the applicant is (a) a customer of another bank or (b) not using a business banking account.

Paul Scully:

The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) has been introduced to help small and medium-sized businesses to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000. Businesses are not required to bank with their provider in order to be eligible for a loan under the Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBLs).

It is also not a requirement of the Scheme for businesses to operate via a business account. However, some lenders may request that an applicant opens a business account in line with their standard policies. This is at the sole discretion of the lender. There are now 14 lenders accredited under the scheme, providing more choice for SMEs. Details of accredited lenders can be found on the British Business Bank's website.

In order to apply for the scheme, businesses need to complete a short, simple online application form. A lender may consider paying funds into a personal current account if no business bank account is held, if it has been satisfactorily evidenced that the personal current account is being used for business purposes. In some cases, borrowers may need to include their 2018-19 HMRC self-assessment tax return alongside the form to verify their status as a business.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Suzanne Webb: [\[43194\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Chambers of Commerce on how they can support businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Department works in close contact with UK Business Representative Organisations (BROs) – including with leading BROs such as the British Chambers of Commerce, the Federation for Small Businesses, and MAKE UK, the Manufacturers Organisation and UK Finance.

This engagement has been increased significantly across all levels of the Department, for Government to understand where support is needed most for businesses across the economy during the Coronavirus outbreak. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I hold numerous calls every week with a range of BROs to discuss feedback on government support measures; and we have initiated additional calls to announce additions and developments to the suite of COVID19 business finance, such as the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme.

In my role as Minister for Small Businesses, I have also engaged with local Chambers of Commerce such as in Merton, for example on Wednesday 5th May I joined a webinar to engage in a Question and Answer session.

■ **Construction: Coronavirus**

Grahame Morris:

[41988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason (a) version 2 of the Construction Leadership Council guidance stated that no construction work should be carried out on site if social distancing could not be enforced and (b) version 3 of that guidance changed those guidelines.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) has developed Site Operating Procedures (SOP), which align with Public Health England (PHE) guidance on social distancing. The SOP were developed in consultation with the construction industry, and provide practical advice to those seeking to implement the guidance on construction sites so they can work safely.

This approach is based on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Hierarchy of Controls and HSE should consider enforcement action if a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out by PHE.

Grahame Morris:

[41989]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy whether he has plans to enforce staggered start times for construction sites to enable the social distancing of construction workers on public transport during rush hour.

Nadhim Zahawi:

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

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

■ **Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter**

Dr Matthew Offord:

[41433]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether it remains the Government's policy to comply with the (a) London Convention on the

Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972 and (b) 1996 London Protocol to that Convention following the decision to leave in-situ the (i) steel jackets and (ii) concrete bases underneath decommissioned (A) Bravo, (B) Charlie and (C) Delta east of Shetland Brent oilfield platforms.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Any approval of the derogation permit to leave *in-situ* the footings of the Brent Alpha steel jacket and the concrete gravity based installations Brent Bravo, Brent Charlie and Brent Delta will be consistent with all our International obligations.

■ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Sammy Wilson:

[42241]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps have been taken to enable the aluminium industry to access the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is open to eligible businesses with annual turnover of under £45m operating in most sectors, including the aluminium industry.

To be eligible for the CBILS, businesses must:

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

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

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

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

- **Removing the per lender portfolio cap.**

The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) facilitates access to finance for medium-sized and larger businesses with annual turnover of above £45 million, affected by the Coronavirus outbreak. This is also open to eligible businesses operating in most sectors, including the aluminium industry.

The Government will continue to monitor the schemes.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[42250\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the proportion of businesses that have applied for loans through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme that have had their application declined.

Paul Scully:

As of 6 May, in total over £5.5 billion worth of loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to 33,812 businesses. Lenders have received 62,674 completed applications.

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

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

■ **Manufacturing Industries: Coronavirus**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[42209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government is taking to support original equipment manufacturers to re-shore industrial supply where viable during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Manufacturing is a critical part of our economy and we are engaging with the industry and its suppliers to ensure that we can support them during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have created an unprecedented package of Government support to help, including:

- £330 billion of Government-backed and guaranteed loans to support UK businesses.
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme to help small and medium-sized businesses to access vital financial support.
- Our new Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme to allow more firms to benefit from Government-backed support during this difficult time.

- Deferring VAT payments for firms to the next quarter, until the end of June 2020, which represents a £30 billion injection into the economy.

- Our Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, where small and large employers will be eligible to apply for a Government grant of 80% of workers' salaries up to £2,500 a month, backdated to 1 March 2020 and available for at least three months.

Ensuring free trade and resilient supply chains through open markets will be crucial to the global economic recovery as the crisis passes. We are working with the Devolved Administrations to support the manufacturing industry by continuing the flow of critical freight for the whole of the UK.

The Government is also supporting industry-led research to map UK supply chain capability, which creates substantial new opportunities for UK suppliers.

■ National Federation of SubPostmasters

Scott Mann: [\[42130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of adding the National Association of Sub-Postmasters to his Department's industry group.

Paul Scully:

The Government has already established a quarterly working group between the BEIS Minister for Postal Affairs, the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters (NFSP) and Post Office Limited to discuss how the relationship between the Post Office and postmasters can be improved. The working group also provides the NFSP with a forum to challenge Government and the Post Office on key issues, such as postmaster remuneration and hard-to-place branches. Officials also meet the NFSP on a regular basis

■ Post Office: Economic Growth

Scott Mann: [\[42131\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Post Office on their 100 day strategy for growth.

Paul Scully:

The CEO of Post Office Limited regularly meet with BEIS Ministers, through scheduled monthly meetings with the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets as well as through wider Shareholder Meetings.

These meetings are held to discuss a range of matters including the development of the business's new strategy under CEO Nick Read.

■ Postal Services: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[\[42226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what information his Department holds on whether the Royal Mail's Saturday delivery service will resume after the end of the covid-19 outbreak.

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. Royal Mail has announced that its Saturday letters delivery service will resume from 13 June.

■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus

Beth Winter:

[\[44056\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the capacity of UK textiles manufacturers to produce face masks on a large scale in the event that the Government requires the general public to wear non-medical face masks during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government are in contact with various UK manufacturers and business representative organisations regarding support to boost the availability of non-surgical face masks.

The Government welcomes efforts by manufacturers who are pivoting their businesses to producing non-surgical face masks.

Additionally, Lord Deighton is leading the national effort to produce essential personal protective equipment for frontline health and social care staff. These efforts will support smaller companies to scale-up their engineering, thereby increasing their contribution to the supply chain.

■ Public Houses: Small Business Grants Fund

Alex Norris:

[\[44023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an exemption for pubs with a

rateable value of £51,000 or above to enable them to be eligible for local authority business support grant funding.

Paul Scully:

Under the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) businesses in England that would have been in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount (which covers retail, hospitality and leisure) on 11 March 2020, with a rateable value of less than £51,000, will be eligible for cash grants of up to £25,000 per property. Businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or over are not eligible for this scheme.

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

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

Alex Norris:

[44024]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of British Beer and Pub Association statement that at the end of April 2020 only 40 per cent of pubs had received local authority business support grants for which they were eligible.

Paul Scully:

As of 3 May, over 697,000 business premises have received grants across the Small Business Grants Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund, totalling over £8.6 billion. We do not receive management information from local authorities broken down by sector. We have, however, published, a full breakdown of grant funding allocated to and distributed by each local authority here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-grant-funding-local-authority-payments-to-small-and-medium-businesses>.

Government has made £12.3 billion available to businesses under the Small Business Grants Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund. On 1 May, the Government announced a further £617 million available to help those small businesses with high fixed property-related costs that are not eligible for the current grant schemes. We will be issuing Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund guidance for local authorities in due course. Local authorities are responsible for

delivering these grants to businesses and government is working closely with all local authorities to help deliver grants as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Alex Norris:

[\[44027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether pub businesses with fewer than 50 employees are eligible for payments from the discretionary fund for local authorities announced on 2 May 2020.

Paul Scully:

On 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants. This is an additional 5% uplift to the £12.33 billion funding previously announced for the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF).

The 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.

Pub businesses with less than 50 employees, not directly liable for business rates and thus not eligible for either Small Business or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants, could be in-scope subject to them being in business on 11th March, not having received any other Government grant funding, having ongoing relatively high fixed building-related costs (e.g. rent and service charges) and experiencing a significant loss of income due Covid-19 impacts. Local authorities will run these schemes locally.

■ Research and Science: Finance

Chris Green:

[\[42082\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking in addition to Budget 2020 measures to support science funding and R&D tax credits by increasing the incentives for advanced medicines manufacturing in the UK.

Amanda Solloway:

The UK has world leading science and research capabilities and we have already committed to utilising these to address the COVID-19 challenges, in close collaboration with the research and business communities in the advanced manufacturing sector.

In April we announced a £1.25 billion package to help ensure innovative firms in some of the most dynamic sectors of the UK economy – including life sciences – are protected through the COVID-19 crisis so they can continue to develop innovative new products. As part of this Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), are investing £750 million to support innovation in the country's most research-intensive businesses during and post the coronavirus pandemic, and to support new ways of dealing with global disruption. The package will include grants,

loans, and expanded business advisory support. This package builds on the government's existing support for innovative, high-growth firms including the £2.5 billion British Patient Capital fund, the upcoming £200 million Life Sciences Investment Programme, internationally competitive R&D tax reliefs and our major commitments to increase public R&D spending to £22 billion by 2024-25.

Currently over £36 million is awarded through UKRI to projects directly related to tackling Covid-19. This includes £24.6 million awarded across 27 projects, including for testing a vaccine, developing therapies and improving understanding of how to treat COVID-19, awarded through a Rapid Response call (now closed) run jointly with the National Institute for Health Research .

We are also supporting the development of a coronavirus vaccine, working to ensure the UK has the manufacturing capability to produce these at the levels the UK needs. This is at the early stages but progressing rapidly. A new cross government vaccines taskforce has been set up, reporting to the Secretaries of State for BEIS and DHSC as well as Sir Patrick Vallance. It brings together government, industry, academics, funding agencies and other partners to make rapid decisions in order to accelerate vaccine development in the UK, working closely with the BioIndustry Association.

This taskforce is reviewing a number of options, including looking at delivering the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (VMIC) earlier than the 2022 opening date originally planned. The VMIC was asked to develop a plan for its dramatic acceleration and expansion. As a result the initial phase of the build has now started which is approximately three months ahead of schedule. Further acceleration and expansion options will be presented by the VMIC to the government in due course, and definitive estimates of further time savings will be available at that time.

■ **Rolls-Royce**

Margaret Beckett:

[43836]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he has had discussions with representatives of Rolls Royce on measures to support the manufacturing sector to manage the financial effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is committed to supporting companies through the COVID-19 crisis and has worked with many businesses across the economy to understand how best to do so, including Rolls-Royce.

The Government has been in close discussions with Rolls-Royce on the various business support schemes available to the business and its suppliers. Through the Aerospace Growth Partnership , the company has also fed into the Government's dialogue with the wider aerospace sector about business support.

■ Small Business Grants Fund

Alex Norris:

[44025]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment his Department has made of the level of additional business support grants required by businesses in sectors that will remain closed for an extended period after the lockdown is eased.

Paul Scully:

The Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) are just a part of the Government's unprecedented package of support for businesses to help with their ongoing business costs in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19.

On 1 May 2020 the Business Secretary announced that up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants. This is an additional 5% uplift to the £12.33 billion funding previously announced for the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF).

The additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs.

We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would meet the criteria for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates.

Local Authorities are responsible for defining precise eligibility for this fund and may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need, subject to those businesses meeting the specific eligibility criteria. Businesses already in receipt of the Small Business grant, a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure grant or Self-employed Income Support Scheme payment are not eligible.

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

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

o The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

Alex Norris:

[\[44026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits on an application to the European Commission for a derogation of State Aid rules in relation to local authority business support grant payments.

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 until the end of the Transition Period.

Whilst the European Commission has declined to suspend the State aid rules because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Commission has introduced some welcome flexibilities into the rules to deal with the impacts of the Coronavirus, in the form of a Temporary Framework. This facilitates aid going to the companies who need it most, quickly and efficiently.

Following work by BEIS officials, the COVID-19 Temporary Framework was approved by the Commission under the Temporary Framework on 6 April. This 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 grants from local authorities.

I would also add that other local authority support, such as Small Business grants, can be given under the normal de minimis rules. These allow up to EUR 200,000 to be given to a business in a three-year period. De minimis aid can be received in addition to Temporary Framework aid.

The combination of these and other measures constitute an unprecedented programme of Government support for business to address the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[41070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if his Department will publish guidance on the financial support available during the covid-19 outbreak for small businesses that (a) work with a licence as a business within another business rather than having a lease contract of a property and (b) are ineligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rates Relief.

Paul Scully:

In England, the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) have supported many thousands of small businesses with their ongoing business costs in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. These grants only apply to businesses in England.

Local business support policy is devolved and the Barnett consequential formula is being applied. Therefore, the Devolved Administrations will receive over £2.3bn additional funding as a result of these English grant schemes, enabling them to provide support to businesses in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

On 1 May 2020, the Business Secretary announced that up to £617 million is being made available to Local Authorities in England to allow them to provide discretionary grants. This is an additional 5% uplift to the £12.33 billion funding previously announced for the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF).

The additional Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund is aimed at small businesses in England with ongoing fixed property-related costs but not liable for business rates or rates reliefs. We are asking local authorities to prioritise businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders, small charity properties that would meet the criteria for Small Business Rates Relief, and bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates.

Local Authorities in England are responsible for defining precise eligibility for this fund and may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need, subject to those businesses meeting the specific eligibility criteria. Businesses already in receipt of the Small Business grant, a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure grant or Self-employed Income Support Scheme payment are not eligible.

The Devolved Administrations will receive additional funding as a result of this announcement through the Barnett formula in the usual way, with up to £116m of additional Barnett consequential.

Rachael Maskell:

[43974]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish a risk analysis of the potential effect easing the covid-19 lockdown on local businesses.

Paul Scully:

The Government has published guidance to help businesses make their workplaces as safe as possible to allow employees to return. This requires a risk assessment to be carried out, in line with health and safety legislation.

The guidance was developed with business representatives, unions, Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive to consider what might be needed to adapt workplaces in order to minimise the risk of transmission as much as possible while accommodating a return to work at the appropriate time – to make them safer places in the current climate. The variation in types of local business and working environments mean that risk assessments are more appropriately carried out by the business itself.

If businesses do not take action to comply with the relevant legislation and guidance, they could face a range of actions from the Health and Safety Executive or the local authority to improve control of workplace risks. These actions include the provision of

specific advice through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements with the guidance.

■ **Travel Agents: Repayments**

Catherine West:

[44005]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department plans to take steps to prevent travel agents from withholding a proportion of refunds for holidays that have been cancelled as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Package travel agencies are required to comply with The Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018, which protect consumers who have bought package holidays. Consumers are entitled to a refund if forced to cancel a package holiday due to unavoidable and extraordinary circumstances, which should be issued within 14 days, depending on the nature of the contract in place. BEIS officials have held regular discussions with travel and tourism sector representatives, travel businesses and consumer advocacy bodies to assess the impact of cancellations made in light of the covid-19 outbreak. Further information on the rights and responsibilities of consumers and businesses was published on 30 April by the Competition and Markets Authority who have also set up a covid-19 taskforce for consumers seeking refunds.

CABINET OFFICE

■ **Brexit and Coronavirus: Advertising**

Chi Onwurah:

[43905]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Government has spent on Facebook adverts on (a) the UK leaving the EU and (b) covid-19 in the latest 12 months for which figures are available.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [33512](#) on 21 April 2020.

■ **Civil Servants: Coronavirus**

Helen Hayes:

[43997]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure that annual pay increases for civil servants are not delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chloe Smith:

Pay for civil servants below the Senior Civil Service is delegated to individual departments. The Civil Service Pay Remit Guidance sets the framework for departments to set pay. The guidance will be published soon to ensure that departments are able to make pay awards to staff following negotiations with trade unions.

■ Emergencies: Risk Assessment

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[42191\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps the Government has taken to mitigate the risks identified in the National Risk Registers of Civil Emergencies, published on 14 September 2017.

Penny Mordaunt:

Departments are responsible for addressing their portfolio of risks as identified in the National Risk Register, working with a wide range of stakeholders to coordinate, enact and test appropriate plans.

■ Industrial Diseases: Death Certificates

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[44015\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many death certificates refer to industrial disease in (a) each year since 2010, (b) March and April 2019, and (c) March and 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 Holding Response [PQ44015 HR.pdf]

■ Life Expectancy

Ruth Jones:

[\[42182\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment he has made of trends in the level of life expectancy.

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 [PQ42182.pdf]

■ Trade Agreements: Coronavirus

David Linden:

[\[902521\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent assessment the Government has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the progress of trade negotiations with the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

As a result of Covid-19, it has been necessary to conduct negotiations through video conference. Negotiators from the UK and the EU held discussions through video conferencing on 20 – 24 April 2020 for the second round of negotiations on the UK-

EU future relationship. A written ministerial statement ([HCWS209](#)) made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 28 April 2020 updated the House on the progress of negotiations.

The third round of negotiations started this week, also via video conference, and will conclude on 15 May.

■ UK Relations With EU

Caroline Lucas:

[[41419](#)]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to the press statement by Michel Barnier following the second round of future relationship negotiations with the United Kingdom published on 24 April 2020, what recent (a) social, (b) economic, (c) labour and (d) environmental impact assessments the Government has undertaken of the effect of not reaching a deal with the EU by the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK has struck a deal with the EU and that will form the basis of our relationship with the EU going forwards. There is no danger of the kind of legal rupture and uncertainty that would have occurred if we had left the EU without a deal. The outstanding question is how deep our trading relationship can be in future and what kind of pragmatic collaboration we are looking for in other areas.

It's in our and the EU's interests to have a future relationship which keeps goods flowing, services being provided, and business being done. Negotiations with the EU on the form that relationship will take are ongoing. We will continue to keep Parliament informed with appropriate analysis at appropriate times.

Ruth Jones:

[[42179](#)]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent progress the Government has made on negotiating the UK's future relationship with the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [39669](#) on 4 May 2020.

■ UK Relations with EU: Climate Change Convention

Hywel Williams:

[[43841](#)]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will ensure that the future agreement between the UK and EU contains a clause confirming the parties' legal commitment to the provisions of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK is committed to tackling climate change and as COP26 President will work with all partners to deliver the Paris Agreement. As set out in the [document outlining our approach to negotiations](#), the agreement we reach with the EU should reaffirm both parties' commitments to the Paris Agreement and recognise both sides' right to decide their own regulation to meet our respective climate goals.

■ UK Trade with EU: Trade Agreements

Kerry McCarthy:

[902549]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what recent progress the Government has made on EU trade deal negotiations; and if she will make a statement.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ [39669](#) on 4 May 2020.

■ Veterans: Worcestershire.

Sajid Javid:

[41972]

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps his Department is taking to support veterans and their families in Worcestershire.

Johnny Mercer:

This Government is absolutely committed to making the United Kingdom the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world. We have created the Office for Veterans' Affairs in the Cabinet Office to ensure veterans are represented right at the heart of Government.

We have also introduced measures such as discounted railcards; guaranteed interviews to make it easier for veterans to join the Civil Service; creating more Armed Forces champions in the Department for Work and Pensions; introducing a national insurance holiday to encourage employers to maximise the talents of veterans in our workforce; improved access to housing, and making it easier for veterans to access physical and mental healthcare support for veterans in the NHS. This is alongside introducing legislation to ensure veterans are not subject to unfair historic investigations and further strengthening the Armed Forces Covenant in law.

DEFENCE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Carla Lockhart:

[902474]

What steps the Government is taking to improve mental health and well-being support for armed forces personnel and their families.

Johnny Mercer:

Our Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy launched in 2017 and it delivers education and training at appropriate points throughout Service life. Personnel and their families can access a 24hr helpline and Service Leavers are supported via the Veterans Gateway initiative. The incidence of mental health issues in Service Personnel and Veterans is comparable to the general population, a testament to the effectiveness of the support provided.

Mr Virendra Sharma:[\[902481\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the effect on veteran welfare of closing the Veterans UK Helpline.

Johnny Mercer:

The Veterans UK helpline has not been closed.

The COVID-19 situation has necessitated the delivery of services differently and veterans can still submit written enquiries in the normal manner via email. Call backs and referral to the Veterans Welfare Service are provided where urgent or vulnerable callers are identified.

■ Coronavirus: Finance

Mhairi Black:[\[42091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much his Department has (a)(i) invested and (ii) spent to date and (b) plans to spend in the next six months on covid-19-related operations.

James Heappey:

Support to the Government's COVID-19 response is now Defence's main effort; our role is to support other Government Departments, principally the NHS.

Defence has committed a total of 19,189 personnel (as of 12 April) to the COVID Support Force with 2,958 deployed supporting 71 MACA tasks nationwide. To date, costs have been no more than £27 million. Future costs will depend on the scope of tasks Defence is asked to support.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[41919\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to page 60 of the Defence Equipment Plan 2019, published on 27 February 2020, what steps his Department has taken to reduce the cost of the P-8 contract from £2.392 billion to £2.203 billion.

Jeremy Quin:

The approved cost for delivery of the P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft project is £2.392 billion. However, at the point when the information for the Defence Equipment Plan 2019 was prepared, the forecast cost of the project was £2.203 billion. A robust project management regime is in place which enables the financial forecast to be revised and refined as the project progresses through its lifecycle and more detail becomes known, for example as actual costs replace expected ones.

■ Military Bases: Coronavirus

Andrea Jenkyns:[\[42121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to minimise the spread of covid-19 on UK military bases overseas.

Andrea Jenkyns:

[\[42122\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps the Government is taking to minimise the spread of covid-19 on UK military bases in the UK.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence has stringent measures in place to safeguard our people and reduce the risks to them and their families on UK Bases. Many of our people – both civilian and military – are working from home and where they do come into work, we have adjusted their working environment to meet Public Health England's (PHE) guidelines. Furthermore, we have taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that the PHE's guidelines on social distancing, self-isolation protocols, the cleaning of communal areas and personal hygiene are adhered to. Defence personnel are included in the national testing programme.

■ Protective Clothing: Coronavirus

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42197\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what guidance on the use of personal protective equipment has been issued to the armed forces when conducting covid-19 testing at mobile units; and what steps he is taking to ensure that guidance is followed.

James Heappey:

Guidance on the wearing of covid-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) by personnel has been issued, including for armed forces personnel conducting covid-19 testing at mobile units. This guidance is coherent with Public Health England direction.

Staff from the Standing Joint Command Defence Medical Services are responsible for assuring measures to protect Defence workforce in collaboration with the requesting agency (DHSC), who provide the PPE and introductory training. Commanders on the ground maintain standards and ensure that guidance is followed.

■ Rifles

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[43845\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Lee Enfield No.8 small bore target rifles his Department has destroyed in the last five years; and whether his Department plans to destroy any more of those rifles.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) Warehouse Management System records that twelve Lee Enfield No.8 small bore target rifles were destroyed in the last five years. The MOD is examining possible disposal options for the remaining rifles, although no decisions have yet been made.

■ Type 45 Destroyers

Mr Kevan Jones:**[43846]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the cost of the Type 45 Upkeep 2020 programme was (a) in total and (b) by sub-system (i) Sampson upgrade, (ii) LRR upgrade, and (iii) PIP project.

Jeremy Quin:

The total overall cost of the Type 45 Destroyer Upkeep programme in Financial Year 2019-20 was approximately £38.5 million. There were no upgrades to either the Sampson or Long Range Radar systems. However, the cost of planned routine overhaul of these systems amounted to some £400,000.

The Power Improvement Project is not part of the Upkeep programme, but expenditure on the project during Financial Year 2019-20 amounted to some £11.6 million.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ BeoutQ

Mr Richard Holden:**[43200]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for International Trade on the continued activity of beoutQ in broadcasting Premier League football; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

My officials work closely with their counterparts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Trade and Intellectual Property Office on matters relating to the protection of intellectual property rights around the world.

Our understanding is that beoutQ has ceased broadcasting, but we will remain vigilant in respect of any further instances of illegal broadcasting of Premier League football and other UK-owned intellectual property rights, at home and abroad.

■ Broadband: Standards

Robert Langan:**[43205]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many properties receive broadband with speeds less than 30Mbps in (a) High Peak constituency, (b) Derbyshire and (c) the UK.

Matt Warman:

In September 2019, Ofcom released their 'Connected Nations Report' which shows properties with speeds of less than 30Mbps to a variety of levels including constituency, county and across the UK: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/infrastructure-research/connected-nations-2019/data-downloads>.

This data is always posted to the House of Commons Library:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/science/technology/constituency-data-broadband-coverage-and-speeds/>

Whilst DCMS does not endorse any particular coverage checker sites other than Ofcom Connected Nations, we would draw your attention to this site which provides a useful way to access constituency, county or national level coverage statistics. This is their coverage data for High Peak, but you can select Derbyshire and UK from the dropdowns: <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E14000748>. The data is updated more frequently than the Connected Nations data and is generally accurate.

Coverage data and “take-up” are not one of the same. We find areas of the UK where residents are complaining about internet speeds and on investigation we find that their area has been upgraded to Superfast (“coverage”) but residents have not asked their Internet Service Provider to upgrade them to the faster speeds (take-up”).

Information on our Superfast funding for Derbyshire is available on the BDUK Programme Summary tab of the spreadsheet here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Hs00bNsyRV1WoOt-fow3rsNXzpcKg26AsOWvk1bvJRk/edit#gid=1411146266>.

The spreadsheet shows that approx £19m of funding from central and local government was provided to provide connectivity to 103,755 premises. However in the Phase 1 contract 61.03% of premises have taken up that service, and in the Phase 2 contract only 41.64% of premises have taken up the service. This means there are many residents who could subscribe to a Superfast service but, for various reasons, have not done so to date.

There is also a very good paper at the HoC Library on the various Programmes that are underway to further improve connectivity

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8392/>.

■ Electronic Surveillance

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[41372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to (a) regulate, (b) supervise and (c) control the sale of covert listening and filming devices.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[41373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to limit the ability of (a) private companies and (b) the general public to spy, stalk and harass people with covert devices.

Mr Ben Bradshaw:

[41889]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to increase protections for members of the public from bugs and other covert listening devices bought online that may intrude on their privacy in public settings.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Private organisations using surveillance equipment will need to ensure that their use of this equipment complies with the UK's data protection laws.

Our data protection laws impose strict obligations on both individuals and organisations to process people's data fairly and lawfully and to ensure that any data collected is held securely. There must also be a legal basis for processing data. The way in which personal data is collected and handled must be fair and transparent, and the data should be processed in a way which individuals would expect.

The UK's data protection laws are enforced independently of Government by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Organisations that fail to comply may be subject to enforcement action by the Information Commissioner's Office. Whilst a breach of these laws is not generally a criminal offence, the Information Commissioner can impose significant financial penalties for non-compliance.

Where this equipment is used by individuals for private purposes, data protection rules will not normally apply, but criminal offences, such as stalking and harassment, might be relevant depending on the circumstances of the case.

Whilst the Government remains open to considering any gaps identified in the law, it currently considers that the range of existing legal provisions provides a robust framework.

■ Football: Governing Bodies

Mr Richard Holden:

[43199]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department has taken to set-up a fan-led review of football governance, including consideration of the Owners and Directors Test; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

Football clubs are the heart of local communities, they have unique social value and many with a great history. It is vital they are protected which is why the government has given as much support as possible to support football clubs during these difficult times.

The government is committed to setting up a fan led review of football governance at an appropriate time, which will include consideration of the Owners' and Directors' test. We will continue to liaise closely with the football authorities as we develop the scope and structure of the review.

■ Newcastle United Football Club: Sales

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[43198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with (a) national governing bodies and (b) sports rights holders on the potential sale of Newcastle United; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

My Department has not held any discussions with sports national governing bodies or sports rights holders on the potential sale of Newcastle United Football Club. Any such sale is a matter for the parties concerned, and for the Premier League to assess under its Owners' and Directors' Test.

■ Sports: Broadcasting

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[43201\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate his Department has made of the economic value of international sport broadcasting revenues to the UK economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The government recognises the valuable contribution of UK broadcasting and of domestic and international sporting events to the UK economy, as well as to the lives and wellbeing of its citizens. In 2018, the UK exported over £10bn of audiovisual services in total. The government has not made any specific estimate of the economic value of international sport broadcasting revenues to the UK economy.

■ Sports: Coronavirus

Alison McGovern:

[\[43629\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions officials in his Department have had with representatives of sporting organisations on the provision of financial support from the Government to protect sports clubs from the effect of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

I am having regular discussions with sector and industry bodies to understand the impact of COVID-19 on sport and how we can provide support. This includes chairing a fortnightly meeting with over 25 sporting organisations. Sport England, the arms-length body of government responsible for growing and developing grassroots sport, have been involved in these discussions. In addition to this, my officials maintain daily contact with the sector.

The Chancellor has already announced a host of measures to help businesses, with £330 billion worth of government backed and guaranteed loans to support

businesses across the UK. In addition, Sport England, has also announced £195 million of funding to help sport and physical activity organisations deal with the short and long term effects of the pandemic.

■ Tourism: Fees and Charges

Nick Fletcher: [\[43774\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with stakeholders in the hospitality industry on the equity of single supplement charges.

Nigel Huddleston:

I regularly attend weekly meetings with tourism stakeholders. As soon as it is safe to open the hospitality and tourism sector, I will continue to engage with stakeholders on a range of issues to help support the industry's recovery.

EDUCATION

■ Adult Education: Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah: [\[42024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure access to digital learning for adult learners that do not have access to (a) devices and (b) the internet.

Gillian Keegan:

We are exploring options within adult education and will be making decisions shortly on where we may be able to introduce flexibilities into the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Adult Education Budget Funding Rules 2019/20 to help remove barriers, including IT equipment or connectivity costs, for learners wishing to access their provision online. Any changes that we introduce will be communicated via the Covid-19 operational guidance published on GOV.UK.

■ Adult Education: Disadvantaged

Chi Onwurah: [\[42023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State, what steps he is taking to increase participation rates in adult education by people in lower socio-economic groups.

Gillian Keegan:

The department recognises the importance of adult education in supporting the economy and tackling disadvantage. Participation in adult education will only become more important as people live longer lives and automation and technological change the profile of the jobs market.

We are continuing to invest in adult education to support people from all backgrounds. Most recently, we announced an extra £3 billion, over the course of this

Parliament, for a new National Skills Fund (NSF) to help people learn new skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

The NSF will transform the lives of people who are not in work or who wish to improve their qualifications as well as people who are keen to return to work from raising a family or who wish to change to a different career. It will not only make this country more prosperous but will also make it fairer.

We are also continuing to invest in the Adult Education Budget (AEB) (we are investing £1.34 billion in 2019/20 and 2020/21). The AEB fully funds or co-funds skills provision for eligible adults aged 19 and above from pre-entry to level 3 in order to support them to gain the skills that they need for work, an apprenticeship or further learning.

Through the AEB, providers are able to fully fund learners who are employed and in receipt of a low wage and who cannot contribute towards the cost of co-funding fees. The AEB also funds colleges and providers to help adult learners to overcome barriers which prevent them from taking part in learning. This includes Learner Support, which supports learners with a specific financial hardship.

For the 2019/20 academic year, we are continuing to support those in work on low incomes to access the AEB through a trial, which allows providers to fully fund eligible learners on low wages. This directly supports social mobility by enabling those that have moved out of unemployment, and are low paid or low-skilled, to further progress.

■ Children: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell:

[41920]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to take steps to support young children with concerns about returning to primary schools or nurseries after the covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Rosindell:

[41921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how his Department plans to work with schools to support young children in readjusting to attending school after the lockdown due to covid-19 is lifted.

Nick Gibb:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education has made it clear that schools will only reopen when the scientific advice indicates that it is the right time to do so, based on five key tests.

We are working in close consultation with the sector as we consider how to reopen schools when the time is right, and will ensure schools have the support and guidance they require.

The Department has published guidance for schools and parents signposting to resources and advice regarding the wellbeing of children and young people, which we are keeping under review and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education#mental-wellbeing>

Alexander Stafford:

[42223]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect on child welfare of temporary relaxation of regulation relating to children's social care in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

We have taken a number of steps to ensure the safety of vulnerable children, including ensuring that vulnerable children can continue to attend the education and childcare settings that are closed to the majority of children.

The vast majority of statutory duties remain unchanged. However, in light of the current pressures that the Covid-19 outbreak is bringing on social care services, and the risk of such pressures increasing, we have reviewed our regulations to allow some temporary and limited flexibility – to be used where absolutely necessary – to enable children's services to continue to support vulnerable children in the most effective and safest way during the outbreak.

Our starting point has been to make minimal changes to ensure the safe functioning of children's social care during the Covid-19 outbreak. The department recently published updated guidance for children's social care services that covers how the flexibilities provided in regulations should be used. The guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care#delivery-of-services>.

Amendments have been made to provide for extra flexibility in limited circumstances, but this should only be used when absolutely necessary, with senior management oversight and must be consistent with the overarching safeguarding and welfare duties that remain in place. The amendments will remain in place only for as long as they are needed.

Where it becomes necessary to use any of these flexibilities, it is important that this is properly recorded, along with the reasons for doing so. Where it is not necessary to make use of the flexibilities due to the current circumstances, they should not be used.

The department continues working with a wide range of stakeholders and the sector to ensure that the right support is available for frontline services during the crisis. The regulatory changes will be kept under continuous review and will expire on 25 September 2020 unless they are extended.

■ Department for Education: Staff

Layla Moran: [\[42174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of (a) civil servants, (b) special advisers and (c) contract staff in his Department have teaching qualifications.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not hold information on whether civil servants, special advisers or contract staff have teaching qualifications.

■ Foreign Students: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy: [\[43149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to update the International Education Strategy as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Michelle Donelan:

The International Education Strategy, published in March 2019, by the Department for Education and the Department for International Trade, set out a commitment to review progress following its publication. The review, which we intend to publish this autumn, will ensure that the International Education Strategy responds to this new context and the challenges that are posed.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[42124\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the efficiency of companies issuing free school meals vouchers to families during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

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

During this period, we are asking schools to support children eligible for 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.

We are monitoring the use of the national voucher scheme on a daily basis. As of 28 April, Edenred has indicated that over 16,500 schools have placed orders for codes under this scheme. Edenred has reported that over £65 million worth of voucher

codes has been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by schools and families through the scheme as of Monday 11 May.

We are working tirelessly with Edenred to resolve any outstanding technical problems. We are very grateful to families and schools for their understanding and patience while we 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.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Vicky Foxcroft:

[42125]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the contract for provision of free school meal vouchers to EdTech companies.

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 centrally funded national voucher scheme as an alternative to support schools with this process.

Schools are best placed to determine what is most appropriate locally and are free to make their own arrangements outside the national voucher scheme. We understand that some approaches, such as providing food parcels or purchasing vouchers for shops currently not included in the national scheme, may mean that schools incur additional expenses. Guidance is available setting out how we will compensate schools who incur these additional costs in providing free school meals or vouchers to pupils affected by coronavirus: <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.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[44020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether free school meal vouchers will continue to be offered throughout the (a) May half-term and (b) summer holidays.

Vicky Ford:

Provision for free school meals is ordinarily term time only. However, during the Easter holidays the department met the costs of offering free school meals to eligible pupils not attending school 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.

■ Further Education: Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[42027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to providers of further education to ensure that low-income students maintain access to digital learning.

Gillian Keegan:

We would like to thank all the colleges that switched to online learning so that students can continue their studies. Colleges are able to provide digital devices and internet access to disadvantaged 16-19-year-old students using their flexible bursary funding. We have ensured that they can apply for additional funding to do this if needed.

Our latest guidance on technology support during COVID-19 is set out below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-with-technology-for-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19> .

■ Home Education: ICT

Robert Halfon:

[43883]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what criteria he uses to define disadvantage when deciding which disadvantaged year 10 pupils are eligible for laptops and tablets under his scheme to support remote education during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chi Onwurah:

[43904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education when disadvantaged pupils will receive 4G internet access during the covid-19 outbreak; and how those pupils will be identified.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has committed over £100 million to support remote education while schools are closed for most children.

We are providing laptops and tablets to disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for examinations in Year 10, those receiving support from a social worker, including pre-school children, or are a care leaver.

Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and children in Year 10 do not have internet connections, we will be providing 4G internet hotspots so that they can learn at home.

Local authorities, academy trusts and other relevant organisations overseeing schools have been given guidance on how to request and order devices. We believe that local authorities and academy trusts are best placed to identify and prioritise children and young people who need devices.

■ Schools: Protective Clothing

Rehman Chishti:**[41993]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government has taken to help ensure special schools have access to adequate levels of personal protective equipment for staff delivering personal and intimate care.

Vicky Ford:

The scientific advice indicates that most educational staff do not require additional Personal Protection Equipment (PPE).

Any symptomatic individual should avoid attending an educational setting, with the exception of residential special schools, where PPE may be required if contact with a symptomatic individual is unavoidable.

Current guidance issued by Public Health England suggests that PPE is only required for contact with an asymptomatic individual if there is a high risk or high likelihood of contact with excess bodily fluids or during an aerosol-generating procedure. This may be applicable to some special school settings (for example, in instances such as tracheostomy changes or if a pupil in a special school has a medical condition that includes uncontrollable spitting).

Educational settings are using their locally agreed supply chains to obtain PPE wherever possible. If there is a requirement in line with published guidance for educational settings to obtain PPE and it is not possible for them to source PPE via the aforementioned supply chains, PPE may be obtained from their nearest Local Resilience Forum.

■ Science: Further Education

Chi Onwurah:**[42025]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what long-term strategy his Department has put in place to increase the number of life science students in further education.

Gillian Keegan:

Further education colleges are autonomous organisations and, as such, are free to deliver provision to meet the needs of local learners and labour markets.

We have established 36 Skills Advisory Panels across the country to increase understanding of the skills that local employers and labour markets need and to work with colleges to help ensure that they align with their provision better. At a national level, we are establishing an independent Skills and Productivity Board (SPB), which will give ministers advice on where the skills system can add the most value, identify areas of potential skills shortage and support us in identifying the training which best equips people for work in the future.

We have made substantial spending commitments on maths, digital and technical education and we are also encouraging more students into STEM, from primary school to higher education. The life sciences are covered in school as part of the science curriculum and qualifications. Science is a compulsory subject for key stages

1 to 4 (ages 5 to 16), and the National Curriculum ensures that all pupils in state-maintained schools are given a firm foundation for the future study of biology and life sciences at further and higher education.

In post-16 education, students are able to continue to study sciences such as biology at A level. The department is supporting further uptake of science A levels through a range of programmes. This includes support to schools to increase provision of GCSE triple science as we know that those students who study GCSE triple science are more likely to study science at A level. From 2010 to 2019, we have seen a 19% increase in entries to Biological Science A level.

Schools and colleges are required to provide independent and impartial careers guidance for 11 year olds to 18 year olds on the full range of education and training options. Careers programmes are developed in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Careers Guidance, which means that every young person has opportunities to meet employers and providers and to receive personal guidance from a qualified careers adviser to help them choose the right education and career path. The role of the National Careers Service is to deliver independent and impartial careers advice to young people and adults, ensuring that those customers are linked into relevant local Labour Market Information.

The Life Sciences Industrial Strategy highlighted the need to increase uptake of life science apprenticeships. The government provided £1.5 million of funding for the Advanced Therapies Apprenticeship Community to allow for key skills gaps to be addressed with high quality apprenticeships. Life science apprenticeship standards already available for delivery include the bioinformatics scientist and clinical trials specialist standards.

■ Sixth Form Education

Daniel Zeichner:

[43040]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Education and Skills Funding Agency on (a) auditing guided learning hours and (b) the leaving date that should be recorded by colleges for year 13 students.

Daniel Zeichner:

[43041]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assurances he has provided to colleges that do not record the expected guided learning hours that no financial loss will be incurred as a result of moving to online learning during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

For funding purposes, guided learning hours are not used in the 16 to 19 system, as providers are funded based on planned hours recorded early in the academic year. The auditing of these hours is based on evidence of planned delivery (for example, with a timetable or learning agreement). In the adult education system, we do not use the planned guided learning hours recorded on the Individualised Learner Record, as the funding is based on a series of rates that are attached to each learning aim.

We have stated in our further education operational guidance that we are reviewing the impact of Covid-19 on retention in the 16 to 19 funding formula. We will provide further guidance on this and on recording leaving dates in due course.

To help manage the financial implications due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to pay grant-funded providers their scheduled monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019 to 2020 funding year.

For 2019 to 2020 only, the ESFA will not carry out the final reconciliation for grant-funded providers who are in receipt of the ESFA-funded Adult Education Budget (AEB), which relates to adult skills, community learning, learner and learning support and 19 to 24 traineeships. These providers will be funded in line with the current agreement schedule with no claw-back, subject to the conditions stated in the operational guidance. The conditions are that these providers will be funded unless they had already forecast significant under-delivery in their mid-year returns and that they support furloughed workers to enhance existing or develop new skills. The conditions also include that providers deliver online learning wherever possible, including for ESFA-funded AEB via existing subcontracting arrangements to support existing learners to successfully complete their courses or qualifications, or retain evidence where this is not possible.

ESFA allocations for 2020 to 2021 have been confirmed and payments will be made in line with the national profile.

Looking ahead, for 16 to 19 funding, as we will use data from the 2019 to 2020 academic year to calculate allocations for 2021 to 2022, the ESFA may need to apply a different approach to a number of elements within 16 to 19 funding. Where appropriate, we will therefore use alternative data sources to calculate allocations for 2021 to 2022 to ensure, as far as possible, that there is not a disproportionate impact on funding.

■ Special Educational Needs: Coronavirus

Peter Aldous:

[42009]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of children reported to be experiencing domestic abuse have an Education, Health and Care plan in the most recent period for which figures are available; and how many of those children are attending school during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

252,580 children were recorded as having domestic abuse as a factor at the end of their referral assessment[1] in the year ending 31 March 2019. This includes children where the assessment has raised concerns about the child, concerns about the parent(s) or concerns about other adults in the household. We do not publish figures showing where there are solely concerns about the child being the victim of domestic abuse. 46.0% of children in need on 31 March 2019 have special educational needs (SEN), including 21.6% with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Figures for

the number of children with domestic abuse as an assessment factor and an EHC plan are not available.

For school attendance, 69,000 of the children and young people in attendance on Thursday 7 May were classed by schools as vulnerable. Of these, around 20,800 of the children and young people in attendance on Thursday 7 May were children and young people with SEN who have an EHC plan. Figures for the number of children with domestic abuse as an assessment factor are not available in the school attendance data collection.

Please note that the department has set an expectation that children with a social worker, including those where domestic abuse is a factor, are to attend. This is the expectation unless their social worker decides that they are at less risk at home or in their placement, for example, due to underlying health conditions. In the event of non-attendance, providers should follow up with the parent or carer – and social worker or local authority, where appropriate – to explore reasons for absence. Where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at school or college or discontinues, the provider should notify their social worker. Where appropriate, they should keep in contact with the family.

[1] When a child is referred to children's social care, an assessment is carried out to identify if the child is in need of services, which local authorities have an obligation to provide under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support or disabled children's services (including social care, education and health provision).

Rosie Cooper:

[43852]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if the Government will publish operational guidance for SEN schools operating during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Special schools are playing a vital role in supporting vulnerable children during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Department for Education has published a substantial body of guidance to help special schools and other settings support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes in particular:

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on vulnerable children and young people:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people>.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): SEND risk assessment guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-send-risk-assessment-guidance>.

Education, health and care needs assessments and plans: guidance on temporary legislative changes relating to coronavirus (COVID-19):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus>.

Further guidance for all schools, including special schools, can be found in our coronavirus (COVID-19) collection:

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

We are committed to maintaining and updating all guidance as the COVID-19 outbreak develops.

■ Students: Coronavirus

Colum Eastwood:

[40793]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with counterparts in the devolved Administrations on the refunding of tuition fees paid by students who have had their tuition interrupted as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

Education is devolved and it will be for each administration to determine the actions they wish to take.

We are working closely with sector representative bodies in England to understand the impact of COVID-19 and the immediate financial implications for students and providers, and we are working with universities to make sure all reasonable efforts are being made to enable students to continue their studies to the best of their abilities.

The government has made it clear that if universities are unable to deliver adequate online teaching then it would be unacceptable for students to be charged for any additional terms of study, which would effectively mean that they were being charged twice. We only expect full tuition fees to be charged if online courses are of good quality, fit for purpose and help students progress towards their qualification. If universities want to charge full fees, they will have to ensure that the quality is there.

Whether or not an individual student is entitled to a refund of their fees will depend on specific contractual arrangements between the student and their university. Students ordinarily should not expect any fee refund if they are receiving adequate online learning and support.

In the first instance, students should speak to their university. We expect student complaints and appeals processes to be operated flexibly, accessibly and sympathetically by institutions to resolve any concerns. Students who are not satisfied with their institution's final response can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint if their institution is based in England or Wales.

Seema Malhotra:

[42044]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 lockdown on the (a) employment and (b) income of (i) full-time and (ii) part-time students.

Michelle Donelan:

The government is working closely with the sector on a wide range of issues and student wellbeing is at the heart of those discussions. It will be a matter for universities to deal with individual students' situations.

Eligible students studying on full-time and part-time courses will continue to receive scheduled payments of loans towards their living costs for the remainder of the current, 2019/20, academic year.

We have engaged 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.

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. Information can be found at:

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

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.

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

■ Training: Coronavirus

Nick Fletcher:

[42212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Education and Skills Funding Agency is taking to reassure training providers that seeking financial support from the Coronavirus Business Loan Interruption Scheme and bounce back loans scheme will not affect their financial health assessment calculation after the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

As the full financial consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak on the sector emerge, we will assess the impact of the outbreak on the sector and the most appropriate means of how to approach to financial health assessments and intervention actions, including how to treat the Coronavirus Business Loan Interruption Scheme and other elements of government support.

■ University Technical Colleges: Coronavirus

Karl McCartney:**[41998]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of how the specialisms taught at University Technical Colleges can support the (a) skills needs of employers and (b) UK's economic recovery after the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are well positioned to support the skills needs of local economies, placing employers at the heart of designing their specialist curriculum, mostly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects such as engineering and digital technologies. There are over 500 employers involved in the 48 open UTCs, including leading names such as JCB, Network Rail, Toyota, Siemens and the Royal Navy, helping to create 30,000 opportunities for young people to train as the engineers, technicians and scientists of the future.

UTCs will continue to play a role in building the skills capabilities the country needs now and in the future following COVID-19. An immediate focus for UTCs will be to help this year's leavers use and build on their technical skills through becoming apprentices, as well as other paths to employment including progression to universities, or going straight into technical jobs.

Our latest guidance for schools and other educational settings is set out below:

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

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor:**[42137]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he plans to introduce an additional grant scheme for people working in the agricultural sector that are facing market disruption as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is aware that coronavirus represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy. The agricultural sector plays a vital role in maintaining the UK's food security. We are working closely alongside the agricultural industry to ensure that we understand and manage the impacts to the industry.

The department has been in close discussion with banks to ensure the farming sector has access to financial support to ease cashflow problems during this period, including through the HMG backed Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBIL),

and the Bounce Back Loan scheme, which was announced on 27 April, and is the latest step in a package of support measures announced by the Chancellor. The Government will provide lenders with a 100% guarantee on each loan, to give lenders the confidence they need to support small businesses. These loans will be from £2,000 up to £50,000, capped at 25% of firms' turnover, and the Government will cover the first 12 months of interest payments and fees charged to the business by the lender. Almost all UK businesses will be eligible to apply for a loan under the scheme.

In March, Defra worked with BEIS to introduce new measures to support businesses in the food sector keep food supply flowing on to shelves and into homes. These included a temporary relaxation of competition rules to allow supermarkets to work together. The legislation to bring in this change was introduced on 27 March and has a retrospective effect from 1 March.

In April, we temporarily relaxed further elements of competition law to support the dairy sector during this period. Legislation was laid before Parliament on 1 May to enable collaboration between dairy farmers and producers, supporting them to adapt to changes in the supply chain including decreased demand from the hospitality sector. The legislation will apply retrospectively from 1 April 2020.

On 6 May, Defra announced a new fund to support English dairy farmers who have seen decreased demand due to the loss of the food service sector. Dairy farmers access this funding for those qualifying months, with no cap set on the number of farmers who can receive this support or on the total funding available. Eligible dairy farmers who have lost more than 25% of their income over April and May due to coronavirus disruptions will be eligible for funding of up to £10,000 each, to cover around 70% of their lost income during the qualifying months to ensure they can continue to operate and sustain production capacity without impacts on animal welfare. The Welsh Government announced the opening of a similar scheme on 12 May.

The availability of this funding followed the launch on 5 May of a joint Government and Devolved Administrations backed £1 million campaign aiming to boost milk consumption and help producers use their surplus stock. This 12-week campaign is being led by Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) and Dairy UK. This follows a similar on-going campaign led by AHDB and retailers to promote the consumption of beef products.

While the Government has made a wide-ranging package of measures available to businesses to support them through this difficult period, we continue to keep the situation in each sector under review. Legal powers were included in the COVID-19 Bill enabling us to offer further financial support if we believe it is necessary.

■ Air Pollution: Pollution Control

Peter Aldous: [\[42012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2020 to Question 38589 on Air Pollution: Pollution Control, whether he has commissioned further analysis of the (a) economic viability and (b) practical deliverability of the WHO guideline limit for PM_{2.5}.

Peter Aldous: [\[42013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2020 to Question 38589 on Air Pollution: Pollution Control, whether he has commissioned further analysis of a pathway to achieving the WHO guideline limit for PM_{2.5}.

Rebecca Pow:

We are developing a clear evidence-based process for setting the fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) target introduced in the Environment Bill. This process will involve thorough analysis and independent expert advice, considering economic, social and technological factors. It will also involve detailed analysis to assess what additional action would be needed to achieve potential targets. Stakeholders, Parliament and the public will have the opportunity to comment on and provide input to the development of an ambitious and achievable target.

We are committed to taking action on PM_{2.5}, as it is the pollutant that has the most significant impact on health.

■ Angling: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy: [\[41156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether angling is a permissible activity during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Every citizen must stay alert to protect the NHS and save lives. From Wednesday 13 May, angling can resume in England, as long as participants are with their household or on their own and follow social distancing guidance.

John Spellar: [\[43589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what steps his Department is taking to enable the early resumption of angling.

Victoria Prentis:

Every citizen must stay alert to protect the NHS and save lives. From Wednesday 13 May, angling can resume in England, as long as participants are with their household or on their own and follow social distancing guidance.

■ Food: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[41969]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the conditions required to ease the lockdown include plans to (a) rebuild public confidence in the safety of the restaurant sector and (b) promote awareness that food handlers are key workers that are eligible for covid-19 testing.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra, alongside the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Devolved Administrations, is working closely with representatives from the food and beverage hospitality sector to support their planning towards reopening and their continued operations. This includes identifying what ongoing support businesses may need from the Government as they implement the measures required to protect workers and customers as restrictions are eased.

It is possible for many businesses to reopen safely, in a cautious way, and we welcome the reopening of food-to-go businesses, predominantly for drive thru, in line with

social distancing measures. Providing clear advice and guidance will be important to restoring confidence in restaurants, takeaways and other hospitality businesses, not only for customers but for workers too. This will be a key part of Government planning as we move towards the easing of restrictions.

This includes measures such as the Government expanding the eligibility for testing to all essential workers with symptoms of coronavirus, including those working in the food and drink industry. As a result of rapidly increasing testing capacity, we have been able to implement this and we have published advice including on how to arrange tests.

Carolyn Harris:

[42112]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on (a) the viability of the food and drink wholesale sector and (b) food provision in (i) care homes, (ii) prisons, (iii) hospitals and (iv) other public sector institutions over the next 12 months.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra is monitoring the potential impacts COVID-19 is having on the food and drink wholesale sector, in partnership with industry and other Government departments. We remain committed to working with industry to respond to these challenges as they evolve and to assess whether current support mechanisms are sufficient and effective.

Defra is working very closely with officials from the Department of Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence on ensuring food supply continues to schools, prisons, hospitals and other public sector institutions over the next 12 months. To support care homes, the Federation of

Wholesale Distributors (FWD) has set up a new online portal Food2Care (www.Food2Care.co.uk) to enable care homes to find local wholesalers, based on a postcode search. The website is also highlighted on the Care Providers Association website. This portal will help those care homes struggling to get supplies during the Covid-19 outbreak. More than 90 national and regional wholesalers have signed up to the scheme so far.

Additionally, FWD's initiative, Local Food Drops (www.localfooddrops.co.uk), has been designed to help local communities get better access to food supplies during these unprecedented times with flexible delivery and 'click and collect' options.

■ Milk: Coronavirus

Kate Osamor:

[42136]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the milk supply chain is not disrupted during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

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

At the outset of the pandemic, the Government announced a number of emergency measures to support farmers, processors, and retailers. These include designating the food sector as critical to the response, with those working in the production, processing, sale, distribution or delivery of food categorised as "key workers" and granting derogations on drivers' hours limitations.

In addition, to support milk producers, the Government announced on 17 April a temporary easing of some elements of competition law to make it easier for the dairy industry to come together to maximise production, processing and storage efficiency and ensure as much product as possible can be processed into high quality dairy products. This approach will allow the market for milk to adjust to the change in demand for milk while allowing production to be restored when shops, restaurants and pubs are able to open again. Exempted activities have been developed in conjunction with the dairy industry.

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) together with Dairy UK are launching a new £1 million campaign to drive consumption of milk and other dairy products. Running over 12 weeks, the campaign will highlight the role that milk and other dairy products play in supporting moments of personal connection during times of crisis. Defra and the devolved administrations are jointly contributing towards the financing of this campaign.

The dairy industry can access various Government backed loan schemes. The COVID-19 Business Interruption Loans scheme is available to farmers, milk buyers and milk processors. In addition, the new Bounce Back Loan scheme, which will apply to businesses including those operating in agriculture, will ensure that the smallest businesses can access up to £50,000 loans.

In recognition of the unprecedented challenges facing this sector, on 6 May 2020, Defra announced a new fund to help support those dairy farmers who have seen decreased demand due to the loss of the food service sector. The new fund will provide support for those most in need. Eligible dairy farmers in England will be entitled to up to £10,000 each, to cover 70% of their lost income during April and May to ensure they can continue to operate and sustain production capacity without impacts on animal welfare.

Public intervention for skimmed milk powder and butter continues to be available. Industry can sell skimmed milk powder and butter into public intervention when the price they would receive on the open market falls below the intervention price. This provides a floor price for dairy products. From 7 May, UK dairy processors are also eligible to apply for EU funded private storage aid in respect of skimmed milk powder, butter and cheese.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Bangladesh: Rohingya

Stephen Kinnock:

[43668]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to ensure that the Government of Bangladesh works with the international community to offer safe haven to the Rohingya refugees stranded at sea in the Bay of Bengal.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: We are monitoring the extremely concerning reports of hundreds of Rohingya still at sea in the Bay of Bengal. We continue to engage with the Government of Bangladesh, other countries in the region, UN agencies and the international community to support the safety and well-being of all Rohingya refugees. The UK supports the UN's call for a regional effort to ensure the safety of these vulnerable refugees.

The Minister of State for South Asia, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, raised the issue of Rohingya refugees stranded at sea with the Bangladesh Foreign Minister on 27 April, and also 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. Our High Commission in Kuala Lumpur continues to raise our concerns about the

situation of the Rohingya community with the Malaysian Government. 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.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

Ruth Jones: [\[43165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the EU on the repatriation of (a) British citizens and (b) UK residents overseas during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that British travellers around the globe, and British nationals who are resident overseas but wish to return home to the UK, are able to do so. We have been working closely with our European partners to support our respective repatriation efforts, including coordinated lobbying on maintaining commercial routes for nationals to return.

Ruth Jones: [\[43167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Caribbean Community on the repatriation of (a) British citizens and (b) UK residents overseas during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The welfare of British nationals remains our top priority, and we remain committed to ensuring that British travellers around the globe are able to return home. The British Government is working closely with host governments of the Caribbean Community 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. On 8 May, we have brought back more than 300 people from Jamaica and Guyana on charter flights organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However, we have supported nearly 11,000 to return home from the Caribbean via commercial means.

We are aware that there are British nationals remaining overseas in the Caribbean region and our effort is focused on supporting their return as quickly and safely as possible.

■ Calais: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas: [\[41961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 37562 on Calais: coronavirus, what support his Department is providing to its French counterparts on the ongoing sheltering operation for

displaced populations in northern France in light of its commitments under the 2018 Sandhurst Agreement.

Wendy Morton:

The Home Secretary and her department lead on and work closely with French authorities to manage the migratory pressures at our joint border, including during the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Under the terms of the 2018 Sandhurst Agreement, the UK and France have worked together to further enhance co-operation on managing the shared border. This includes strengthening co-operation around migration and facilitating access to the asylum procedure for those who seek international protection, and working to reduce the number of people crossing the border illegally, risking their own safety and lives. Following the UK-France Summit at Sandhurst in 2018, £1.1 million was committed and has since been spent to support the development of reception centres for migrants in France.

The relocation of vulnerable individuals into reception centres remains an issue of domestic responsibility for the French Government. Since the introduction of the COVID-19 measures in France on 17 March, French authorities have worked with over 600 migrants to relocate them to accommodation centres. In these centres asylum claims can be lodged, and any other urgent needs assessed.

■ Canary Islands: Coronavirus

Rosie Duffield:

[44021]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of UK citizens awaiting repatriation to the UK from the Canary Islands, and what the timeframe is for those citizens to be returned to the UK.

Wendy Morton:

Our Embassy and Consulates in Spain are in touch with and providing advice and support to those who remain and who have contacted us. We believe that the vast majority of British nationals who want to return home have now done so. The FCO does not have a central registration system for flights and British nationals will only be asked to register for flights with Corporate Travel Management (CTM) when charters have been announced for a country. Commercial flights are still available from Spain and information options are available from <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/spain/return-to-the-uk>.

■ Coronavirus: Disinformation

Henry Smith:

[41974]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs what diplomatic steps he is taking to help tackle disinformation on the covid-19 pandemic internationally.

Nigel Adams:

Transparency and accuracy of information is essential for an effective global response to the pandemic. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is leading

the UK's cross government effort to address disinformation and misinformation. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is supporting this effort. We are helping to identify disinformation narratives about the UK from foreign actors. We are working with international partners to better understand the scale, scope and impact of disinformation and help shield our citizens so they can get the right information to protect themselves and save lives. We are building international cooperation among like-minded nations to enable us to tackle the threat of disinformation.

■ Golan Heights

Neil Coyle:

[43949]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of Israeli's compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 497 on the annexation of the Golan Heights.

James Cleverly:

The UK position on the status of the Occupied Golan Heights is well-known and has not changed. In line with international law, and relevant Security Council resolutions, notably Resolutions 242 and 497, we do not recognise Israel's sovereignty over the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967, including the Golan Heights, and we do not consider them part of the territory of the State of Israel. Annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law. Any declaration of a unilateral border change goes against the foundation of the rules-based international order and the UN Charter.

■ Greece: Refugees

Daniel Zeichner:

[43045]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had since the beginning of covid-19 pandemic with (a) the European Commission and (b) the Greek Government on resettling refugees from the island of Lesbos.

Wendy Morton:

The Foreign Secretary last discussed the migration situation with the Greek Foreign Minister on 18 March, and on 22 April the Minister for Immigration Compliance signed the UK-Greece Migration Action Plan with his Greek counterpart and discussed a range of bilateral and regional migration issues.

This Migration Action Plan sets out the framework for future bilateral co-operation with Greece on migration. It includes renewed deployment of a Border Force cutter to the Aegean to carry out search and rescue; facilitation of family reunification of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, where it is in their best interests; sharing of expertise on asylum processes and migrant returns in line with international laws; and the establishment of a strategic migration dialogue.

In terms of the Greek migrant camps, we remain in close contact with the Greek authorities. We are also in regular discussions with our European partners, both

bilaterally and through multilateral channels, and continue to monitor the situation via our Embassy in Athens closely.

The UK's refugee resettlement schemes offer a safe and legal route to the UK for the most vulnerable refugees, and purposefully target those in greatest need of assistance. The Government's long-standing policy is to provide support to and resettle the most vulnerable refugees directly from conflict regions.

■ Guatemala: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[44006]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking to repatriate UK travellers stranded in Guatemala during the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

The British Embassy in Guatemala City continues to explore all possible options for the safe return of UK nationals in Guatemala, working closely with the relevant authorities. We have worked with the German, Swiss, and Spanish Embassies in country to secure seats for UK nationals on planes chartered by them. In addition, our Embassy has worked successfully with Guatemalan authorities to transport British citizens to the Mexican border for onward travel to the UK via commercial means. We will continue to provide consular support to British nationals who remain in Guatemala and require assistance, as well as with our international partners to secure seats for British nationals on future flights, including to European countries where commercial routes to the UK are still available.

■ Huawei: 5G

Dan Jarvis:

[43929]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the UK's relationship with the United States of the review by the United States National Security Council on Huawei's involvement in the UK's 5G network.

Wendy Morton:

The relationship between the UK and US remains solid, including on intelligence sharing. In relation to telecoms security, we share the same understanding of the threat and have the same overall objectives: increasing global standards and diversity of suppliers. We will continue to work closely together on this to address what is a global challenge. The UK has a special and enduring relationship with the US based on our long history and commitment to shared values, and that will continue to be the case.

■ Jagtar Singh Johal

John Spellar: [43833]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when his Department last made representations to the Indian Government on the case of Jagtar Singh Johal.

Nigel Adams:

We regularly make representations on Mr Johal's case to the Government of India. On 29 April, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister of State for South Asia, raised Mr Johal's case with the Indian High Commissioner to the UK. On 30 April, the Minister also wrote to the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs regarding Mr Johal's case.

■ Jerusalem

Neil Coyle: [43948]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of Israeli's compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 476 and 478 on the annexation of Jerusalem.

James Cleverly:

Our position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: The UK recognises Israel's "de facto authority" over West Jerusalem. But in line with Security Council Resolution 242 and subsequent Council resolutions, we regard East Jerusalem as under Israeli military occupation. The UK believes that Jerusalem's final status must be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states.

■ Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Steve McCabe: [41891]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if she will place copies of the 2019-20 and 2020-21 Memoranda of Understanding between her Department and the Palestinian Authority in the Library.

James Cleverly:

Our 2019-20 Memoranda of Understanding with the Palestinian Authority were published on Dev-tracker (<https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-GOV-1-300050/documents>) and copies were placed in the Library. The 2020-21 Memoranda of Understanding will be published on Dev-tracker in due course.

■ Spain: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[\[44007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans he has to support the repatriation of vulnerable UK travellers in Spain during the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

We have been working hard to help as many British Nationals (BNs) as possible return home, working with tour operators, airlines, local authorities and other diplomatic missions. Our efforts have enabled more than 200,000 BNs to fly home from Spain. The Spanish Government has ensured that some hotel accommodation remains available and although availability is very limited, commercial flights are still operating. Our Embassy continues to provide consular support to those remaining BNs who wish to return, including advice on medical support and financial assistance. The new loan scheme has made it easier for BNs to access financial support when booking onto flights.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks and Tobacco: Coronavirus

Alex Norris:

[\[38662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has made any assessment on levels of (a) tobacco and (b) alcohol use during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

It is too early to make an effective assessment of the levels of tobacco and alcohol use during the COVID-19 outbreak. Data on this is published annually, and the Department is investigating other external sources of data and surveys to track indicators of behaviour change.

■ Allergies: Drugs

Caroline Lucas:

[\[34960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the supply of (a) Zaditen tablets, (b) Ketotifen Zaditen Elixir and (c) other Ketotifen products; and what steps his Department is taking to secure the supply of those medicines.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is aware that Alfasigma, the sole licensed supplier of ketotifen tablets and oral syrup in the United Kingdom made the decision to withdraw this product from the UK market during 2019 due to commercial reasons.

Following ongoing discussions between the Department and Alfasigma, the company have since reversed this decision and informed us that they will be reintroducing

ketotifen tablets and oral solution to the UK. Supplies will be available again during April 2020. In the interim, supplies of unlicensed ketotifen products from abroad have been made available by specialist importer companies. Information about this issue and the availability of the unlicensed product has been communicated to the National Health Service and relevant patient groups.

■ Cancer: Health Services

Alex Norris:

[41141]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to NICE Guideline 12, Suspected cancer: recognition and referral, published in June 2015, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of patients with suspected cancer that have their first consultant appointment within two weeks of an urgent GP referral.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: The first published data covering the period of the COVID-19 outbreak for the month of March will be available during May.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers:

[39493]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is the Government's policy that hospital patients will not be discharged to care homes unless those patients have tested negative for covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: We announced in our Adult Social Care Action Plan, on 15 April 2020, that testing will be provided to all care home residents before they are discharged from hospital into a care home.

For some individuals who have suffered from COVID-19, we expect that a period of specialist National Health Service support will be needed. Given the total length of stay for these individuals, most will be able to transfer directly to the appropriate social care setting with 'COVID-free' status. However, a small number of people may be discharged from the NHS within the 14-day period from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms needing ongoing social care. Some care providers will be able to accommodate these individuals through effective isolation strategies or cohorting policies. If appropriate isolation/cohorted care is not available with a local care provider, the individual's local authority will be asked to secure alternative appropriate accommodation and care for the remainder of the required isolation period.

All residents, whether COVID-19-positive or not, can be safely cared for in a care home if appropriate infection control, isolation and cohorting advice is followed, as set out in the 'Admission and Care of Residents during COVID-19 Incident in a Care Home' guidance published on 2 April 2020.

This is an unprecedented global pandemic and we will continue to review our guidance in line with scientific advice.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[41567]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the announcement by the Government on 28 April 2020 that care home residents will be able to access tests for covid-19, what steps he is taking to provide the care home sector with (a) additional infrastructure and (b) guidance to deliver those tests.

Helen Whately:

The Government has committed to offering a test to every resident in every care home in England, whether they have symptoms or not. We are ramping up capacity with over 450 care homes to receive deliveries on 3 May of over 7,500 individual swab kits. The whole-home programme will be supported by a bespoke digital portal for adult social care testing and a specific helpline. Once the digital portal is in place, we aim to deliver up to 30,000 tests a day to care homes. Detailed and clinically approved guidance and tutorial video to guide staff through the swab collection process has been produced for care home managers.

Dan Jarvis:

[42037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to ensure the health and safety of (a) staff and (b) residents in care homes where covid-19 patients have been transferred from hospitals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 May 2020]: The safety of residents and staff is a priority. We announced in our Adult Social Care Action Plan, on 15 April 2020, that testing will be provided to all care home residents before they are discharged from hospital into a care home.

A small number of people may be discharged from the National Health Service within the 14-day period from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms needing ongoing social care. Some care providers will be able to accommodate these individuals through effective isolation strategies or cohorting policies. If appropriate isolation/cohorted care is not available with a local care provider, the individual's local authority will be asked to secure alternative appropriate accommodation and care for the remainder of the required isolation period.

All staff with symptoms will be tested before going into care homes. On 17 April Public Health England published guidance on 'How to Work Safely in Care Homes'. This includes advice on what measures to take in relation to physical distancing in various scenarios.

This is an unprecedented global pandemic and we will continue to review our guidance in line with scientific advice.

■ Care Homes: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[43065]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent financial support his Department has allocated to care homes.

Helen Whately:

We have set out a comprehensive action plan to support the adult social care sector in England throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, including ramping up testing, overhauling the way personal protective equipment is being delivered to care homes.

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

This funding is part of the Government's commitment to ensure the National Health Service and social care system, and other public services, have the resources required to tackle COVID-19. The Government will continue to monitor pressures in the NHS and local government and will keep future funding under review.

■ Carers: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[40978]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that adult social care service providers are (a) identifying and (b) referring vulnerable young carers for support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Government has published guidance for both schools and local authorities on how best to support to families and protect vulnerable children during the COVID-19 outbreak. This is available on GOV. UK. Local authority duties to assess the needs of young carers, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, are unchanged.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, adult social care providers and services should still be maintaining their responsibilities under the Act to ensure young carers are identified and referred to appropriate support if needed.

Rachael Maskell:

[43066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to ensure that unpaid carers are eligible for covid-19 testing.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: As of 4 May, the Government has included unpaid carers in its latest list of essential workers and those prioritised for COVID-19 testing in England. The list is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#list-of-essential-workers-and-those-prioritised-for-testing-england-only>

■ Chemical Weapons: Wiltshire

Kenny MacAskill:

[\[38036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what drugs were used to treat people exposed to Novichok in Wiltshire in 2019; and what testing those drugs were subject to.

Jo Churchill:

Only medicines licensed for use either as recognised treatments for organophosphate poisoning, or ordinarily used for supportive care in normal resuscitative and intensive care practice were used to treat those symptomatic people recognised as having been exposed to Novichok nerve agent.

For all licensed medicines, robust scientific data is required to demonstrate that the products meet acceptable standards of safety, quality and efficacy before they are placed on the market.

■ Coronavirus: Cancer

Alex Norris:

[\[38648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has carried out increased monitoring on cancer (a) diagnosis and (b) treatment statistics during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

The situation is being closely monitored by the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement.

The first published data covering the period of the COVID-19 outbreak for the month of March will be available through the Cancer Waiting Times system during May.

Alex Norris:

[\[39012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that people with potential cancer symptoms seek help from a GP during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Norris:

[\[39013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that GPs continue to refer patients for appropriate cancer diagnostic tests during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: The National Health Service has continued to provide urgent and emergency services throughout the outbreak and has run the 'Open for Business' media campaign to encourage people with potentially serious health issues, such as cancer, to continue to seek medical advice and attend essential appointments.

Referrals for cancer treatment from general practitioners (GPs) to hospitals continue and the NHS is working hard to increase these to pre-COVID-19 levels. To assist this, technological solutions are being implemented so that cancer patients can attend GP and specialist appointments without the need to leave their homes, through the use of telephone or video consultations.

■ Coronavirus: Death

Mr Clive Betts:

[40507]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date he plans to publish on a daily basis non-hospital deaths with covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: From 29 April, figures for deaths include all cases where there is a positive confirmed test for COVID-19. The figures include deaths with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 in all settings, not just those in hospital, and this provides us with a single figure on an equivalent basis for the whole of the United Kingdom.

These UK figures are compiled from validated data provided by each of the four nations of the UK. Figures from Health Protection Scotland, Public Health Wales and the Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland) have always included tested cases outside hospital. Figures for England from 29 April onwards are provided by Public Health England and draw together several different data sources, including data from NHS England and NHS Improvement, to produce this broader measure.

This approach allows us to compile deaths data on a daily basis using up-to-date figures across all settings.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Liz Saville Roberts:

[41557]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the terms of reference for the inquiry into BAME covid-19 deaths will be announced.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: We are very concerned by the apparent disproportionate number of people from minority ethnic backgrounds who have died, both within the National Health Service and overall. We have asked Public Health England to complete a rapid review to understand how COVID-19 may be having an impact on different ethnic groups, and other groups of concern. The Terms of Reference will be announced in due course.

To complement this rapid review, the National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation issued a joint call on 22 April for research proposals to investigate emerging evidence of an association between ethnicity and COVID-19 incidence and adverse health outcomes.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[41559]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish data on the ethnicity of people (a) infected and (b) who have died of covid-19 by (i) age and (ii) English region in (A) hospitals and (B) in the community; whether demographic data on covid-19 deaths can be provided in real-time; and how that data will be collected.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Data on those infected with COVID-19 are collected by Public Health England (PHE) for new diagnoses and hospitalised patients. Standard recording practice across laboratory systems requires recording of only minimal data (such as date of birth and name) as these records are not intended for disease surveillance purposes.

PHE has begun a rapid review to better understand how COVID-19 may be having an impact on different ethnic groups. As part of this review, PHE is matching thousands of laboratory records of COVID-19 cases to other health records to draw down accurate data on ethnicity, age, sex and geographical region. The first results will be published by the end of May.

NHS England and NHS Improvement lead on reporting deaths with confirmed COVID-19 in hospital. They publish a daily summary that includes a breakdown by ethnicity which can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-daily-deaths/>

The Office for National Statistics publishes provisional counts of the number of deaths registered in England and Wales, including deaths involving COVID-19, by age, sex and region, in the latest weeks for which data are available. These data can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsregisteredweeklyinenglandandwalesprovisional/weekending24april2020>

The Public Health England COVID-19 dashboard shows the number of cases confirmed by NHS/PHE labs for each region and upper tier local authority in England. The dashboard can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-track-coronavirus-cases>

■ **Coronavirus: Hospitals**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[42897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it the policy of the Government to use the Nightingale temporary hospitals as isolation hospitals for covid-19 patients so that other hospitals can prioritise patients without covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: The establishment of the Nightingale hospitals was an unprecedented response to an unprecedented challenge and they provided extra capacity to manage potential surges in demand due to COVID-19.

Now that we are coming through the peak of infection rates, it has been decided that the National Health Service currently has sufficient capacity to deal with anticipated demand.

As such, the Nightingale hospital in London has been placed on standby, but retains the capacity to stand up again should the need arise.

Work is underway to consider how the Nightingale Hospitals' role may be adapted as the NHS seeks to resume activity that had to be paused in the first phase of our response to the pandemic.

The national Nightingale team will work with regions and host trusts to develop and assure regional proposals for the potential ongoing availability and function of the Nightingale Hospitals.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[38525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the continued delivery of the national screening programme during the covid-19 pandemic.

Jo Churchill:

To protect patients and staff during this pandemic, some clinical services are rescheduling routine invitations or appointments to a later date, including routine screening appointments. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with service providers to ensure that plans are in place to reschedule and restore services as soon as is safely possible to do so, in order to minimise any risk to individual patients.

NHS England and NHS Improvement recommend that anyone experiencing any unusual symptoms should contact their general practice as soon as possible for advice.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Julian Sturdy:

[\[39652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that any UK-based research breakthroughs on a covid-19 vaccine are prioritised for mass production by the UK's pharmaceutical sector.

Jo Churchill:

The Government has established a Vaccines Taskforce to coordinate the work going on across Government, academia and industry to accelerate the development and manufacture of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Work is proceeding at pace, with the support of industry and academic partners, to ensure that the United Kingdom has capacity to deliver across different vaccine types while those vaccines are still under development.

As the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has said, we are working closely with the industry-led BioIndustry Association Manufacturing Taskforce. It brings together a range of businesses keen to use their expertise to ensure the UK can produce a vaccine at scale, once it has been found.

Ian Paisley:

[40608]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking with UK companies to support the development of a vaccine for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

On 17 April 2020 the Government announced a new Vaccines Taskforce (VTF) to drive forward the rapid development and production of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The VTF is supporting efforts to rapidly develop a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible by providing industry and research institutions with the resources and support they need. This includes reviewing regulations and scaling up manufacturing, so that when a vaccine becomes available, it can be produced quickly and in mass quantities.

The taskforce is also working closely with the Bioindustry Association which has set up an industry-led group, to accelerate vaccine development and manufacturing.

■ **Coronavirus: Young People**

Mhairi Black:

[43683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that covid-19 social distancing advice is accessible to young people.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England has worked with members of the National Health Service Youth Forum and young 'I Will' Ambassadors to create COVID-19 guidance that is more young people friendly. The tailored guidance adapts the advice, resources and language to be more relevant to young people aged 11-19 years. The involvement of young people, including those that are shielding, demonstrates the double benefits of youth social action.

Guidance for young people on shielding and protecting people most likely to become unwell if they catch COVID-19 has been published on the GOV.UK website.

Guidance on social distancing for young people will be published shortly.

The published guidance is available to view at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-on-protecting-people-most-likely-to-get-unwell-from-coronavirus-shielding-young-peoples-version>

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Written Questions

Barbara Keeley: [41941]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 39524, for what reasons his Department is unable to provide a full response at this time.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 6 May 2020]: A regularly updated list of which local authorities have informed the Department that they have taken the decision to operate under the Care Act Easements introduced by the Coronavirus Act 2020 is publicly available at the following link:

www.cqc.org.uk/CareActEasements

■ Endoscopy: Coronavirus

Holly Lynch: [43069]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the resumption of endoscopy service provision during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The National Health Service has continued to provide urgent and emergency services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure patient safety and continuation of service, local systems and Cancer Alliances are providing diagnostic and surgical provision through cancer hubs and contracted independent sector hospitals.

Diagnostics and treatment are actively being brought back up to pre-pandemic levels and referrals into services are being encouraged through campaigns such as the 'Open for Business' media campaign to encourage people with potentially serious health issues, such as cancer, to continue to seek medical advice and attend essential appointments.

■ Epilepsy: Cannabis

Sir Mike Penning: [39502]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to maintain private prescriptions of medical cannabis to vulnerable children with intractable epilepsy during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Mike Penning: [39503]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support his Department is providing to families with severely epileptic children who are reliant on private prescriptions for medical cannabis and whose ability to fundraise for those prescriptions is limited by covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Sir Mike Penning:

[39504]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide temporary financial support to the families of vulnerable children with intractable epilepsy who cannot (a) access or (b) fund-raise for private prescriptions for medical cannabis during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement

Sir Mike Penning:

[39505]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the ability of families of vulnerable children with intractable epilepsy to a) fund and b) maintain access to private prescriptions for medical cannabis; and if he will make statement.

Jo Churchill:

As part of our concerted national efforts to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department is working closely with industry and others in the supply chain to help ensure patients can access the medicines they need, whether on the National Health Service or privately. The supply of unlicensed cannabis-based products is no different. The Government has also recently changed its policy on imports, so that patients can access their prescribed medicines more quickly and be better assured their treatment will not be interrupted.

No assessment has been made of the effect of the COVID-19 outbreak on the ability of this patient group to maintain funding to private prescriptions for unlicensed medicinal cannabis, and no additional funding is being provided beyond the financial package to provide additional support for public services, individuals and businesses experiencing financial difficulties during COVID-19.

For those who rely on fundraising events to access private medicines, events which do not involve people gathering in one place may still go ahead provided they comply with Government policy and guidelines which is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charities-act-2016-new-fundraising-rules>

And further advice on fundraising is available at the following link:

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/more-from-us/news/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-fundraising>

■ Exercise Cygnus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[37419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) public and (b) private sector organisations contributed to Exercise Cygnus; and how many of those organisations have been consulted following that exercise on its findings and recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Exercise Cygnus was a national level pandemic influenza exercise involving Ministers and officials from the Department of Health and Social Care; other Government

departments; devolved administrations; NHS England; Public Health England and local agencies.

The lessons identified from the exercise have been considered across Government and shared with participants and local pandemic preparedness planners. Lessons identified from previous influenza pandemics, and exercises such as Exercise Cygnus, continue to inform the development of pandemic preparedness plans.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[37420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish (a) the findings of Exercise Cygnus 2016 and (b) information on which recommendations have been implemented.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not routinely publish reports on exercises. This is to allow Ministers, officials and emergency planners to develop policies and plans while ensuring that the full, candid and proper deliberation of lessons identified is not influenced or impacted by the possibility of public exposure.

Working across Government and with stakeholders, the lessons from Exercise Cygnus have informed our preparedness, such as development of draft legislation support to the response to a future influenza pandemic, and strengthening health sector plans to surge and flex beyond normal operations. Learning the lessons from preparedness exercises, as well as other sources of expertise has ensured that the United Kingdom remains well prepared for infectious disease outbreaks.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[37421]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he first became aware of the findings of Exercise Cygnus carried out in 2016; and what steps he has taken to implement the recommendations arising from that exercise.

Jo Churchill:

Pandemic Influenza is identified as the most significant natural hazard risk on the Government's National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was informed of this and the work underway to develop, and manage, United Kingdom pandemic influenza preparedness following Exercise Cygnus upon assuming office in 2018.

Working across Government and with stakeholders, the lessons from Exercise Cygnus have informed our preparedness, such as development of draft legislation support to the response to a future influenza pandemic and strengthening health sector plans to surge and flex beyond normal operations.

Clive Efford:

[38414]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) list the recommendations made by Exercise Cygnus in 2016, (b) set out those recommendations that have been implemented by the Government and (c) provide the reasons for not implementing those remaining recommendations.

Justin Madders:

[38614]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the recommendations of Exercise Cygnus in 2016; and if he will publish those recommendations.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not routinely publish reports on exercises.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[38420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it the policy of the Government to publish all recommendations resulting from Exercise Cygnus in 2016 other than those which directly affect national security; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: The Department does not routinely publish reports on exercises. This is to allow Ministers, officials and emergency planners to develop policies and plans while ensuring that the full, candid and proper deliberation of lessons identified is not influenced or impacted by the possibility of public exposure.

Working across Government and with stakeholders, the lessons from Exercise Cygnus have informed development of preparedness plans for a future influenza pandemic. Learning the lessons from preparedness exercises, as well as other sources of expertise has ensured that the United Kingdom remains well prepared for infectious disease outbreaks.

■ Health Services: Coronavirus

Dr Ben Spencer:

[41599]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure support for (a) routine care and (b) all other NHS services continues during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

As a result of the measures put in place to tackle COVID-19, we now appear to have passed the peak of new cases being reported and it has been decided to begin the 'reset' of services across the National Health Service. This reset will involve the release and redeployment of some of the treatment capacity that could have been needed while the number of COVID-19 patients was rising sharply.

All NHS organisations have therefore been asked to step-up non-COVID-19 services as soon as possible, starting with the most urgent. Decisions on how to do this will be taken locally, based on local demands for health services. The NHS issued guidance to NHS service providers on 29 April outlining the next steps for the NHS response to COVID-19.

■ Heart Diseases: Health Services

Dr Lisa Cameron: [43956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has made for heart failure patients to resume access to standard levels of care following a reduction in the level of covid-19 related cases.

Dr Lisa Cameron: [43957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that patients with heart and circulatory diseases are able to safely access (a) standard levels of care and (b) specialist services in the community during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The suspension of non-urgent elective operations did not apply to emergency admissions, urgent cancer treatment and other clinically urgent care.

As a result of the measures put in place to tackle COVID-19, we now appear to be passing the peak of new cases and it has been decided to release and redeploy some of the treatment capacity that could have been needed while the number of COVID-19 patients was rising sharply.

All National Health Service organisations have therefore been asked to step-up non-COVID-19 services as soon as possible, starting with the most urgent.

The NHS is running an 'Open for Business' media campaign, encouraging all patients in need of urgent or emergency medical care to seek appropriate treatment including, where appropriate, attendance at accident and emergency.

This media campaign specifically targets heart attack patients, as well as anyone else with a potentially serious health condition.

■ Hospital Beds: Coronavirus

Gareth Thomas: [37403]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to publish figures relating to people that have been discharged from hospital after recovering from covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

The latest available data on the number of COVID-19 cases can be viewed at the following link:

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

Cumulative case counts include patients who are currently unwell, those that have recovered and those that have died.

Public Health England is not currently publishing 'patients recovered' due to limitations in the quality of the data provided.

■ Medical Treatments

Alex Cunningham:

[43011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure the public seek care and treatment in the event of (a) a heart attack and (b) other urgent conditions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: The National Health Service is running an 'Open for Business' media campaign, encouraging all patients in need of urgent or emergency medical care to seek appropriate treatment including, where appropriate, attendance at accident and emergency.

This media campaign specifically targets cancer, heart attack and stroke patients, as well as anyone else with a potentially serious health condition.

Mike Hill:

[43135]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for (a) cancer and (b) other life-saving treatments to be resumed.

Edward Argar:

The suspension of non-urgent elective operations did not apply to emergency admissions, urgent cancer treatment and other clinically urgent care.

The Government has been clear from the start of the pandemic that hospitals providing cancer care, including radiotherapy, should keep doing so where it is safe for the individual patient. This is in line with guidance from professional bodies such as the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

Cancer Alliances across England are working hard to make sure there is enough capacity for cancer treatments. They are also urged to make full use of the negotiated deal with the independent sector to make sure essential cancer treatments and diagnostics can go ahead.

■ Mental Illness: Coronavirus

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[43096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people with severe mental illness can register as extremely vulnerable to get access to essential food and medication supplies through the NHS volunteer scheme during the lockdown.

Helen Whately:

The NHS Volunteer Responders programme is available to anyone in England with a mental health illness if they are having issues accessing supermarkets or for picking up prescriptions. Whilst it was originally designed to support the shielded population, it is not limited to this cohort, and it is open to wider vulnerable groups who may have issues accessing essentials.

If a vulnerable person needs support in this way, they can either self-refer, or can be referred into the programme through a number of routes, including health professionals and local authorities.

■ NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

Judith Cummins:

[43050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) all, (b) agency and (c) NHS wholly owned subsidiary staff working in NHS acute hospital settings will be eligible for the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: The Government is in the process of setting up a life assurance scheme for frontline health and social care staff in England who contract COVID-19 during the course of their work.

The scheme is non-contributory and pays a £60,000 lump sum where staff die as a result of COVID-19 and had been recently working in frontline roles and locations where personal care is provided to individuals who have recently contracted COVID-19. The scheme is also available to staff whose duties require them to be present in a frontline National Health Service or social care setting where COVID-19 is present. This includes agency staff and staff employed by NHS wholly owned subsidiary companies, providing their work requires them to be present in frontline NHS or social care settings where COVID-19 is present.

In relation to the NHS, the scheme covers frontline staff who are employed by a statutory NHS organisation, or who work for organisations that support the delivery of NHS services or who work on an NHS contract.

■ NHS and Social Services: Coronavirus

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[43098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what psychological support his Department is offering to (a) NHS and (b) social services (i) staff and (ii) volunteers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Department has commissioned NHS England to develop a comprehensive emotional, psychological and practical support package for National Health Service staff during and following the COVID-19 response. This currently includes free access to well-being apps, a dedicated support helpline and text service, and a separate helpline offering bereavement support. The Department is working with partners to extend both helplines to the social care workforce and will also be introducing an app and website aimed at providing timely information for the adult social care workforce.

NHS and social care organisations are continuing to support the psychological welfare of their volunteer staff, in line with the latest health, safety and wellbeing guidance.

■ NHS Trusts: Staff

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[43095\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many wellbeing teams there were in each NHS trust in (a) 2010 and (b) 2019.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[\[43097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many wellbeing members of staff there were in each NHS trust in (a) 2010 and (b) 2019.

Helen Whately:

The information requested on the number of wellbeing teams and members of staff in each National Health Service trust is not collected or held centrally.

■ NHS Walk-in Centres: Rother Valley

Alexander Stafford:

[\[43215\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to establish a walk-in medical centre in Rother Valley.

Edward Argar:

There are currently no plans to establish a walk-in centre in Rother Valley or the Rotherham area. Rother Valley area has a good general practice coverage and general practitioner (GP) access survey results which compare well with other areas in England.

The Government is committed to improving access to general practice services and everyone will soon be able to access routine GP appointments at evenings and weekends, as part of our plan for a seven-day National Health Service.

■ NHS: Conditions of Employment

Judith Cummins:

[\[43051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether staff that are (a) newly recruited and (b) returning to work in NHS frontline settings during the covid-19 outbreak have (i) standard NHS terms and conditions of employment, (ii) access to NHS pensions and (iii) access to other associated benefits.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: Both newly recruited staff, and staff returning to the National Health Service during the COVID-19 outbreak, where they take up employment alongside existing NHS staff, will be employed on standard NHS terms and conditions of service. Staff will also have access to the NHS Pension Scheme subject to them satisfying scheme eligibility criteria. Many of those who have retired are not permitted by the rules of the NHS Pension Scheme to re-join on their return to work.

In relation to other associated benefits, the Government is in the process of setting up a life assurance scheme for frontline health and social care staff in England who contract COVID-19 during the course of their work.

■ NHS: Contracts

Caroline Lucas: [\[41023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Exercise of Commissioning Functions by the National Health Service Commissioning Board (Coronavirus) Directions 2020, if he will provide details of the types of services that private companies will provide following those directions.

Caroline Lucas: [\[41024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Exercise of Commissioning Functions by the National Health Service Commissioning Board (Coronavirus) Directions 2020, how payments are to be made to private companies for services provided under contracts entered into them with NHS England; and whether those payments are (a) nationally or (b) locally negotiated.

Caroline Lucas: [\[41025\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide details of where the website which NHS England is required to maintain under regulation 4(1) of The National Health Service (Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition) (No. 2) Regulations 2013 can be found; and if he will take steps to ensure that a record of contracts entered into by NHS England with independent providers pursuant to paragraph 3(2)(a) of The Exercise of Commissioning Functions by the National Health Service Commissioning Board (Coronavirus) Directions 2020 will be published on that website, including in relation to each contract the same details as required by regulation 9(2) of those regulations.

Edward Argar:

Under the Exercise of Commissioning Functions by the National Health Service Commissioning Board (Coronavirus) Directions 2020, NHS England's arrangements with independent sector hospital operators relates to the delivery of some or all of the following services for NHS patients:

- Inpatient respiratory care to COVID-19 patients needing oxygen therapy, non-invasive ventilation and mechanical ventilation in intensive care;
- Urgent, time-dependent National Health Service elective care services, to help maintain priority elective and cancer pathways as the pressure builds from COVID-19 related admissions;
- Diagnostic capacity, in collaboration with the NHS, to help maintain urgent priority elective and cancer pathways;
- Inpatient non-elective care to NHS patients to help free up bed capacity in NHS hospitals; and

- For those operators to make their staff, facilities and equipment available for deployment as necessary to support the NHS response to COVID-19 in those and other settings as required.

NHS England has also entered into contracts to secure and flexibly co-ordinate additional mobile CT scanner capacity across England during the national COVID-19 crisis.

Independent sector hospital providers will be reimbursed for their operating and support costs incurred in providing the required services, at cost, verified on an open-book basis. Payment under the CT scanning contracts is on the basis of an agreed day rate per manned scanner.

The basis of payment in both cases is England-wide and has been negotiated by NHS England centrally.

NHS England will ensure that details of the contracts it has entered into under the 2020 Directions are published on the GOV.UK website in accordance with regulation 4(1) of The National Health Service (Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition) (No. 2) Regulations 2013 at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Rosie Cooper:

[38879]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 for his Department's policies on reporting the deaths of NHS staff following occupational exposure to covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 27 April 2020]: The Department has agreed with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that National Health Service and social care employers will be reminded of the requirement to report dangerous occurrences, cases of disease and work-related fatalities to the HSE under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) regulations.

■ NHS: Mental Health

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan:

[43109]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what impact assessment he has undertaken on the effect of the increased pressure on NHS staff on staff mental wellbeing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

We have anticipated that National Health Service staff will potentially face significant pressure during COVID-19 response. The Department has urgently commissioned NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a comprehensive package of

emotional, psychological, and practical support for NHS staff during and following COVID-19 response.

Details of the support available as a part of this package are online at the following link:

people.nhs.uk/help/

The package includes free access to several mental health and wellbeing apps, virtual staff common rooms for mutual support, a dedicated staff support helpline and a separate helpline offering bereavement support.

■ NHS: Recruitment

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[43117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the average time taken is for an applicant to the NHS Bringing back staff campaign to rejoin the workforce.

Helen Whately:

The Department has worked closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement to support staff who previously left the National Health Service workforce and wish to aid the response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The Bring Back Scheme process is designed to deploy returning healthcare professionals to local trusts and healthcare employers where they are needed most. The final decision to employ a returning professional lies with the employing organisation.

There is no average figure available for the time taken to complete pre-employment checks and to be deployed. However, NHS England and NHS Improvement expects this process to take a minimum of 7-10 days.

■ NHS: Rother Valley

Alexander Stafford: [\[43217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the change in the level of spending on NHS services in Rother Valley constituency since 2015.

Edward Argar:

Spending data for Rother Valley constituency is not available.

■ NHS: Voluntary Work

Sir John Hayes: [\[40979\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to provide NHS volunteers to help support vulnerable families during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[41209\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to provide NHS volunteers to help support vulnerable families.

Helen Whately:

607,074 NHS Volunteer Responders have completed the necessary identity checks to begin helping those most vulnerable, and as of 1 May, volunteers have completed 82,385 tasks.

NHS Volunteer Responders can provide a range of support, including collecting shopping, medication or other essential supplies for someone close to their home, providing telephone support to individuals at risk of loneliness as a consequence of isolation, and patient transport support.

The programme is now accepting self-referrals and hon. Members are also able to refer vulnerable people to the programme to receive support from the NHS Volunteer Responders. This can be done by completing an online referral form via the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) website or by calling the RVS call centre.

■ Notifiable Diseases: Chickenpox

Chris Green:

[\[42083\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason chickenpox is not a notifiable disease in England.

Jo Churchill:

In England, notifiable diseases are outlined under the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010.

When the regulation was created, 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.

■ Nurses: Qualifications

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[43587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to reduce the (a) administrative cost and (b) bureaucratic burden resulting from the annual re validation process for nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: Revalidation supports public protection by requiring nurses, nursing associates and midwives to demonstrate their ability to practise safely and effectively throughout their career. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) requires registrants to revalidate every three years by submitting a range of

evidence demonstrating their skills and adherence to the NMC Code of professional standards and behaviours.

On 30 March the Department laid an emergency Statutory Instrument allowing the NMC to respond to the pandemic by adapting some of its operating procedures. The NMC has extended revalidation application dates for registrants due to revalidate in March, April, May or June this year. The extended timeframe aims to ease the immediate pressures on registrants working in frontline services and reduce the incidence of lapsed registrations.

■ Patients: Travel

Alex Norris: **[41145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to support patients' travel arrangements to access hospitals that have no confirmed cases of covid-19.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: Guidance has been issued to the National Health Service on patient transport services at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0035-patient-transport-services-27-March-2020.pdf>

This guidance is being updated and will reflect changes to the provision of all clinical services including those at hospitals that have no confirmed cases of COVID-19.

■ Pharmacy: Finance

Alexander Stafford: **[42224]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has for the future funding of community pharmacies.

Jo Churchill:

In July 2019, we set out our landmark five-year Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) deal to deliver an expanded role for community pharmacy. The deal commits £2.592 billion per year to community pharmacy from 2019-20 to 2023-24. This amounts to almost £13 billion across the five years.

We set out that we would reprioritise funding, moving to a more service based contractual framework. The Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to work with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee to develop and deliver this joint vision. A more detailed breakdown of the funding can be found in the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819601/cpcf-2019-to-2024.pdf

■ Social Services

Caroline Lucas:

[41020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for this policies of the recommendations made in the Carers UK Report, Behind Closed Doors; and whether he has plans to make testing for covid-19 available to unpaid carers.

Helen Whately:

We recognise the crucial role unpaid carers play, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak, and acknowledge the issues raised in Carers UK's recent report.

We have published guidance for unpaid carers, which provides carers with general advice, including advice on infection control, links to other information and support and advice on caring where someone has symptoms. It is available on GOV.UK. New guidance for young carers will also be available shortly.

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

We have also provided funding to extend Carers UK's information and advice service during the COVID-19 outbreak.

On testing, unpaid carers can now access a test when they need it. Booking the test has been made simpler via a new online system on GOV.UK. Unpaid carers can book a test directly for themselves or members of their household who are experiencing symptoms.

We will continue to work closely with carers organisations including Carers UK to identify further solutions to support carers.

■ Social Services: Children and Young People

Alexander Stafford:

[41208]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that adult social care (a) identifies and (b) refers vulnerable young carers for support.

Helen Whately:

The Government has published guidance for both schools and local authorities on how best to support to families and protect vulnerable children during COVID-19. This is available on GOV. UK. Local authority duties to assess the needs of young carers, under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, are unchanged.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, adult social care providers and services should still be maintaining their responsibilities under the Act to ensure young carers are identified and referred to appropriate support if needed.

■ Social Services: Living Wage

Fleur Anderson: [43768]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, will he bring forward legislative proposals to introduce a statutory requirement for care workers to receive a real living wage.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: We are incredibly proud of social care workers and are determined to do everything we can to show they are truly valued. The National Minimum Wage and Living Wage apply across social care, and we expect local authorities to work with providers to determine a fair rate of pay.

■ Surgery: Rother Valley

Alexander Stafford: [43212]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many NHS surgery appointments were cancelled in Rother Valley constituency in the last year for which figures are available.

Edward Argar:

This data is not available in the format requested.

HOME OFFICE

■ Asylum

Alyn Smith: [37985]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many refugees have been resettled in the UK in each of the last three months.

Alyn Smith: [37986]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many refugees below the age of 16 have been resettled in the UK in each of the last three months.

Alyn Smith: [37987]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many refugees whose applications for resettlement in the UK have been granted by her Department have been reunited with their family in each of the last three months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is committed to publishing data in an orderly way as part of the regular quarterly Immigration Statistics, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. These can be found at www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistic

The next set of figures will be in the quarterly release on 21 May 2020. These figures will include the number of people resettled in the period January to March 2020 and

will also include a breakdown of minors arriving under each scheme. We do not publish a breakdown of resettlement family reunifications.

The arrival of refugees under our schemes is currently impacted by travel restrictions globally. As a result, our current planned arrivals will not happen as originally scheduled. We are closely monitoring the situation and expect resettlements to resume when conditions allow.

■ Asylum: Afghanistan

Seema Malhotra:

[37685]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on providing (a) refuge and (b) asylum to the (i) Sikh and (ii) Hindu communities from Afghanistan.

Chris Philp:

It was appalling to hear of the attack conducted against a Sikh Gurdwara in Kabul on 25 March and the subsequent attack on the funeral procession the following day. We are deeply concerned about any attacks which target innocent people based on their beliefs; religious minorities should never be a target. Freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental right, and the UK is firmly committed to protecting ethnic and religious minority groups around the world. We are clear that all ethnic and religious groups have equal rights and an important role to play in Afghan society.

Whilst we sympathise with people in many difficult situations around the world, we are not bound to consider asylum claims from people overseas. Those who need international protection should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety.

The UK's refugee resettlement schemes do offer a route for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognised refugees in need of protection, who have fled their country of origin. Through these schemes, the UK prioritises the most vulnerable refugees regardless of race, religion or ethnicity and we do not discriminate in favour of, or against, any group. We work closely with UNHCR, which has well-established procedures and criteria for identifying refugees they consider to be suitable for resettlement, taking into account their protection needs. Apart from the criteria we set for each scheme, we do not seek to influence which cases are referred to us by UNHCR.

■ Asylum: Finance

Alex Sobel:

[43752]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will set asylum support at 70 per cent of universal credit.

Chris Philp:

We are currently reviewing the level of the cash allowances, as we do each year, to ensure that these meet the essential living needs of asylum seekers. The level of the cash allowances is not linked to Universal Credit.

■ British Nationality: Young People

Dr Matthew Offord:[\[34968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timeframe is for her Department's decision on the level of the citizenship application fee for young people.

Chris Philp:

The Secretary of State for the Home Department has been granted permission to appeal against the High Court Ruling of 19th December 2019. While the case remains on-going we continue to charge Child Registration fees as set out in the Fees Regulations.

The Home Office notes the Court's judgment from the High Court and is considering its implications carefully, while awaiting the appeal hearing.

■ Business: Crime Prevention

Daniel Zeichner:[\[43674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to provide additional support to Business Crime Reduction Partnerships during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kit Malthouse:

Provisional data from police forces in England and Wales shows a reduction in crime during the Coronavirus outbreak and, as a result, the Government has no plans to provide additional support to Business Crime Reduction Partnerships during the covid-19 outbreak.

■ Detention Centres: Coronavirus

Richard Fuller:[\[34954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to help ensure people in immigration detention (a) at increased risk and (b) with an underlying health condition are able to (i) isolate in line with Government advice and (ii) access adequate medical treatment during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

There are currently no cases of COVID-19 in immigration removal centres.

The safety and health of people in the detention estate is of the utmost importance. The Home Office is working closely with NHS England health and justice teams and regional commissioning teams to support the planning and delivery of healthcare services in immigration removal centres during the COVID-19 outbreak. All immigration removal centres have communicable disease contingency plans, based on PHE advice, and dedicated health facilities run by doctors and nurses which are managed by the NHS or appropriate providers. All receptions into detention receive an assessment within two hours by a nurse and can see a doctor within 24 hours.

NHS England have identified all people with known vulnerabilities across the immigration detention estate, who by age, underlying health conditions or both are at greater risk from COVID-19. Each of these detainees will be shielded using protective isolation measures as far as practicable. Detainees can also self-declare any vulnerabilities to healthcare or centre staff.

■ Fire and Rescue Services: Coronavirus

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[42143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of funding provided to fire services during the covid-19 outbreak.

James Brokenshire:

The Government has provided over £3.2 billion to local authorities to support their response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Standalone fire and rescue authorities (including Greater Manchester Fire) received £6.5 million of the £1.6 billion funding provided in March and will receive a further £28.5m share of the additional £1.6 billion announced in April. The Home Office is also launching a £6 million Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund to support fire and rescue authorities who incur significant costs as a result of taking on additional duties during the coronavirus outbreak.

We will continue to keep future funding needs under review and support the sector to ensure that services have the resources they need.

■ Immigrants: Detainees

Stuart C McDonald:

[\[38497\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many immigration detainees have been moved from Larne House detention centre in Northern Ireland to immigration detention centres in (a) Scotland and (b) England since 23 March 2020; and what risk assessments have been undertaken in respect of those moves.

Chris Philp:

We take the welfare of the detainees in our care very seriously. The safety and health of those in residential short-term holding facilities and immigration removal centres (IRC) is of the utmost importance.

Management information indicates that since the 23 March 2020, three detainees have been transferred from Larne House to an IRC. All these moves were to Dungavel House IRC in Scotland.

The Home Office undertake careful risk assessments when considering detainee placement in the detention estate. This is done on a case by case basis to ensure placement in the most suitable IRC that can best accommodate the individual's needs.

■ Immigrants: Finance

Meg Hillier: [\[37524\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been made to lift the no recourse to public funds restrictions by residents with leave to remain since 23 March 2020.

Meg Hillier: [\[37525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many no recourse to public funds restrictions have been removed since 23 March 2020.

Chris Philp:

Migrants with limited leave to remain under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the no recourse to public funds restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances.

The information you have requested is not assured to the standard required by ONS for publication and as it would be too costly to do so, we are unable to provide it.

However, my department has recently digitised the application form, to make sure it is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and I can assure you that the applications are being prioritised and dealt with swiftly and compassionately.

Kate Green: [\[R\] \[37637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect on the well-being of children of their parents or carers having no recourse to public funds.

Kate Green: [\[R\] \[37638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for a change of conditions to allow recourse to public funds her Department has (a) received and (b) granted since 1 March 2020; and what the average time was for her Department to determine its response to those applications.

Kate Green: [\[R\] \[37639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department is providing to families with no recourse to public funds whose parents or main carers have lost their jobs as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kate Green: [\[R\] \[37640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the cost of suspending the no recourse to public funds condition during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kate Green: [\[R\] \[37641\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the effect of the implementation of the no recourse to public funds condition on local authority children's services.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is working closely with other government departments to support people, including migrants with no recourse to public funds, through this crisis. We are taking 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 therefore are available to migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). We therefore do not believe it is necessary to suspend the NRPF condition.

Migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the NRPF restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances. The information you have requested regarding these applications is not assured to the standard required by ONS for publication, and as it would be too costly to do so we are unable to provide it. However, the Home Office has recently digitised the application form to make sure it is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and I can assure you that the applications are being dealt with swiftly and compassionately.

The Coronavirus job retention scheme, self-employment income support and statutory sick pay are not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Contribution-based benefits are also not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Additionally, measures we have brought forward such as rent and mortgage protections are not considered public funds and can be accessed by migrants with leave to remain.

Local authorities may also provide basic safety net support if it is established that there is a genuine care need that 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 made in excess of £3.2bn of funding available to local authorities in England to assist them in managing the pressures arising out of the pandemic.

Stephen Timms:

[42868]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for the lifting of the No Recourse to Public Funds condition have been (a) submitted and (b) granted in each of the last 12 months.

Kevin Foster:

Migrants with limited leave to remain under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the no recourse to public funds restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances.

The information you have requested is not assured to the standard required by ONS for publication and as it would be too costly to do so, we are unable to provide it. However, my department has recently digitised the application form, to make sure it

is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and I can assure you that the applications are being prioritised and dealt with compassionately.

Fleur Anderson:

[44050]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will suspend the no recourse to public funds clause during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office is working closely with other government departments, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and Social Care to support people, including migrants with NRPF, through this crisis.

Many of the wide-ranging Covid-19 measures the government has put in place are not public funds and therefore are available to migrants with NRPF. 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>

Migrants with leave under the Family and Human Rights routes can apply to have the NRPF restriction lifted by making a 'change of conditions' application if there has been a change in their financial circumstances. The Home Office has recently digitised the application form to make sure it is accessible for those who need to remain at home, and applications are being dealt with compassionately.

Local authorities may provide basic safety net support, regardless of immigration support, if it is established that there is a genuine care need that 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 allocated more than £3.2 billion to local authorities in England, and additional funding under the Barnett formula to the devolved administrations, to help them 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.

■ Immigration Controls

Stephen Doughty:

[43661]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the provisional management information on the number of arrivals at the UK border from 23 March to 5 May 2020.

Chris Philp:

The next Quarterly Immigration Statistics will be published on 21st May and Home Office statisticians are considering the additional information that can be provided as part of this national statistics publication, including data relating to the impact of Covid-19.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ Electronic Voting: House of Commons

John Spellar:

[\[43832\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, when the contract for running the Commons Remote Voting system was awarded to Civica Election Services; and whether the contract was subject to open competition.

Pete Wishart:

The Commons Remote Voting system is being developed and implemented entirely by existing Parliamentary Digital Service resource. No contract has been awarded for this work. A contract was awarded on 22 April to Civica Election Services to run an online ballot for the Chairs of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and the Committee on Standards. An open competition was not required as the expected final value is below the £10,000 threshold at which the Parliamentary Procurement Rules require multiple quotes to be sought.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Council Tax Benefits: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[42073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department made prior to implementing the £150 Council Tax discount due to the covid-19 outbreak for people in receipt of Council Tax Support of the effect of that policy on household incomes of (a) people living in poverty and (b) low income households in local authority areas that had already implemented a council tax reduction scheme.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Each council tax billing authority has its own means tested local council tax reduction scheme, designed to best meet the needs of its local population. As part of a wider package of support for businesses and individuals, a £500 million hardship fund was announced at the Budget on 11 March to enable local authorities to provide households in receipt of council tax support, as those already identified as being economically vulnerable, with additional relief.

Daniel Zeichner:[\[42074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to make an assessment of the effect the £150 Council Tax discount due to the covid-19 outbreak on whether that discount for people in receipt of Council Tax Support has directly benefited people in poverty.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Local council tax support is a means tested benefit and, through linking the hardship fund to local council tax support, the Government has enabled councils to deliver help effectively to those in financial need, while providing opportunities for discretion to reflect local circumstances. The Hardship Fund complements other help provided to vulnerable people in response to Covid-19, including changes to universal credit and working tax credits and additional support to alleviate homelessness.

■ Council Tax: Empty Property

Sir Christopher Chope:[\[43827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make it the policy of the Government to prevent people who are unable to sell an empty property during the covid-19 lockdown from being penalised under the Empty Property Council Tax Premium; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The empty homes premium is a discretionary power and applies to properties that have been empty and unfurnished for two or more years. Local authorities are responsible for administering the premium, taking into account any relevant circumstances.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:[\[44052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will extend the pause on eviction notices from three months to six months during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

Through the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Government extended the notice period that a landlord is required to serve on a tenant to at least three months or, in some cases, created a three months' notice requirement where a requirement to give notice does not currently exist.

The Act provides powers that allows the Government to keep this protection under review as efforts to tackle COVID-19 progress. Any decision to alter the duration of these emergency measures will be informed by the wider government approach to lockdown measures and Public Health England guidance, alongside consideration of the needs of landlords and tenants.

■ High Rise Flats: Insulation

Rushanara Ali:

[43921]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding the Building Safety Fund to include the removal of dangerous cladding from buildings below 18 metres in height.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has made £1 billion available to fund the removal of unsafe non-Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding. This is in addition to the £600 million made available already to ensure the remediation of the highest risk ACM cladding. The Government's decision to place the scope of the Building Safety Fund at buildings over 18m reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height, as previously noted by the Independent Expert Advisory Panel and Dame Judith Hackitt. There are no plans to extend the Building Safety Fund below 18m. It remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings of all heights. We have provided advice from the Expert Panel on the measures building owners should take to ensure their buildings are safe.

Rushanara Ali:

[43922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when his Department plans to publish data on the number of private blocks above 18 metres in height that have non-ACM cladding.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department has commenced a data collection exercise which will enable us to build a picture of external wall systems in use on high rise residential buildings. The exercise will collect data on residential buildings 18 metres and over covering private and social buildings, student accommodation and hotels in England. The data collection is not yet complete. We have asked local authorities and housing associations to provide final responses as soon as possible. We will publish appropriate summary information from the data collection in our monthly Building Safety Programme data release in due course once the data collection has been completed.

■ Housing: Standards

Ian Mearns:

[41997]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timetable is for the publication of the Future Homes Standard announced by his Department in 2019; and whether that standard will apply to the whole of the UK.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government remains committed to meeting its target of net zero emissions by 2050 and recognises the important contribution that the energy efficiency of buildings has to make in meeting it.

We have proposed an ambitious uplift in the energy efficiency of new homes through the introduction of the Future Homes Standard from 2025. We expect that homes built to the Future Homes Standard will have carbon dioxide emissions 75-80 per cent lower than those built to current Building Regulations standards, which means they will be fit for the future, with low carbon heating and very high fabric standards.

Ahead of this, we have consulted on a meaningful and achievable increase to the energy efficiency standards for new homes to act as a stepping stone to the Future Homes Standard. The Future Homes Standard consultation closed on 7 February. The responses we received will be considered carefully, and a government response will be published in due course.

These matters relate to England only, as Building Regulations are a devolved matter.

■ Local Government Finance: Coronavirus

Ms Angela Eagle:

[41904]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, for what reason the funding allocated to Wirral Council in relation to the covid-19 outbreak was £11,862 million in the first payment and £8,886 million in the second payment.

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.

It is important that these two waves of funding are seen together and that false comparisons between the two are avoided. Across both waves, more than 90 per cent of the funding will go to social care authorities. Wirral Council's share is £20.7 million.

■ Local Government: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner:

[42071]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what data (a) Local Resilience Forums and (b) local authorities are being asked to (i) record

and (ii) report on during the covid-19 outbreak, and whether that data includes economic vulnerability and its effect on household food security.

Christopher Pincher:

Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) regularly report situational awareness of the local area effects. This includes a daily self-assessment report, information on PPE stocks and information on the number of non-shielded vulnerable people within the local area.

Current data collection from local authorities includes monthly financial management information on the impact of COVID-19.

MHCLG does not collect data on economic vulnerability and its effect on household food security.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[42072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if his Department will publish regional or aggregated data from Local Resilience Forum Situation Reports on the number of non-shielded people using Local Resilience Forum helplines to (a) signal difficulty in accessing food or other basic necessities and (b) who are struggling due to financial vulnerability during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

We do not collect this data.

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[42076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether data on the number of people accessing Local Resilience Forum helplines due to financial vulnerability during the covid-19 outbreak can be ascertained from Local Resilience Forum Situation Reports.

Christopher Pincher:

Local Resilience Forums do not routinely collect this information nor do they run public helplines. As such we do not collect this information via Local Resilience Forum situation reports.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[42169\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions has he had with Local Resilience Forums on the easing of the covid-19 lockdown.

Mr Simon Clarke:

All Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) have a dedicated Government Liaison Officer from MHCLG who provides a direct line of contact into central Government. MHCLG continues to engage frequently with all LRFs to discuss the Covid-19 response and will work with them closely on any adjustments to restrictions.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[42170]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions has he had with representatives from the Local Government Association on the easing of the covid-19 lockdown.

Mr Simon Clarke:

There has been regular and significant contact between Ministers, regional mayors, council leaders, and the Local Government Association providing support to local authorities during the Covid-19 emergency.

The Secretary of State has hosted regular teleconferences for all local government leaders and chief executives, with other Ministers present to answer questions. My department is also discussing priorities and support measures with councils in each of the nine English regions. Further to this, a Ministerial-led Economic Recovery Working Group has been established, made up of local government leaders from across England including several Metro Mayors to help inform Government's plans for economic recovery.

Officials will continue to liaise regularly with local authorities to understand the challenges and concerns regarding the easing of restrictions and how we adapt our public services and public spaces to enable their safe usage.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[43844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he plans to allow local authorities to retain unallocated grant money from the Government's covid-19 support packages.

Mr Simon Clarke:

Government is providing a package of support for businesses and workers, in recognition of the disruption caused by Covid-19. This includes £12.3 billion for local authorities to deliver to SMEs under the Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund (RHLGF).

On 1 May, the Business Secretary announced up to £617 million will be available to local authorities to support small businesses previously outside the scope of the business grant funding. This funding is aimed at small businesses which have ongoing fixed property-related costs but are not liable for business rates or rates reliefs. Further guidance for local authorities, including the interaction with underspends in relation to the SBGF and RHLGF, will be set out shortly.

Rachael Maskell:

[43975]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish a risk analysis of the potential effect of easing the covid-19 lockdown on local government.

Mr Simon Clarke:

We understand that local authorities know better than anyone the needs of local people, and that they are working hard to balance the need to maintain services alongside wider responsibilities for the health and wellbeing of residents.

Ministers and officials have led regular engagement with local authorities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes dedicated Government Liaison Officers, support through Local Resilience Forums, and an unprecedented £3.2 billion of additional funding.

At all times the government has been informed by the science around COVID-19 and has set out set out five criteria that must be met before further restrictions are eased.

■ Planning Permission: Coronavirus

Kate Griffiths:

[\[42196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the validity period for planning permissions due to expire during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is aware from both local planning authorities and the development industry that, with delays caused by COVID-19, there is a risk of unimplemented planning permissions lapsing, undermining the delivery of projects. We are aware of these concerns and are considering whether permissions should be extended.

■ Refuges: Domestic Abuse

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[42200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of working with (a) hotels and (b) hotel groups to provide refuge for victims of domestic violence.

Luke Hall:

On 2 May, the Government announced an unprecedented £76 million package of support to ensure the most vulnerable in society get the support they need during the pandemic. We have secured £10 million of this package specifically for safe accommodation

The MHCLG COVID-19 Emergency Support Fund for Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation launched on 7 May and will ensure refuge charities can continue to operate, whilst also helping more victims access vital services during the COVID-19 emergency. Where refuge charities judge hotels and other temporary accommodation to be necessary, safe and appropriate, they can apply to fund such costs through this new £10 million MHCLG fund

Local authorities can now also secure additional rooms for victims through Crown Commercial Services.

■ Social Rented Housing: Natural Gas

Alexander Stafford:**[42221]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what guidance his Department has issued to gas housing associations on gas safety inspections in properties during the covid-19 outbreak.

Christopher Pincher:

Government advice to landlords and tenants may be found at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876500/Consolidated_Landlord_and_Tenant_Guidance_COVID_and_the_PRS_v4.2.pdf

Landlords should make every effort to abide by statutory gas safety obligations. However, we recognise that the current restrictions may be making it harder to carry out these checks. There are provisions in the regulations for landlords to account for situations in which they cannot carry out inspections, however they must demonstrate they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with the law. Recognising the concern among landlords, residents and inspectors, on 7 April 2020, HSE published further guidance setting out detailed advice for a range of scenarios. This can be found here: <https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/help-and-advice/covid-19-advice-and-guidance/landlords/>

Our guidance is clear that no work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless the work is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household. Where entry is required for emergency repairs landlords should take every possible step to minimise contact with residents and follow government guidance on tradespeople working in people homes, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>

■ Temporary Accommodation: Coronavirus

Wera Hobhouse:**[42252]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether he has made an assessment of the level of availability of accommodation for British citizens returning from overseas as a result of the covid-19 pandemic who do not have a permanent home in the UK.

Christopher Pincher:

United Kingdom Nationals returning from abroad who have been stranded as a result of Covid-19 and who encounter difficulty sustaining accommodation, are entitled to advice and support under the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This will include the provision of emergency accommodation for the most vulnerable who return from abroad and are homeless.

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act, local authorities and other public bodies must work together to actively prevent homelessness for people at risk. Local

authorities must do so irrespective of whether they are a family or single person, the reason they are at risk, or if they have a local connection to the area.

We have announced over £3.2 billion of additional funding to enable local authorities to respond to other COVID-19 pressures across all the services they deliver, including stepping up support for services helping the most vulnerable, including homeless people.

■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Nick Smith:

[\[42240\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what the timeline is for the implementation of the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government has committed to creating a UK Shared Prosperity Fund to succeed European structural funds and bind together the whole of the United Kingdom, tackling inequality and deprivation in each of our four nations. The Government recognises the importance of reassuring local areas on the future of local growth funding and of providing clarity on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Final decisions on the design of the fund will need to be taken after a cross-Government Spending Review. In the meantime, we will continue to work closely with interested parties whilst developing the fund.

■ Windrush Generation: Anniversaries

Helen Hayes:

[\[43994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that Windrush day 2020 is safely commemorated during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

It is only right that we celebrate the enormous contribution of the Windrush Generation and their descendants to our social, economic and cultural life. 2020 will see the second provision of an annual £500,000 grant to support celebrations on 22 June and ensure a lasting legacy.

Earlier this year, on the advice of the Windrush Day Grants Committee, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government approved funding to be allocated among 49 charities, community groups and local authorities.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we have been working with grantees to encourage them to develop contingency plans if there are still restrictions on gatherings and the use of public buildings on 22 June. In the midst of challenging circumstances, the grantees are demonstrating admirable willingness and aptitude to deliver their project outcomes through online or virtual means to coincide with Windrush Day, and by postponing some delivery until later in the year where necessary. We are also working with community stakeholders to mark Windrush Day appropriately online and in the media.

The Government remains committed to ensuring that 22 June is a day of celebration and recognition for the Windrush generation and their descendants.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Africa: Locusts

Rachael Maskell:

[43698]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent steps her Department has taken to mitigate the effect of locust plagues in Africa.

James Duddridge:

We are deeply concerned about the devastating locust outbreak in East Africa, which is destroying crops, livelihoods and essential food supplies. It is compounding the impact of humanitarian disasters, conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic, putting millions of people at risk of food insecurity.

To date the UK has provided £7 million to FAO's regional appeal for surveillance, control and coordination activities, and the Department for International Development (DFID) has significant humanitarian and development programmes in the affected regions that are adapting to support vulnerable communities in response to the outbreak. The Desert Locust Control Organisation for Eastern Africa, based in Nairobi, has also been using a DFID-funded super computer to predict movements of locusts and geographically target the response.

Our support is having an immediate impact. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are ready to help further.

■ Department for International Development: Ministers' Private Offices

Preet Kaur Gill:

[43722]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 41134 on Department for International Development: Ministers' Private Offices, which of her Department's Ministers have their private offices in the (a) Foreign and Commonwealth Office, (b) Department for International Development and (c) Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Wendy Morton:

There are seven joint private offices across DFID, FCO and Defra: four offices are in the FCO at King Charles St, two offices in DFID at 22 Whitehall, and one office at Defra at 2 Marsham Street. Additionally, there are shared office spaces in DFID and the FCO for Ministers and private offices to use when away from their home location.

FCO – KING CHARLES STREET	DFID – 22 WHITEHALL	DEFRA - 2 MARSHAM ST
Rt Hon James Cleverly MP	Baroness Sugg CBE	Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	James Duddridge MP	

FCO – KING CHARLES STREET**DFID – 22 WHITEHALL****DEFRA - 2 MARSHAM ST**

Wendy Morton MP

Nigel Adams MP

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:**[43184]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to help tackle the economic effects of covid-19 on local economies in developing countries.

James Duddridge:

The UK is actively supporting the poorest countries and most vulnerable people at a time when the secondary economic impacts of COVID-19 are running ahead of the health impacts in many countries.

First, we are supporting countries to free up the fiscal space that they need to reorient spending to responding to the crisis. The UK has made a leading contribution of up to £150 million to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, to fund the poorest countries' debt repayments to the IMF. The UK and other G20 countries have also committed to suspend debt service payments for International Development Association-eligible and the UN Least Developed Countries until the end of 2020, providing up to \$12 billion of additional fiscal space. We are also providing advisory support to countries covering economic policy and their broader response, including trade-offs associated with containment measures.

Second, we are working with the International Financial Institutions to make additional resources available. We have committed to doubling our existing £2.2bn loan to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, to support concessional financing for the poorest countries. The UK also pushed early for a capital increase of the World Bank in 2018 and, thanks to these efforts, the World Bank Group has been in a position to respond rapidly to this crisis, making \$160bn of financing available over 15 months.

Third, at a time when many investors are retreating from these markets, CDC, the UK's Development Finance Institution, is committed to investing patiently and working alongside other Development Finance Institutions to help companies access the finance they need and to protect supply chains and jobs overseas.

Fourth, the UK is also committed to directly supporting the most vulnerable people affected by the economic fallout of COVID-19. We are currently supporting social protection and/or humanitarian cash transfer programmes in 35 countries, in addition to wider support through multilateral institutions.

Rachael Maskell:

[43694]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she has plans to introduce a volunteering scheme to help developing countries have insufficient staff to support a covid-19 response.

Wendy Morton:

Official responses to COVID-19 are heavily reliant on a range of volunteers, who are devoting their time and skills both at home in the UK and in developing countries. The new DFID-funded Global Standard for Volunteering sets a useful benchmark for how volunteers can be deployed in a responsible, effective and safe way.

DFID's Volunteering for Development (V4D) programme, delivered in partnership with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), is working through volunteers to directly respond to the pandemic in 18 developing countries.

V4D volunteers are working within national response efforts to: ensure continued access to education for girls and children living with disabilities; strengthen health systems; improve emergency coordination systems; share key advice in accessible ways; and, support micro enterprise for the extreme poor.

Rachael Maskell:

[43695]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with her (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) international partners on the UK's response to covid-19 in developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State regularly engages with Cabinet colleagues on a wide range of matters including COVID-19 and its impact on developing countries.

The UK is taking decisive and co-ordinated action to support the global response to COVID-19, working with our international partners. The UK is also using its membership of the G7 and G20 to urge collective action and help drive a timely and effective international response. We are working closely with our G7 partners, including significant donors who are outside this group, for example the Netherlands, Norway and Australia, to agree priorities for immediate response to help countries deal with the immediate health and humanitarian impacts of the virus.

Rachael Maskell:

[43697]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions has she had with her (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) international partners on prioritising developing countries in the global vaccine programme.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State regularly discusses efforts to accelerate the development of and global access to COVID19 vaccines with Ministerial colleagues as part of the UK international COVID19 response.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[43724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will publish her Department's plan to ensure equitable access to vaccines and medical tools for people in the Global South.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is at the forefront of global efforts to ensure equitable access to potential COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests, and is already strategically funding key organisations at the centre of the global response. We have committed over £313 million of UK aid to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, the Wellcome Therapeutics Accelerator and the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics. This funding is alongside our investment in GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, worth an equivalent of £330 million a year for five years, which will support the development, manufacture and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests for people around the world.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[43725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps the Government will take to ensure pharmaceutical companies in receipt of public funds allow equitable access to covid-19 vaccines and medical tools for people living in the global south.

Wendy Morton:

The UK has long supported affordable and equitable access to essential medicines and vaccines in the UK, and for people living in the Global South. We have committed £250 million of UK aid – the largest contribution of any country - to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to develop a portfolio of Covid-19 vaccines that, once available, will be available to all. CEPI works with a range of partners to support equitable access for products that it supports. The UK has further committed £40 million to the Wellcome Therapeutics Accelerator and £23 million to the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), both of which are central to efforts to accelerate development and access to new treatments and tests.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[43726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what representations she has made to her counterpart in the US Administration on ensuring equitable access for countries in the Global South to (a) a covid-19 vaccine and (b) medical equipment needed to treat covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

The Secretary of State has had a range of discussions on this issue with G7 counterparts along with a range of global partners on access to Covid-19 vaccines, tests and treatments. We support global collaboration, joining efforts to ensure equitable access to potential COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests, including for the poorest countries.

Anna McMorris:

[43741]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure logistical strategies are in place to help ensure the timely distribution of vaccines to international NGOs working on the ground in low-income and fragile states.

Wendy Morton:

My Department is at the forefront of global efforts to ensure that Covid-19 vaccines are available to everyone who needs them, including in low-income and fragile states. On 4 June, the UK will host the Global Vaccines Summit (GVS2020) alongside GAVI who are uniquely placed to ensure safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines can be rolled out at scale to ensure equitable access. The UK is the leading donor to GAVI and we recently announced the equivalent of £330 million a year for five years, covering the business planning period 2021-2025.

Fleur Anderson:

[43767]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much funding her Department has allocated to support international health NGOs to continue pre-existing immunisation programmes in developing countries during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

It is vital that routine immunisation programmes continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. If immunisation coverage is not maintained, we will face far worse public health emergencies around the world if measles, polio, yellow fever, cholera, and other deadly diseases spread in the absence of routine immunisation. That is why the UK's commitment of the equivalent of £330 million per year for the next five years to fund Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance's work is so critical. This will help fund the immunisation of up to 75 million children in the world's poorest countries. Gavi is an alliance, working hand in glove with international health organisations such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF. The UK's commitment of £400 million to polio for the next four years will support not only the vaccination of over 450 million children every year against polio, but also broader health systems that are currently proving essential to the COVID-19 response in many countries. Polio vaccinations will continue to be delivered where possible during the pandemic.

■ **Developing Countries: Debts**

Fleur Anderson:

[43183]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with her international counterparts on developing a debt-relief plan for developing countries.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the public finances of low-income developing countries. In this time of crisis, it is vital that creditors work together to ensure that servicing debts does not prevent countries protecting their citizens and economies.

The UK, alongside the G20 and the Paris Club of official creditors, has committed to a temporary suspension of debt service repayments from the poorest countries. This official sector effort could provide up to \$12 billion of additional fiscal space until the end of the year, allowing countries to redirect finances towards mitigating the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.

In the future, some countries, especially those entering the crisis with significant debt vulnerabilities may require debt relief. If debts do require restructuring or reduction, this will need to be done evenly amongst creditors, including non-Paris Club G20 creditors and the private sector. The G20 initiative provides more time to assess countries' debt positions and explore possible solutions with other stakeholders whilst, importantly, freeing up resources to allow countries to respond to the crisis.

■ Developing Countries: Forests

Chris Grayling:

[43600]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 12 March 2020 on Developing Countries: Forests, how much funding her Department allocated to each of those international forestry projects.

James Duddridge:

The total budgets allocated to the international forestry projects listed in the Answer of 12 March 2020 are provided in the table below.

PROJECT	DURATION OF FUNDING	TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATED
Nepal Multi-Stakeholder Forestry Programme	2011-2016	£16,124,703
Forest Governance, Markets and Climate (Global)	2011-2023	£280,000,000
Investments in Forests and Sustainable Land Use (Global)	2015-2023	£ 102,596,352
International Forestry Knowledge programme (Global)	2012-2017	£36,987,765
Forestry, Land-use and Governance in Indonesia	2015-2020	£32,549,986
Improving Livelihoods and Land Use in Congo Basin Forests	2015-2020	£15,260,720
Green Economic Growth for West Papua (Indonesia)	2016-2022	£11,512,311

PROJECT	DURATION OF FUNDING	TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATED
Supporting a Sustainable Future for West Papua's Forests (Indonesia)	2018-2020	£6,200,000
Total		£501,231,837

■ Developing Countries: Nutrition

Anna McMorris:

[\[43744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of UK Government-funded nutrition programmes in developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

DFID undertakes reviews of all its programmes, including nutrition programmes, on an annual basis, including whether intended outcomes and impacts are being achieved. We also invest in evaluating our programmes to enable us to learn what works and to adapt our approaches accordingly.

In 2020, we have been looking across DFID's country portfolio to assess where there is scope to improve how we address malnutrition as part of the government's commitment to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children – and considering current efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact is close to finalising its review of DFID's work on nutrition. This will provide important insights into how we can further strengthen the work we do, and we look forward to receiving the final report in September.

■ Developing Countries: Overseas Aid

Fleur Anderson:

[\[43186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to help support the informal economy in developing countries during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Duddridge:

DFID currently supports social protection and/or humanitarian cash transfer programmes in 35 countries, enabling the most vulnerable people - including those who work in the informal sector - to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19.

Beyond social protection, other DFID programmes are being adapted to support informal sector workers in response to COVID-19. For example, we are supporting the Kampala Capital City Authority with emergency provisions to assist the most vulnerable in the city, including providing shelter to vendors in the informal markets.

We have supported the Multilateral Development Banks to provide much-needed working capital for small businesses and supply chains, which informal workers depend on in developing countries. This includes \$8 billion of fast-tracked support from the International Finance Cooperation.

■ Developing Countries: Ventilators

Rachael Maskell:

[43693]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how many ventilators has the UK pledged to donate to developing countries.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is helping to lead the global response to COVID-19. We are using UK aid to its full effect to counter the health, humanitarian, and economic risks and impact of this pandemic in the developing world. We are working hard to ensure that our help reaches those most in need through close collaboration with our partners. The UK has, to date, pledged £744 million of UK aid to help end this pandemic as quickly as possible.

Our funding is supporting a range of initiatives and partners to ensure that it can reach those who need it the most. This includes £75 million for the World Health Organisation (WHO) to help lead the international efforts to stop the spread of this virus and help access critical medical supplies, £55 million to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement appeals to provide medical supplies and equipment to hospitals and clinics, build quarantine areas and disinfection facilities and a range of support to NGOs.

The WHO and UNICEF are working with governments to identify requirements and ensure that supplies reach those in need, including the critical medical equipment for oxygen therapy.

■ Infectious Diseases: Disease Control

Dr Dan Poulter:

[15024]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans his Department has to help support increased resilience to global health pandemics in (a) low and (b) middle income countries.

Wendy Morton:

Global health security is underpinned by strong national health systems and international cooperation. The UK is helping low and middle-income countries through building strong and resilient health systems, which are well prepared and can protect people from health threats, including potential pandemic diseases. The UK is a top donor to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Health Emergencies Programme, which leads the WHO's work on supporting the world to prevent, detect and respond to disease outbreaks. We also fund the Tackling Deadly Diseases in Africa programme, the International Health Regulations Strengthening Project, delivered by Public Health England, and the UK Emergency Medical Team to train

and deploy emergency response personnel to urgently respond to humanitarian emergencies. The UK also invests significantly in new technology, products and research for disease control, prevention and treatment.

■ Middle East: Food

Anna McMorris: [\[43746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts on the need to tackle (a) malnutrition and (b) food scarcity among vulnerable people throughout the Middle East.

James Cleverly:

On Friday 17 April, the Secretary of State for International Development spoke with the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, David Beasley. Their discussion covered COVID-19, the need for humanitarian access in Yemen (to enable the delivery of food to vulnerable people) and the current food scarcity risk posed by locusts in the Middle East and Africa.

On Monday 27 April, I spoke with the Government of Yemen's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Hadrami, where we discussed ways of stabilising Yemen's economy (which will be critical for ensuring food imports and preventing a further deterioration in food scarcity).

On Thursday 23 April, DFID's Acting Permanent Secretary discussed ways of improving humanitarian funding levels in Yemen, including in response to malnutrition and food scarcity, with the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock.

Ministers and UK officials also remain in close contact with other donors on malnutrition and food scarcity across the Middle East.

■ Middle East: Nutrition

Anna McMorris: [\[43745\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the extent to which her Department's funding for nutrition programmes in low-income and fragile states throughout the Middle East is meeting demand for those programmes.

James Cleverly:

Across the Middle East, malnutrition rates, as well as food insecurity levels, are very concerning, particularly in Yemen and Syria where rates are among the highest in the world.

In Yemen, last financial year (19/20), UK support helped UNICEF screen over 400,000 children for severe acute malnutrition and enabled 45,000 children to be enrolled in nutrition programmes after screening. The UK is the second-largest donor to the malnutrition response in Yemen and we continue to encourage other donors to provide significant funding to Yemen, including for the malnutrition response.

In Syria, last financial year (19/20), the UK reached over 170,000 children under five, or pregnant or new mothers, with nutrition interventions. The UK is one of the largest bilateral donors to the Syria Crisis since it began in 2011. We are at the forefront of the humanitarian response, driving other donors to help those acutely in need, including on key issues such as malnutrition.

■ Migrant Camps: Hygiene

Anna McMorris:

[\[43742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with her international counterparts in the (a) G7, (b) G20, (c) UN and (d) World Health Organisation on the scaling up of WASH facilities available in refugee camps in (i) Greece, (ii) Turkey, and (iii) throughout the Middle East.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is at the forefront of tackling forced displacement and supporting refugees around the world, including support to Syrian refugees in Turkey and the Middle East, most notably Jordan and Lebanon. We also continue to offer support to the Greek Government to alleviate pressure and deliver sustainable improvements in the Greek migration system.

To date, the UK has committed £744 million in the international fight against COVID-19. We are a key contributor to the UN Global Humanitarian Response Plan which aims to ensure support to the most vulnerable groups including refugees and other forcibly displaced populations. This includes significant support to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to help install hand-washing stations and isolation and treatment centres in refugee camps, and increase access to clean water for displaced people.

We are working closely with the UN, International Financial Institutions, global health multilaterals, and wider international system to push for a strong and coordinated global response to the crisis and to ensure the most vulnerable groups, including refugees, are not left behind. As part of this, there is regular Ministerial and senior official engagement with the G7, G20, World Bank Group and other Multilateral Development Banks, UN agencies, and bilateral partners.

■ Overseas Aid: Charities

Alberto Costa:

[\[43058\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what covid-19 related financial support her Department has made available for charities based overseas.

Wendy Morton:

Civil society organisations (CSOs), including charities based overseas, are key partners for DFID. Many of DFID's programmes support local and international 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 overseas will be able to access some of this funding as downstream partners. Extra funding opportunities will also be available through DFID's new partnership with Unilever to support hygiene practices in developing countries.

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.

■ Overseas Aid: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[43720]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 40723 on Overseas Aid: Coronavirus, which of her Department's planned spend and objectives have been deprioritised in order to divert resources to the covid-19 response.

Wendy Morton:

To maximise DFID's resources for our COVID-19 response we are: using HMG's crisis reserve, adapting and scaling up existing programmes that respond to COVID-19, and reviewing programmes that can be slowed or paused to free up resources e.g. preparation for delayed international events or support for delayed elections. We will continue to closely monitor the scenarios and impacts of COVID-19 in vulnerable countries, to ensure the best possible use of 0.7 in our response to COVID-19 and HMG's wider development priorities.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[43721]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 40723 on Overseas Aid: Coronavirus, how many FTE staff have been moved to work on (a) her Department's and (b) other Departments' covid-19 response.

Wendy Morton:

DFID along with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is leading on the UK Government's international response to COVID-19. DFID is surging staff internally to support this effort as its priority.

57 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff have been moved into a new central team coordinating the overall COVID-19 response and a further 4 FTE staff have been surged into this team from across government. Delivery of the response itself is spread across the Department, with many staff across our International, Economic Development, Policy, Science and Research and geographical/corporate Divisions focusing on the immediate COVID-19 response and longer-term recovery.

DFID has loaned staff with specific skillsets to other government departments in support of their COVID-19 work. 9 FTE staff have been deployed to support other government departments at this time.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[43727]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she plans to place conditions on ODA funding to large pharmaceutical companies that are developing vaccines and medical tools for covid-19.

Wendy Morton:

DFID routes ODA funding for research into the development of vaccines and other medical tools to tackle COVID-19 through Product Development Partnership and other multilateral not for profit organisations. Besides having the best scientific expertise in their respective field, these funding platforms also have the legal and administrative expertise to ensure that, once developed, products are affordable and accessible to provide low and middle-income countries with the tools they need to tackle this disease in their country.

■ Overseas Aid: Non-governmental Organisations

Fleur Anderson:

[43185]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what financial support she is allocating to international NGOs to adapt pre-existing humanitarian assistance and food supply programmes to ensure continuity during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

To date, the UK has committed £744 million to support global efforts to combat COVID-19. The UK is at the forefront of supporting those in need of humanitarian assistance and we are actively working with international partners to better track, monitor and respond to the impact of COVID-19 on food security for the most vulnerable. NGOs are a critical partner in meeting this huge challenge of tackling the virus. In addition to new and reallocated direct funding to NGOs, much of the UN's work will be delivered on the ground by NGOs and the UK's funding to the UN agencies will support these efforts.

■ Palestinians: Overseas Aid

Steve McCabe: [\[42248\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she plans to renew support for the People for Peaceful Change Project.

Steve McCabe: [\[42249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will place a copy of the People for Peaceful Change research element in the Library.

James Cleverly:

Our three-year People to People programme aimed to bring together Israelis and Palestinians to cooperate on issues which can have a positive impact on both communities, helping to build understanding between people on both sides of the conflict in support of a peaceful, negotiated resolution.

The programme includes a research component that is looking more broadly at the impact of People to People work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to build the evidence base in this area, which is presently limited. An internal panel of researchers is in the process of analysing the findings. Once this work is complete, we will use the research to inform decisions on future programming in this area. We will seek to publish the research results in due course.

■ Palestinians: Refugees

Anna McMorrin: [\[43743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent assessment she has made of the need to increase the UK Government's contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to meet increased demand for core services for Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East.

James Cleverly:

The UK is a long-term supporter of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Our funding helps provide education to more than 533,000 children (half of which are girls), health services for around 3.1 million Palestinian refugees, and social safety net assistance for around 271,000 of the most vulnerable.

The services that UNRWA provide play a key role in helping contain and address the spread of COVID-19. We continue to monitor the situation closely and are working closely with UNRWA and the international community to ensure a co-ordinated response to the outbreak.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Kevin Hollinrake: [\[902519\]](#)

What steps she is taking to facilitate trade with Saudi Arabia.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Total exports to Saudi Arabia from the United Kingdom last year were up £1.0bn from 2018 and we want this growth to continue. My Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade recently engaged with her counterpart to remove trade barriers during this difficult period, and we continue to identify ways of opening up more opportunities in the country to businesses in the United Kingdom.

My Hon. Friend for Thirsk and Malton will also be aware that we are carefully considering the implications of the Court of Appeal Judgement for export licence decision-making and are working to enable the re-taking of decisions on the correct legal basis, which I understand is a process which will have a bearing on businesses in his constituency.

Chris Green:

[902523]

What steps her Department is taking to protect the global supply chains of UK businesses.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Department is working to reduce market access barriers, including through Free Trade Agreements. This will open up more opportunities for business to build further resilience into their supply chains for the future. Alongside this, the United Kingdom will tirelessly fight protectionism and unfair trade practices, including through the G20 and in the WTO.

The United Kingdom has strong, collaborative relationships with other countries on this international endeavour, and will continue to make progress to facilitate free flowing trade. This will continue to be vital throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and for the recovery that will follow.

Scott Mann:

[902528]

What steps her Department is taking to help ensure the recovery of international trade after the covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Restoring an open trading system is vital for global recovery post-COVID. We will continue to champion free and fair trade, and we will support business recovery by opening up markets through free trade agreements, our new Export Strategy, and driving investment across all parts of the United Kingdom. Our ambitious free trade agreement with the US aims to reduce tariffs for key exports such as dairy. As Cornwall and the South West account for two-thirds of all our dairy exports to the US, this will be particularly important for local businesses in my Hon. Friend's constituency and the surrounding areas, such as Davidstow creamery.

Felicity Buchan:

[902530]

What recent assessment she has made of the effect on the global economy of maintaining (a) free trade and (b) open supply chains during the covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Free trade will be the cornerstone of our economic recovery in this global crisis. With over 1.22bn pieces of PPE delivered to the front line already, including 11 million items on Sunday 10 March alone, we will continue this good work with international counterparts to keep global supply chains open. The Department will work to facilitate resilience building through our free trade agreements in order to secure a thriving international trading future for businesses in the United Kingdom.

■ Agricultural Products: Import Duties

Bill Esterson:

[\[43891\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what representations she has received from representatives from the UK farming sector on the effect of tariff free imports from (a) New Zealand, (b) Australia and (c) the US on UK on the competitiveness of UK farmers.

Greg Hands:

The Secretary of State regularly receives representations from the UK farming sector in our negotiations. Many representatives from the UK sector responded to the DIT consultations held in 2018 asking for industry views and priorities for these negotiations. Summaries of the responses are available on the gov.uk website.

The Government is clear that our trade agreements must work in the best interests of UK producers, consumers, and businesses.

■ BeoutQ

Mike Wood:

[\[43953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of (a) Saudi-based pirate broadcaster beoutQ and (b) piracy more widely, on the value of exports from the UK's creative industries; and if she will make a statement.

Mike Wood:

[\[43954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions officials in her Department have had with their Saudi Arabian counterparts on that country's role in the operation of the pirate broadcaster beoutQ and the effect of that pirate broadcasting on exports of UK sports international broadcast rights.

Graham Stuart:

Officials in the Department for International Trade work closely with their counterparts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Intellectual Property Office on matters relating to the protection of intellectual property (IP) rights around the world.

Government ministers and our Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have raised this matter with the Saudi Arabian government and will continue to make representations about any alleged broadcast infringement activities of UK IP.

We understand broadcasting piracy in Saudi Arabia, through the pirate operator beoutQ, has now stopped. This followed pressure by the UK, the US, European countries, and major sports rights holders.

We remain vigilant for any further instances of illegal use of UK-owned intellectual property rights across all industries and will continue to raise these issues in territories where protection is not upheld.

■ **Brexit**

Caroline Lucas:

[41958]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her statement at the British Chamber of Commerce webinar on Building Supply Chain Resilience and Diversity, what the evidential basis is for her statement that extending the transition period will lead to more uncertainty for businesses; and if her Department has conducted a revised economic impact assessment of its trade policy in response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Greg Hands:

The Government has made clear that it will not seek to extend the transition period, and if the EU asks, we will say no.

Extending the transition would simply prolong the negotiations with the EU and prolong business uncertainty. It would mean further payments into the EU budget and keep the UK bound by EU legislation at a point when we need legislative and economic flexibility to manage the response to the pandemic.

The Government is tracking trade developments and monitoring external forecasts of the impact of the pandemic on global and UK trade, and continues to engage with UK businesses to understand the challenges they are facing as a result of the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The latest official trade statistics are for February. We are committed to transparency and will ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to the information they need on our trade policy and analysis.

■ **Department for International Trade: Secondment**

Bill Esterson:

[42996]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many staff of her Department have been seconded to other departments to work on the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: The response to COVID-19 is a key priority for the Department for International Trade (DIT). Our current estimate is that approximately 75% of our people are working full time or part time on it. This includes our overseas workforce who are supporting the FCO-led crisis response at post.

In the UK DIT has deployed 28 people to 4 other departments for COVID-19 related activity since 4 March 2020, of which 4 people have now returned.

■ Distributive Trade: Freight

Bill Esterson: [\[43892\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to her Answer of 6 May 2020 to Question 42002, on Trade: Freight, what representations her Department has made to the Treasury on the suitability of support being provided to the freight sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Greg Hands:

I refer the Hon. Member for Sefton Central to the answer I gave him on 6 May 2020, UIN: 42002, 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.

This Department has an important role in representing the feedback we hear from the sectors we engage with to other Government departments, but, consistent with the practice of successive administrations, the Government does not disclose details of internal departmental meetings.

■ Furs

Olivia Blake: [\[902525\]](#)

Whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to ban the (a) import and (b) sale of real fur products.

Graham Stuart:

EU law currently prohibits imports of cat and dog fur and certain other animal products. Under the Withdrawal Act, these prohibitions will carry across after the end of the transition period. The Government is considering what further steps it could take in relation to fur sales, consistent with our international obligations.

■ Israel: Coronavirus

Matt Vickers: [\[902531\]](#)

What steps she is taking to strengthen the UK's trade in medical research and development with Israel during the covid-19 pandemic.

Graham Stuart:

UK and Israeli experts have been cooperating on the COVID-19 response in such areas as testing, clinical response, epidemiological management and the development of vaccines and treatments. We will continue to assist in identifying and supporting further areas of cooperation between the private and public sectors of both countries.

■ Overseas Trade: Coronavirus

Bill Esterson:

[\[42994\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made an estimate of the changes in UK imports and exports resulting from the covid-19 pandemic in this financial year.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: The Department does not produce UK trade forecasts. The latest official figures from the Office for National Statistics (year to end February 2020) reports UK exports at £702.4bn (up 6.1% on the previous year) and imports at £714.2bn (up 1.5%). The impact of COVID-19 on UK trade would not yet have been apparent in these figures.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) produce the official UK Economic and Fiscal Outlook forecasts. Although the OBR published a COVID19 reference scenario in April, this scenario did not include trade forecasts – the OBR's latest trade forecasts (March 2020) do not include the impact of COVID-19.

■ Overseas Trade: Israel

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[42211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to promote and facilitate trade co-operation between the UK and Israel in the agricultural technology sector.

Graham Stuart:

UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship and we are committed to strengthening that relationship. A dedicated DIT team in Tel Aviv British Embassy promotes trade cooperation between UK and Israeli companies.

A UK-Israel Tech Hub, working alongside DIT, creates partnerships between British companies and world class Israeli innovators across tech sectors, including agriculture.

Following the signature of the UK-Israel trade continuity agreement, Israel and UK expressed support for a future summit to be hosted in London aimed at increasing bilateral trade, including Agri-Tech. Planned for 2020, the event is on hold due to current corona circumstances.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[42243\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what opportunities she has identified for further trade co-operation with Israel beyond the trade continuity agreement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement provides an ambitious framework to continue to grow our future trading relationship, which totalled £5.1bn in 2019.

We will be working with our Israeli counterparts to reinstate plans to host a bilateral trade and investment summit in the future. Through this engagement, we will seek to secure the United Kingdom's position as Israel's number one trade and investment partner in Europe. This includes promoting science, innovation and technology partnerships between both countries, as well as exploring further opportunities for British business in the financial services, infrastructure and manufacturing sectors.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[42245\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to increase trade co-operation between the UK and Israel in the agricultural technology sector.

Graham Stuart:

UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship and we are committed to strengthening that relationship. A dedicated DIT team in Tel Aviv British Embassy promotes trade cooperation between UK and Israeli companies.

A UK-Israel Tech Hub, working alongside DIT, creates partnerships between British companies and world class Israeli innovators across tech sectors, including agriculture.

Following the signature of the UK- Israel trade continuity agreement, Israel and UK expressed support for a future summit to be hosted in London aimed at increasing bilateral trade, including Agri-Tech. Planned for 2020, the event is on hold due to current corona circumstances.

■ Procurement: Staff

Bill Esterson:

[\[42005\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with the Minister for the Cabinet Office on the accountability of the chief procurement officer to her office and other ministers.

Greg Hands:

There have been no discussions with the Minister for the Cabinet Office on this topic.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

Bill Esterson:

[\[43890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the deadline set by the US Congress for the end of trade negotiations between the UK and the US.

Greg Hands:

Neither the UK nor US Governments have set any date for the end of negotiations, however both sides are equally committed to negotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement as swiftly as possible. The first round of negotiations began on 5th May.

■ Trade Agreements: Video Conferencing

Hywel Williams:

[\[43599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what video conferencing system her Department will be using to conduct trade negotiations.

Greg Hands:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: For security reasons I am unable to comment on the solution being used to conduct negotiations.

JUSTICE

■ Marriage: Coronavirus

Dr Ben Spencer:

[\[43181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress the Government is making on bringing forward legislative proposals to ensure that local authorities can extend legal notices on marriages postponed as a result of the covid-19 lockdown.

Alex Chalk:

The Government acknowledges the significant upheaval that Covid-19 is causing for couples who were looking to marry at this time. The requirement to solemnize a marriage within twelve months of giving notice to marry is set out in primary legislation and would require primary legislation to amend.

We are exploring what changes might be possible in relation to marriages at this time, and in line with Public Health England guidance on social distancing.

■ Prisoners' Release: Homelessness

Mr David Lammy:

[\[42886\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prisoners have been released because they have come to the end of their sentence and were known to be going to no fixed abode in (a) February, (b) March and (c) April 2020.

Lucy Frazer:

The data on the number of prisoners released without a fixed address in February and March is due to be published on gov.uk on 30 July as part of the quarterly community performance statistics. The data for April 2020 is not yet available but is due for publication in July 2021.

It is vital that everyone leaving prison has somewhere safe and secure to live, as a platform to access the services and support needed to stop offending especially at this difficult time. It is our intention to make sure that no prisoner will be released without housing and health support being in place and we have set up seven Homelessness Prevention Taskforces to provide accommodation support for those eligible for early release and those in the community experiencing accommodation

difficulties. We are also working in collaboration with several public, private and voluntary sector providers to secure a range of accommodation options.

■ Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships: Coronavirus

Steve McCabe:

[43830]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will give registrars discretion to extend the period of validity for Superintendent Registrar Certificates when weddings have had to be postponed as a result of covid-19.

Alex Chalk:

The Government acknowledges the significant upheaval that Covid-19 is causing for couples who were looking to marry at this time. The requirement to solemnize a marriage within twelve months of giving notice to marry is set out in primary legislation and would require primary legislation to amend.

We are exploring what changes might be possible in relation to marriages at this time, and in line with Public Health England guidance on social distancing.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Freight: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[43986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for the haulage industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is working closely with Cabinet colleagues and the NI Executive to keep supply lines flowing, as the reduction in demand for certain goods has impacted on the haulage sector across the UK.

Recognising the exceptional circumstances faced by businesses across the country, the Chancellor announced an unprecedented package of measures to support businesses, employees and the self-employed. This includes Government backed loans and direct support for wages, which are available to hauliers.

In Northern Ireland, this is supplemented by additional support for businesses from the NI Executive following significant increases of approximately £1.2bn in the spending power of the Executive to enable it to respond to Covid-19. Together with the Executive, the Government has also provided direct financial support (worth up to £17m) for critical ferry routes between NI and GB, which ensures there is capacity for hauliers to transport goods to and from NI.

While reduced demand for goods persists, the Government will continue to monitor the position across the UK in case it should be necessary to take further steps to support the haulage industry.

■ Northern Ireland Government

Louise Haigh:

[43985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, with reference to the Agreement between the Government of Ireland and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland establishing the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval, what discussions he had with his Irish counterpart prior to his written statement of 18 March 2020, HCWS168, on Addressing Northern Ireland Legacy Issues, on the information retrieval provisions contained in that statement.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland spoke to the Irish Government prior to the publication of the Government's Written Ministerial Statement on 18 March 2020, in which he outlined our proposals for dealing with legacy issues.

This marked the beginning of an ongoing period of engagement with the Irish Government and other key stakeholders, on these proposals, including information retrieval. We remain committed to making progress on this important issue, whilst being sensitive to the challenging context in which we are all working.

TRANSPORT

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[41985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of publicly financing (a) smaller airports, (b) air traffic control and (c) specific routes to retain regional connectivity after the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The aviation sector is essential to the UK economy, and we encourage airports, airlines and other businesses in the sector to draw on the unprecedented package of measures we have made available to support them through this time. This includes schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees. The measures have been designed to ensure that companies of any size receive the help they need to get through this difficult time – which could include small airports as well as large, and others in the aviation supply chain.

The Government is willing to consider the situation of individual firms, so long as all other government schemes have been explored and all commercial options exhausted, including raising capital from existing investors. Any intervention would, of course, need to represent value for money for taxpayers.

The Government recognises the importance of regional connectivity to the nations and regions of the UK, and the positive impact that regional airports have on local

economies, including providing domestic and global connectivity, employment opportunities, and a hub for local transport. The Department for Transport has set up a Restart, Recovery and Engagement unit to work with the aviation sector on the immediate issues around restart, and its longer-term growth and recovery.

Grahame Morris:

[41986]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect on regional connectivity of the problems in the aviation sector resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Her Majesty's Government recognises that the aviation sector is vital for providing domestic and global connectivity, employment opportunities, and a hub for local transport.

We are committed to supporting the recovery of the sector to support our levelling up agenda through regional connectivity and strengthen ties within the Union. We recognise the importance of maintaining a thriving competitive aviation sector in the UK to deliver connectivity.

Grahame Morris:

[41990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will provide financial support for (a) airports and (b) airlines in return for shareholdings.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The aviation sector is essential to the UK economy, and we encourage airports, airlines and other businesses in the sector to draw on the unprecedented package of measures we have made available to support them through this time. This includes schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees.

We have set out that the Government is prepared to enter discussions with individual companies seeking bespoke support as a last resort, having exhausted all other options. Any intervention would also be on commercial terms and need to represent value for money for taxpayers.

Grahame Morris:

[41991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will establish an aviation sector group comprising Ministers, aviation unions and the private sector, to (a) assess the issues facing the industry as a result of covid-19 and (b) develop a strategic plan for the sector.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The aviation sector is important to the UK economy and the government recognises the challenging times it is facing as a result of COVID-19. Our transport systems are critical to support the restart of the wider economy and we are working closely with the wider aviation sector, including unions, on these restart plans and the longer-term recovery of the sector.

■ Biofuels: Coronavirus

Matt Vickers:

[\[43204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the bioethanol industry.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is in regular contact with companies in the fuel supply chain, including UK bioethanol suppliers, to apprise them of the support available to businesses as part of the response to COVID-19. It is too early to make any formal assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the bioethanol sector but the Department for Transport regularly monitors and reviews the schemes it has in place to support the renewable transport fuels sector to ensure these deliver cost effective carbon savings.

The Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO), a certificate trading scheme, is continuing to support a market for renewable fuels, such as bioethanol. The Department is working as flexibly as possible to ensure that renewable transport fuel certificates are issued quickly to improve the cash flow of renewable transport fuels suppliers.

The Department has also just consulted on proposals to introduce petrol with a higher bioethanol content in 2021 and is analysing responses at pace. It is understood that these proposals could potentially provide an economic boost to UK bioethanol producers in addition to wider economic benefits for the UK. Indeed, the UK bioethanol sector has stepped up to the challenge presented by COVID-19, by amending their production procedures to supply ethanol to the cleaning and sanitizer market. The Government is grateful to the producers involved.

■ Bus Services and Travel Agents: Coronavirus

Sajid Javid:

[\[41973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support is available for (a) private coach companies and (b) travel management companies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

In March the Chancellor announced £330 billion of guarantees, so businesses, such as coach operators and travel management companies, have access to the funds to pay essential bills. This includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of October.

The Government has also asked local transport authorities outside London to continue to pay coach operators for home-to-school transport at pre-coronavirus level during the outbreak.

■ Bus Services: Private Sector

Dr James Davies: [\[42242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to support private coach and bus companies facing financial difficulty as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government is supporting essential bus services across England with a funding package totalling £397 million.

In March the Chancellor announced £330 billion of guarantees, so businesses, such as coach operators, have access to the funds to pay essential bills. This includes the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which has been extended until the end of October.

■ Electric Scooters

Tom Tugendhat: [\[42099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals on e-scooters.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is reviewing the regulations that apply to e-scooters as part of our Future of Transport Regulatory Review. In response to COVID-19, we are accelerating and expanding planned trials of rental e-scooters, allowing all areas that want to host trials to do so. We will introduce legislation in June to allow trials to begin. Evidence gathered in trials will inform whether and how e-scooters should be legalised in the future.

■ Railways: Concessions

Dr Luke Evans: [\[42199\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the rail to refuge initiative.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The 'Rail to Refuge' initiative is a scheme that complements our wider safeguarding activity to protect vulnerable children and adults at risk.

Since the start of the lock down on 23 March 2020, 40 bookings for travel have been made using the system. This has resulted in more than 50 adults and children in a vulnerable position being helped. Critically these are individuals who would not have been able to travel to a place of safety without the assistance of the scheme.

■ Railways: Coronavirus

John Redwood: [\[41872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak, what plans he has for the safe use of trains when more commuters return to work.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Government advice to the public is to stay alert, and to only use public transport if they need to get to work if they cannot work from home. However, it is vital that our railways – and the transport sector as a whole - is ready to respond as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

My officials are working with SWR to understand what levels of capacity are possible on trains whilst maintaining social distancing. SWR are taking steps to protect passengers and staff through many means, including an increase in the cleaning regimes on trains and at stations, installing floor markings, removing every second Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) and encouraging passengers to download and use the SWR App to purchase tickets, using station posters and frequent PA announcements, removing where possible or restricting access to seats and benches at stations and closing waiting rooms, all to encourage social distancing. SWR are also working with the British Transport Police and Network Rail to manage crowding.

The rail industry is protecting staff in line with advice provided by Public Health England, and railway staff who are not essential to the safe and secure running of the railway continue to be able, wherever possible, to work from home.

TREASURY

■ Business: Coronavirus

Rosie Duffield:

[\[44022\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support the Government is providing to businesses that operate from premises with a rateable value of exactly £15,000.

Kemi Badenoch:

Businesses which occupy premises with a rateable value of exactly £15,000 can receive a grant of £10,000 from the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund if the premises are used for Retail, Hospitality or Leisure purposes.

Businesses in all sectors which occupy premises with a rateable value of exactly £15,000 may also be eligible for a grant from the Small Business Grant Fund. The Small Business Grant Fund provides businesses with a £10,000 cash grant per property, for each property eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rates Relief. Properties with a rateable value of £12,001 up to and including £15,000 are eligible for a tapered form of SBRR. The relief tapers to 0% at exactly £15,000. This means that in theory, a property with a rateable value of exactly £15,000 could be eligible for a £10,000 grant from the SBGF.

Businesses which occupy premises with a rateable value of exactly £15,000 may also be able to benefit from measures in the Government's unprecedented package of support for business, including:

- A twelve-month business rates holiday for all properties used for retail, hospitality or leisure purposes;
- 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 bills;
- The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, to provide support to the self-employed.

■ Charities: Government Assistance

Anna McMorrin: [\[43747\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department is taking to ensure environmental charities are financially supported during the covid-19 outbreak.

Anna McMorrin: [\[43748\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government plans to take to support environmental charities that have experienced reduced income and capacity to deliver on the Government's environmental objectives as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Anna McMorrin: [\[43749\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether emergency Government funding will be made available to environmental charities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

Environmental charities make a valuable contribution to the Government's environmental agenda, through conservation of the natural environment; engaging people in the natural world; and providing access to our beautiful landscapes and coastlines. The Government will continue to work with these organisations on shared objectives during and after the Covid-19 outbreak.

There is no specific financial support available solely to environmental charities. However, environmental charities may benefit from a number of the business support schemes the Government has launched. These include VAT deferrals, Small Business Grant Funding, business rates holidays for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, and the Job Retention Scheme. Full details of the unprecedented support the Government has made available are available at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Caroline Lucas:

[41964]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the timeframe is for the commencement of the review of the duration of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; if he will make it his policy to implement an immediate extension to that scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Lucas:

[41965]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effect of uncertainty on a potential extension of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme beyond 20 June 2020 on the ability of eligible business to (a) forward plan for their own viability and (b) protect jobs; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until October 2020. Extending the scheme in its current form until July will provide workers, businesses and the economy with clarity on this vital support. After July, the Government will introduce more flexibility to the furlough scheme in a measured way that protects people's incomes and helps support furloughed employees as they return to work. From August through to the end of October, employers currently using the scheme will have more flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part-time while still receiving support from the scheme. Employers using the scheme will start contributing some of the costs of their workers' salaries, substituting in part the contribution that the Government is currently making. The Government will outline more details of how this will work by the end of May.

Caroline Lucas:

[41968]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether small limited company directors that opted to submit payroll on an annual basis through the Basic HMRC PAYE Tools kit will be excluded by HMRC from the furlough provisions of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) on the grounds that if their annual pay roll date falls after the 19 March 2020 the system will not recognise them as being on a payroll before the CJRS cut-off date.

Jesse Norman:

Those paid annually are eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as long as they meet the relevant conditions. These include being notified to HMRC on an RTI submission on or before 19 March 2020 that relates to a payment of earnings in the 2019/20 tax year.

This requirement applies for any employee being claimed for under the scheme, irrespective of how frequently they are paid (e.g. weekly, fortnightly or monthly).

This requirement is designed to protect taxpayers' money against fraudulent claims.

Ian Paisley:[\[42035\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, what plans he has to end that scheme after the covid-19 outbreak; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling businesses to take employees out of furlough in the event that demand for services increases.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until October 2020. Extending the scheme in its current form until July will provide workers, businesses and the economy with clarity on this vital support. After July, the Government will introduce more flexibility to the furlough scheme in a measured way that protects people's incomes and helps support furloughed employees as they return to work. From August through to the end of October, employers currently using the scheme will have more flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part-time while still receiving support from the scheme. Employers using the scheme will start contributing some of the costs of their workers' salaries, substituting in part the contribution that the Government is currently making. The Government will outline more details of how this will work by the end of May.

Angela Crawley:[\[42103\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will issue guidance on the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme for umbrella companies on whether they can claim 80 per cent of average take home pay for contract workers in furlough, and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) covers employees on any type of employment contract, including full-time, part-time, agency, flexible or zero-hour contracts. It covers agency workers (including those employed by umbrella companies), so long as the other eligibility conditions of the scheme are met.

Employers should follow HMRC's comprehensive online guidance in order to calculate the correct reference pay. This guidance can be applied to all forms of employment contract.

Where an employee has been paid a variable amount, the reference pay is calculated by looking at the average pay over the financial year 2019/20, or in some instances by means of a one-year look-back test. Only payments that the employer was obliged to make should be included.

Alexander Stafford:[\[42222\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are (a) clinically extremely vulnerable and (b) shielding other members of their household who are clinically extremely vulnerable who are in receipt of support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20th April. By close 3 May 2020, HMRC had received 800,000 claims representing 6.3m furloughed employments and £8bn in support.

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.

Tulip Siddiq:

[43716]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the HM Treasury Direction on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been updated to reflect the guidance issued that states employees whose contracts came to a natural end during the covid-19 outbreak pandemic can be rehired and placed on furlough.

Jesse Norman:

The Direction has not been updated to this effect; however, on 23 April 2020, the guidance on eligibility criteria was clarified, including for employees on fixed-term contracts. Full details can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme.

Ian Lavery:

[43928]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many (a) businesses are using the furlough scheme and (b) employees have been furloughed in (i) Wansbeck, (ii) Northumberland, (iii) the North East and (iv) the UK.

Jesse Norman:

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20th April. By close 3 May 2020, 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.

Kirsten Oswald:

[43961]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he has taken to enable people to check (a) if their National Insurance number is registered on the HMRC Real Time Information system, (b) the last date of registration, (c) the identity of their registered employer and (d) whether their National Insurance number is (i) registered and (ii) proposed for registration under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and by which employer.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC's Real Time Information system can only be accessed by an employer or an agent authorised to act on an employers' behalf.

HMRC are not be able to provide information about individual Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) applications to employees.

If an employee is concerned that their employer has not claimed on their behalf when entitled to do so, the employee should speak to their employer.

If an employee suspects that their employer is abusing the scheme, they should report them to HMRC using the iForm on GOV.UK.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: Discrimination

Stella Creasy:

[43633]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on (a) the gender pay gap and (b) indirect discrimination.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury pays due regard to the equality impacts of policy decisions relating to the COVID-19 outbreak, in line with legal requirements and the Government's commitment to promoting equality. There are internal procedural requirements and support in place to ensure that such considerations inform decisions taken by ministers.

The Treasury's decision on when and how to close down the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will be based on all available evidence, including any equalities impacts.

■ Economic Situation: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[43973]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish a risk analysis of the potential financial effect of easing the covid-19 lockdown on (a) individuals and (b) businesses.

John Glen:

On 10 May, the Prime Minister set out a conditional plan for reopening certain economic activities, whilst continuing to suppress the outbreak.

Further details on the Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>.

We will continue to monitor developments to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and businesses.

The Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency including around £300 billion of guarantees – equivalent to approximately 15% of UK GDP.

■ Economic situation: Wales

Nick Smith:

[\[41955\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support economic recovery in Wales after the covid-19 outbreak; and whether he plans to introduce the Shared Prosperity Fund to help aid that recovery.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury's priority is to support the whole UK economy through the immediate crisis – including in Wales. We have taken unprecedented steps to keep as many people as possible in their existing jobs, support viable businesses to stay afloat and protect the incomes of the most vulnerable. These measures aim to protect the productive capacity of the whole UK economy and to enable a strong and sustainable recovery from this crisis. The government will use the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to level up opportunity in each of our four nations. This means investing in people, improving their life chances. The government will set out plans for the Fund in due course.

■ European Central Bank: Coronavirus

John Spellar:

[\[43834\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on the (a) UK and (b) world economy of the decision of the German Constitutional Court on funding for the European Central Bank bailout package.

John Glen:

HM Treasury regularly monitors global economic developments, including those in the euro area, and their impact on the UK as part of the normal process of policy development. It is not for the UK Government to comment on euro area monetary policy issues.

John Spellar:

[\[43835\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions (a) he, (b) Ministers in his Department and (c) officials in his Department have had with their counterparts in the German Finance Ministry on the decision of the German Constitutional Court on funding for the European Central Bank bailout package.

John Glen:

HM Treasury Ministers and Officials regularly speak with their counterparts in Germany. We have been in regular touch regarding our respective countries' response to COVID-19 and will continue to work closely in the weeks to come. It is not for the UK Government to comment on euro area monetary policy issues.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[43822\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of the financial sector on endowment mortgage policies due to mature

during the covid-19 outbreak with no prospect of discharging the mortgages to which they are linked; and if he will make it his policy to require companies providing such policies to extend their maturity dates until the after the outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government has been working closely with the financial sector to ensure appropriate forbearance is being shown across the mortgage market, including a 3-month mortgage holiday to enable affected borrowers to defer their mortgage payments and a 3-month moratorium on possession action to provide customers with reassurance that they will not have their homes repossessed at this difficult time.

Endowments are a form of investment, therefore, any extension to maturity dates would be a bespoke commercial decision and down to individual providers. We advise any customer whose endowment is to mature, to seek advice from both their lender and insurer on how to proceed.

■ PAYE

Damien Moore:

[\[42177\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to reverse the decision on charging interest on deferred PAYE.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has announced an unprecedented package of support for businesses and individuals during the Covid-19 outbreak.

This includes the deferral of certain VAT and Self-Assessment payments in 2020-21, and the waiving of associated interest and penalties.

HMRC have also scaled up their Time to Pay (TTP) service, where individual and business taxpayers can agree tailored plans to defer certain tax payments due, and repay them over an agreed period of time. These arrangements can include any tax or duty administered by HMRC, including PAYE. Interest will continue to accrue on TTP arrangements, in the usual way, to cover the costs to Government of late payment.

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Martyn Day:

[\[42117\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 28 April 2020 to Question 37780, on Revenue and Customs: Staff, how many people based at the Bathgate Pyramids Business Centre will be redeployed to (a) Edinburgh (b) an alternative office and (c) another Government department.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue and Customs' position has not changed since the response on 28 April 2020. HMRC continue to anticipate that about 70 per cent of staff in Bathgate will be redeployed in Edinburgh, or to an alternative HMRC office, or to another Government department.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Wayne David:

[43842]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he will extend support provided under the Self-Employment Support Scheme to the end of June 2020.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor indicated that the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme would be temporary when he announced it at the end of March, and that it could be extended if necessary. The Government is keeping this under review.

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Dr Julian Lewis:

[43821]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will provide additional support to SMEs such as dental and other medical practices by (a) requiring insurers to honour covid-19 claims under business interruption policies which covered notifiable diseases, even if covid-19 was not explicitly listed; and (b) allowing the directors of limited companies a monthly grant comparable to those given to employees and the self-employed.

Steve Barclay:

The Government recognises the important role all medical business play to protect and improve the health of the population and is taking many steps to support them during the COVID-19 outbreak:

- Dentists will be fully remunerated for the NHS work they would have otherwise undertaken, subject to some basic requirements.
- On 2 April, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) announced a £300 million cash advance for community pharmacies.
- The NHS has committed to securing funding for NHS ophthalmic contractors based on average month NHS General Ophthalmic Services fees from the previous year.

Medical practices may also benefit from the range of economic support measures the Government has announced. The Business Support website provides further information about how businesses can access the support that has been made available, who is eligible, when the schemes open and how to apply - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support>.

Most commercial insurance policies are unlikely to offer cover for unspecified notifiable diseases, such as COVID-19. However, those businesses which have an insurance policy that covers both pandemics and government ordered closure, should be able to make a claim – subject to the terms and conditions of their policy. Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers.

Income from dividends is a return on investment in the company, rather than wages. HMRC are not able to distinguish between dividends derived from an individual's own company and dividends from other sources, so do not have a clear mechanism

through which to support dividend income from an individual's own company, without also supporting dividend income from other investments. Company directors who pay themselves a salary through a PAYE scheme may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

■ Tourist Attractions: Government Assistance

Douglas Chapman:

[43676]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to provide financial support to visitor attractions that rely on a high income during summer months but are ineligible for covid-19 business support during to the covid-19 pandemic.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency including an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP.

Businesses in the leisure and tourism sector may benefit from the range of support measures made available, which includes:

- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England
- Small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- A Discretionary Grant Fund for Local Authorities in England to make grants payments to businesses not eligible for the above schemes
- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)
- The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS)
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months
- The Time To Pay scheme, through which businesses in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, can receive support with their tax affairs
- Protection for commercial leaseholders against automatic forfeiture for non-payment until June 30, 2020

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

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[41071]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment the Government has made of the equity of means testing new applicants for universal credit against partner income and the absence of that requirement for applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

Means-tested benefits such as Universal Credit (UC) act as a safety net for people who need extra support. They assess families' different sources of income, such as earnings and capital, including from a claimant's partner, with the aim of ensuring that help which comes from taxpayers is targeted at those who need it most.

UC is not an alternative as such to the CJRS or the SEISS, as it supports low income people whether they are employed, self-employed, unemployed or furloughed. The eligibility rules for the different sources of support cannot be compared directly.

The CJRS is designed to help employers whose operations have been severely affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) to retain their employees and protect the UK economy.

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) is based on Self Assessment tax returns. Since 1990, the UK's income tax system has been based on the principle of independent taxation. This provides that each individual is taxed on their personal income, has their own tax-free personal allowance, and set of tax thresholds. This fundamental principle provides everyone with absolute confidentiality for their personal tax affairs. It also means that it is not possible to take household income into account in the SEISS.

■ Visas: Turkey

Fleur Anderson:

[44053]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether businesspersons trading under an ECAA-2 visa are eligible for support from the Government during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency including an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP. Our current support measures are well-targeted at the businesses and individuals who most need support, bearing in mind the need to act very quickly to deliver this unprecedented package.

Businesspersons operating in the UK under a Turkish businesspersons' visa (ECAA-2) are eligible for this support which includes:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)
- The Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- Rebates for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for SMEs

- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months
- The Time To Pay scheme, through which businesses and self-employed individuals in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, can receive support with their tax affairs
- Protection for commercial leaseholders against automatic forfeiture for non-payment until June 30, 2020

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

Details of the range of support for individuals affected by COVID-19 is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>.

■ Zoos: Government Assistance

Douglas Chapman:

[43675]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans his Department has to support zoos and aquariums that are unable to furlough their employees.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government announced a package of support for licensed zoo or aquariums in England on May 4. These businesses can apply for a grant of up to £100,000. The amount received will be based on animals' needs and can be used to cover animal-care costs such as:

- keepers' wages
- animal feed and bedding
- veterinary care and medicines
- electricity and heating
- waste removal

Applications are being handled by The Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Further details are available here

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-apply-for-the-zoos-support-fund>.

However, before applying for a grant these businesses must try to reduce costs or generate income in other ways, including applying for COVID-19 business support schemes and commercial and philanthropic funding.

The Business Support website provides further information about how businesses can access the support that has been made available, who is eligible, when the

schemes open and how to apply - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support>.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Coroners

Vicky Foxcroft:

[41123]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many prevention of future deaths reports have been submitted by coroners to her Department in each of the last 10 years.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department established the coroner focal point in March 2016, aiming to provide a single point of entry for coroner communications. Before this point there were multiple routes by which coroners might contact the department, including locally. To try to collate information over the past 10 years would require going out to all business areas for historical information which may not be comprehensive and would incur disproportionate cost. The figures available are below in table 1.

TABLE 1

Year	<i>Number of Prevention of Future Death reports received</i>
2019	1
2018	0
2017	0
2016	1
2015	1
2014	1

N.B. This does not include PFDs for the Health and Safety Executive.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Remote Working

Mr David Jones:

[43607]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to enable its officials to work from home during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: DWP is committed to supporting everyone during this unprecedented time.

Where colleagues can effectively contribute to this effort working from home then they are doing so. Not all colleagues can work from home because they need to access equipment, programmes and support to enable them to do their telephony and processing work. We are requiring these employees to be in the office but in line with the Government's advice on critical workers, we are taking all practical steps to protect the health and safety of colleagues working in our offices.

The Department has procured significantly more portable computers to expand our home working capacity. Colleagues who require specialist IT equipment for accessibility reasons are able to order this for use at home and those who are in the vulnerable or shielding category can have it delivered to their home address.

■ Disability: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[41896]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled (a) employees and (b) business owners; and if she will make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

We continue to monitor employment of disabled people using the quarterly Labour Force Survey along with other relevant sources. Collection of this information is contemporaneous with the covid-19 outbreak. There will be an interval until data needed to assess the effects of the outbreak is available.

Labour Force Survey statistics for the first quarter of 2020, will be reported by the Office for National Statistics on 19 May 2020, covering the very start of the covid-19 outbreak in March. Statistics for the second quarter of 2020 will be available in August.

The latest available disability employment statistics for quarter 4 2019, show that the employment rate for working age disabled people was 54.1%, compared with 82.2% for non-disabled people. Therefore, there was an employment rate gap between disabled and non-disabled people of 28.1 percentage points. The disability employment gap fell by 2.1 percentage points on the year. These statistics also show that similar proportions of disabled and non-disabled people in work were self-employed; 15% of disabled people in work were self-employed compared with 14% of non-disabled people.

The Office for National Statistics is producing a range of wider information about the social and economic impacts of covid-19 such as the Business Impact of Coronavirus (BIC) survey. Statistics from the ONS Omnibus survey for 3 April 2020 to 13 April 2020 show that a lower proportion of disabled people than non-disabled people were worried about aspects of work and household finances.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[41898]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what representations she has received on disabled (a) employees and (b) business owners not receiving support in work as a result of the covid-19 lockdown; and if she will make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

A cross section of disabled people, employers and stakeholders' organisations have been engaging with the department in relation to the impacts covid-19 policies. To support employees, 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.

In addition, to support disabled people and their employers 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; and
- Accepting email claim forms from customers who request this as a reasonable adjustment.

■ **Employment: Coronavirus**

Daniel Zeichner:

[42070]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether workplaces will be required to carry out a specific covid-19 risk assessment before re-opening after the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

As part of managing health and safety, businesses must control the risks in their workplace. To do this, they need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide what reasonable steps to take to prevent that harm, via the process of conducting a risk assessment. This requirement has not changed and should address risks from the work environment as well as processes.

■ Errol Brown

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[41550\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether the Serious Case Panel review into the death of Errol Brown has been concluded; and whether her Department plans to publish the conclusions of that review.

Justin Tomlinson:

We are absolutely committed to improving our services, especially to the most vulnerable, which is why we have set up the Serious Case Panel. The panel does not consider individual cases and instead takes themes and systemic issues that come out of various case reviews to make recommendations for improvements.

■ Food Banks

Stephanie Peacock: [\[42156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what comparative assessment her Department has made of the the level of emergency food parcels provided by food banks in the weeks of March 2020 with same period in 2019.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 6 May 2020]: The Department does not keep official statistics on food bank use, so no such assessment has been completed.

■ Health and Safety Executive

Justin Madders: [\[41505\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans the Government has for the future role of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: Ministers meet regularly with HSE officials to discuss its functions. HSE sets out its roles and activities in annual plans and strategy documents.

■ New Enterprise Allowance: Coronavirus

Tom Tugendhat: [\[42097\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what guidance her Department has issued to people in receipt of the New Enterprise Allowance on business support schemes available during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

The New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) programme provides mentoring support for eligible claimants to help them enter into self-employment, or increase their earnings from an existing business. Each NEA participant works with a business mentor as they develop a business idea, and for up to 52 weeks when they are trading.

Although Covid-19 has presented us with many challenges, the NEA programme remains in place and our providers and mentors continue to deliver information and guidance to support participants in their self-employment journey.

■ Social Security Benefits

Andrew Gwynne:

[43849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to publish the findings of the review into how the benefits system supports people nearing the end of their life and those with severe conditions, announced on 11 July 2019.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[43993]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when her Department plans to publish the outcome of its review on how the benefits system supports people nearing the end of their life and living with severe health conditions.

Justin Tomlinson:

I refer the Rt.Hon./hon. Member to the answer I gave on 1 May 2020 to Question UIN **41931**:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-questions-answers/?page=1&max=20&questiontype=AllQuestions&house=commons%2Clords&uin=41931>

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Stephen Farry:

[41197]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has plans to increase the rates of (a) income support and (b) job seekers allowance for (i) all claimants and (ii) claimants with chronic health conditions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: There are no current plans to increase the amount of Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support due to COVID19. These benefits were increased by 1.7% from 6 April, following the Government announcement to end the benefits freeze in November 2019.

DWP and HMRC are experiencing significant increased demand and the Government has to prioritise the safety and stability of the benefits system overall, announcing measures that can be quickly and effectively operationalised.

Taken together, DWP's measures represent an injection of over £6.5 billion into the welfare system and, along with the other job and business support programmes announced by the Chancellor, represent one of the most comprehensive packages of support introduced by an advanced economy in response to COVID19.

Stuart Anderson:

[42186]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to provide welfare support to people with carers having to shield themselves during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make a statement.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP has now introduced two important temporary measures to help unpaid carers through the current emergency:

- unpaid carers will be able to continue to claim Carer's Allowance if they have a temporary break in caring, because they or the person they care for gets coronavirus or if either have to isolate because of it. (Under normal rules there are restrictions on breaks in care, but these have been lifted.); and
- providing "emotional support" (rather than just more traditional forms of care) to a disabled person will also now count towards the Carer's Allowance threshold of 35 hours of care a week. This recognises that the nature of caring might have to change during the current emergency .

If there are particular circumstances that mean that someone who was providing care for a disabled person ceases to be paid Carer's Allowance or the Universal Credit carer element, then, depending on their circumstances and the benefits they claim, the disabled person may be able to receive an additional amount of benefit, specifically designed to help with the costs of care.

■ Social Security Benefits: EU Nationals

Caroline Lucas:

[41959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether people who were granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (a) are protected by the equal treatment provisions of the Withdrawal Agreement and (b) satisfy the right to reside condition of the Habitual Residence Test for the purpose of accessing social security.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government has taken steps to provide reassurance to and protect the rights of EEA citizens resident in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, so that they will be able to continue their lives in the UK much as before. In order to give effect to this, on 30 March 2019, the Home Office fully launched the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

By being granted status under the EUSS, EEA citizens living in the UK are able to continue to work, study and access benefits and services in the UK on the same basis as they did before we left the EU. EEA citizens with pre-settled status are eligible to claim DWP income-related benefits such as Universal Credit if they are exercising a qualifying EU Treaty Right. This includes those with a worker or self-employed status and EEA workers with retained worker status who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

The longstanding requirement to be exercising a qualifying Treaty right to access income-related benefits is in line with EU law and aligned to Article 24 of the Citizens' Rights Directive, to which Article 23 of the Withdrawal Agreement refers. Our approach is consistent with the Withdrawal Agreement. EEA citizens with pre-settled status can also claim contributory benefits providing they meet eligibility criteria.

Caroline Lucas:

[41960]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has published guidance for Jobcentre Plus staff on accepting pre-settled status as sufficient proof of the right to reside for the purpose of accessing social security, including universal credit.

Justin Tomlinson:

I can confirm that guidance has been provided to Jobcentre Plus staff on those who have pre settled status.

Those granted pre-settled status have the same access to benefits as they did prior to the introduction of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). EEA citizens with pre-settled status are eligible to claim DWP income-related benefits such as Universal Credit if they are exercising a qualifying EU Treaty Right. This includes those with a worker or self-employed status and EEA workers with retained worker status who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

EEA citizens with pre-settled status can also claim contributory benefits providing they meet eligibility criteria.

■ Universal Credit

Ruth Jones:

[42181]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the monthly assessment period for universal credit takes into account a claimant's fluctuating income.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit replaced a highly complex system of multiple benefits with a single monthly payment and introduced a simple taper system to ensure that claimants were better off in work keeping more of what they earn compared to the Legacy system

The amount of Universal Credit paid to claimants reflects, as closely as possible, the actual circumstances of a household during each monthly assessment period.

Monthly assessment periods align to the way the majority of employees are paid and also allows Universal Credit to be adjusted each month. This means that if a claimant's income falls, they will not have to wait several months for a rise in their Universal Credit.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[43663]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in receipt of universal credit before March 2020 have not received the 1.7 per cent increase in that benefit on 6 April; and how many new claimants have received that increase.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: All existing and new universal credit claims will have their claim assessed on the increased rates of benefit for the relevant assessment period from 6 April 2020.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[41072]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of relaxing the savings rules that determine eligibility for and support from universal credit during the covid-19 outbreak in circumstances where the applicant can demonstrate those funds are required for pending tax bills.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 6 May 2020]: A key principle of UC is that it supports people who do not have assets available to meet their basic needs. While it is important to protect the incentive to save for claimants on low earnings, people with substantial capital can take responsibility for their own support. This is to ensure that we can maintain our focus on getting money to citizens who need it and safeguarding the most vulnerable.

If capital exceeds £16,000 there will be no entitlement to UC, unless the capital can be disregarded, for example personal injury compensation payments. Capital above £6,000 will reduce the amount of UC paid by £4.35 per month for every £250 of capital or part thereof.

If someone has money in their account that is to be used for business purposes, for example for paying tax, it will not be counted towards their capital, but they may be asked to prove that the money is for business purposes. People should make clear in their application the savings that are business assets, and note it in their online journal.

■ Universal Credit: Knowsley

Sir George Howarth:

[41390]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people are claiming universal credit; and what the unemployment rate is in Knowsley constituency as of 29 April 2020.

Will Quince:

The information requested on Universal Credit is not readily available at constituency level and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Statistics on employment and unemployment at Parliamentary Constituency level are estimated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) using the Annual Population Survey (APS).

The latest available data on unemployment in Knowsley constituency covers the period January 2019-December 2019, when the unemployment rate was estimated at 2.2%. However, the ONS consider this estimate highly uncertain as it is based on a very small sample. A less uncertain estimate exists for Knowlsey Local Authority District which is 2.9% (with the true level between 1.5% and 4.3%).

The first dataset containing information on the requested period for April 2020 will be published by the ONS in autumn 2020.

■ Universal Credit: Self-employed

Seema Malhotra:

[43027]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for Welfare Delivery at the Work and Pensions Select Committee on 23 April 2020, what steps she has taken to ensure that universal credit claimants that are self-employed are aware that capital set aside for their self-assessment tax bill will not affect their claim.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: The Understanding UC website provides information on UC and self-employment including the treatment of business assets. The Department also provides regular updates to self-employment groups, including the Federation of Small Business, with the ability for stakeholders to ask questions about issues of concern and engages regularly with the media to ensure information is disseminated.

For claimants with capital over £16,000 we contact the claimant to understand the composition of their capital to determine eligibility. Part of that consideration would be whether the declared capital included business assets which would be disregarded.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Finance Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma): **[[HCWS224](#)]**

I am tabling this statement for the benefit of Honourable and Right Honourable Members to bring to their attention the details of the new Bounce Back Loans Scheme (BBLs).

The Bounce Back Loans Scheme was launched on 4 May, and is facilitated by the Government-owned British Business Bank and delivered through its delivery partners. Lenders offer term loans of between £2,000 and £50,000 to support small businesses that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

The scheme is available on a temporary basis for an initial period of six months and can be extended as required. The key parameters of the scheme are as follows:

- BBLs will provide term loans only for a term of six years, with businesses able to access loans equivalent to 25 per cent of their turnover from £2,000 up to a maximum loan size of £50,000. The interest rate will be standardised across all lenders and fixed at 2.5 per cent. There will be no fees for borrowers to access the scheme.
- The percentage of net (post-recovery) losses for each loan that is guaranteed by the Government will be 100 per cent, with no cap on gross Government liability at the level of the lender's whole BBLs portfolio. Personal guarantees are not permitted, although some personal assets could be claimed as part of recovery from sole traders. Sole traders' principal private residence and vehicle may never be claimed as part of recovery.
- A Government grant ('the business interruption payment') will be provided for the benefit of businesses, equal to the interest incurred on the facility for the first twelve months. Businesses will not be required to make any repayments on capital during the first twelve months of the facility.

The Government will be subject to a new contingent liability as a result of the Bounce Back Loans Scheme, and I will be laying a Departmental Minute today containing a description of the liability undertaken.

For more information on this and other support for business, please go to <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/>

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):
[[HCWS225](#)]

The government today published new guidance to help UK employers get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible.

The new guidance covers eight workplace settings from outdoor environments and construction sites to factories and takeaways and sets out practical steps for businesses.

The government has consulted approximately 250 stakeholders in preparing the guidance. It has been developed with input from firms, unions, industry bodies and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), to develop best practice on the safest ways of working across the economy, providing people with the confidence they need to return to work.

The guidance applies to businesses currently open. This also includes guidance for shops which we believe may be in a position to begin a phased reopening at the earliest from the 1 June. Guidance for other sectors that are not currently open will be developed and published ahead of those establishments opening to give those businesses time to plan. The Government will also shortly set up taskforces to work with these sectors to develop safe ways for them to open at the earliest point at which it is safe to do so, as well as pilot re-openings to test businesses' ability to adopt the guidelines.

As part of today's announcement, the government has made available up to an extra £14 million for the HSE, equivalent to an increase of 10% of their budget, for extra call centre employees, inspectors and equipment if needed.

The guidance is available at gov.uk/workingsafely.

DEFENCE

■ Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report 2019

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer): **[[HCWS230](#)]**

I am pleased to lay before Parliament today the Service Complaints Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2019 on the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Service complaints system.

This report is published by Nicola Williams – her last as Ombudsman - and covers the fourth year of operation of the reformed Service complaints system and the work of her office in 2019.

The findings of the Report and the new recommendations made will now be considered fully by MOD, and a formal response to the Ombudsman will follow once that work is complete.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Donation of £1 million to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation

Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Dominic Raab):
[\[HCWS227\]](#)

It is the normal practice when a government department proposes to make a gift of a value exceeding £300,000, for the department concerned to present to the House of Commons a minute giving particulars of the gift and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from making the gift until fourteen parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the minute, except in cases of special urgency.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 27 January 2020 made a formal joint announcement of a donation by the UK Government of £1 million to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. This donation reflects HMG's strong commitment to Holocaust remembrance in this the 75th anniversary year of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The donation will be funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government at a cost of £500,000 each. This is a gift donation with no preconditions attached. There is however a precedent for this donation. In 2011 the then Foreign Secretary and then Communities Secretary announced a £2.15 million donation to the Foundation over three years. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation was founded in 2009 and collects funding for the preservation and maintenance of the grounds and remnants of the former Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau concentration camps, which are supervised by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim, Poland. The proposed donation has a symbolic value; moreover, preserving Auschwitz-Birkenau contributes to the continuation of Holocaust education. Several thousand UK citizens visit Auschwitz-Birkenau each year and it provides a lasting memorial to the dangers of antisemitism, extremism and racism in general.

The Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before the House of Commons, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a Parliamentary Question or a Motion relating to the minute, or by otherwise raising the matter in the House, final approval of the gift will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

TRANSPORT

■ Transport Update

Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): [\[HCWS226\]](#)

This statement concerns the application for the A38 Derby Junctions Development Consent Order made by Highways England under the Planning Act 2008, which had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 23 April 2019.

Under section 98(1) of the Planning Act 2008 the Examining Authority appointed to examine the application must complete its examination within six months. Under section

98(4) the Examining Authority must submit its recommendation report to the Secretary of State within three months of its completion of the examination. The examination began on 8 October 2019 and was due to close on 8 April 2020. The recommendation report would need to be sent to the Secretary of State on or before 8 July 2020.

Under section 107(1) of the Act, following receipt of the Examining Authority's recommendation report, the Secretary of State must decide whether to grant development consent. A decision in this case would therefore be made on or before 8 October 2020.

Sub-sections 98(4) and 107(3) of the Act give the relevant Secretary of State power to set new deadlines in respect of the above which are later than the statutory maxima. For this application, the relevant Secretary of State is the Secretary of State for Transport. In exercising this power, the Secretary of State for Transport must, amongst other things, make a statement to Parliament announcing the new deadlines.

The deadline for the completion of the examination is to be extended to 8 September 2020 (an extension of five months) to enable examination hearings postponed in the light of Government advice concerning coronavirus (COVID-19) to be rescheduled and held in a virtual forum. Consequently, the deadline for the Examining Authority to submit its recommendation report to the Secretary of State for Transport is amended to 8 December 2020 and the deadline for the Secretary of State for Transport to take his decision is amended to 8 March 2021.

The decision to extend an examination under the Planning Act 2008 regime is not taken lightly and reflects the exceptional public health circumstances the country finds itself in.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

TREASURY

■ Economy Update

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS229\]](#)

The Government's economic plan is one of the most comprehensive in the world.

We have provided:

- Billions of pounds of grants and loans for businesses
- Tens of billions of pounds of deferred taxes
- Income protection for millions of the self-employed
- And a strengthened safety net to protect millions of the most vulnerable people.

These schemes speak to my and this Conservative government's values. We believe in the dignity of work. And we are doing everything we can to protect people currently unable to work.

Yesterday, my Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister set out our plan for the next phase of the public health response. Today I can confirm the next stage of our Jobs Retention Scheme.

The scheme has been a world-leading economic intervention, supporting livelihoods and protecting futures. 7.5 million jobs have been furloughed – jobs we could have lost if we had not acted. Nearly a million businesses who could have closed shop for good. And as we reopen the economy we will need to support people back to work. We will do so in a measured way.

I can announce the job retention scheme will be extended, for four months, until the end of October. By that point, we will have provided eight months of support to British people and businesses.

Until the end of July, there will be no changes whatsoever. Then from August to October the scheme will continue, for all sectors and regions of the UK, but with greater flexibility to support the transition back to work. Employers currently using the scheme will be able to bring furloughed employees back part time. And to change their incentives, we will ask employers to start sharing, with government, the costs of paying people's salaries.

Full details will follow by the end of May, but I want to assure people today of one thing that won't change: Workers will, through the combined efforts of government and employers, continue to receive the same overall level of support as they do now, at 80% of their current salary, up to £2,500. I'm extending this scheme because I won't give up on the people who rely on it.

■ IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak):

[\[HCWS228\]](#)

The Government have today augmented the UK's 2010 agreement to lend to the International Monetary Fund's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust by a total of 2 billion Special Drawing Rights (approximately £2.2 billion) to support economic recovery and response to COVID-19 in the most vulnerable countries. This takes the total UK agreement to up to 4 billion Special Drawing Rights (approximately £4.4 billion). A copy of the agreement will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses in due course.