



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 20 May 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (07:20 P.M., 20 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

■ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Dental Services**

Neil Coyle:

[\[47310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be extended to include (a) NHS and (b) private dental practices.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is open to eligible businesses in most sectors, including private dentists. In order to be eligible for the CBILS, businesses must:

- be based in the UK;
- have an annual turnover of up to £45 million.

Businesses also need to show that they:

- would be viable were it not for the pandemic;
- have been adversely impacted by the coronavirus.

As with any other borrower, these businesses would need to meet the eligibility criteria for the Scheme which would be assessed by the lender on a case by case basis.

■ **Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Correspondence**

Stella Creasy:

[\[47270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many pieces of correspondence he has received from MPs on behalf of constituents on matters relating to covid-19 on each date since the outbreak began; and how many responses he has provided to that correspondence in each category of response.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Between 23 March and 18 May 2020, the Department received 3,261 pieces of COVID-19 related correspondence from MPs on behalf of constituents. Of these 3,261, we have responded to 1,827, closed 125 for which a response was not required, and transferred an additional 244 to other Government Departments.

■ **Hospitality Industry and Retail Trade**

Lucy Powell:

[\[47298\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which (a) Ministers, (b) organisations and (c) individuals will sit on the (i) pubs and restaurants and (ii) non-essential retail roadmap taskforces.

Paul Scully:

As you are aware, five new ministerial-led taskforces have been set up to develop plans for how and when closed sectors can reopen safely, following publication of the UK's roadmap to rebuild Britain.

As part of this science-led approach, each taskforce will work across Government and engage with key stakeholders in public health, industry, trade unions and devolved administrations to:

- ensure that COVID-19 secure guidelines are developed in line with the phased approach and public health directions, building on the existing guidance and providing intelligence and sector-specific expert input;
- agree and ensure alignment of all relevant sectoral guidance, and;
- provide key sector stakeholders direct access to Ministers to shape the guidance.

Details on the structure and scope of the taskforces is currently being drawn up and will be provided in due course.

■ Manufacturing Industries: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:****[46059]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on domestic manufacturing capacity.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Manufacturing is a critical part of our economy. My Department is engaging with industry trade bodies to understand the impacts of Covid-19 on the manufacturing sector, to ensure that Government support meets the needs of manufacturers during and after the Covid-19 outbreak.

On 7 May, the Office for National Statistics published the Business Impacts of Covid-19 Survey.[1] It showed that 79% of manufacturing businesses continued to trade during between 6 and 19 April 2020. However, more than half of manufacturing businesses reported a fall in turnover during this period.

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/coronavirus/theeconomyandsocietyfasterindicators/7may2020#business-impact-of-the-coronavirus>

■ Small Businesses: Non-domestic Rates**Richard Burgon:****[47376]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 41552, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of businesses and (b) value of business rates paid by (i) businesses in shared offices, (ii) regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment,

(iii) B&Bs that pay council tax instead of business rates and (iv) charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

Paul Scully:

Overall, for the Discretionary Business Grants Fund we have estimated some 400,000 businesses as potentially in-scope. The National Market Traders Federation estimates that there are 32,400 market traders; we have estimated that 80% do not pay business rates. 93,247 charity properties are in receipt of charitable rates relief. The Bed & Breakfast Association estimates that 5-10,000 Bed and Breakfast pay Council Tax rather than business rates. The numbers of business in shared work spaces, who are not liable for business rates is not fully known and makes up the remainder.

■ **WH Smith: Post Offices**

Marion Fellows:

[\[47340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the effect on the level of viable Post Office branches of WH Smith's recent fall in revenue.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the critical role that post offices play in communities and for small businesses across the UK. While the Government sets the strategic direction for the Post Office, it allows the company the commercial freedom to deliver this strategy as an independent business. As such, the impact of WH Smith's recent fall in revenue on the viability of post office branches is an operational matter for Post Office Limited. I have asked Nick Read, the Group Chief Executive of Post Office Limited, to write to the Hon. Member about this matter. A copy of his reply will be placed in the libraries of the House.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ **Church Services: Attendance**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[47487\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what is the average church attendance each week in (a) Rother Valley Constituency, (b) Yorkshire, and (c) England in each year of the last five years.

Andrew Selous:

The most recent survey of church attendance was published in 2018, and the table below contains figures aggregated from 2014-18 using average weekly attendance figures at all age services. These figures are collected each year during four weeks in October.

The figures in the table below include adult and child attendance at Sunday and midweek church services and fresh expressions, but not attendance at services for schools. Special local services such as memorials to commemorate flooding – can lead to fluctuations in the figures.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Rother Valley*	1,450	1,260	1,170	1,130	980
Yorkshire*	82,600	82,800	77,600	75,500	75,200
Church of England	975,300	959,900	921,700	893,900	870,900

More information can be found in the annual Statistics for Mission report:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media/18763>

Parish boundaries do not coincide with constituency or county boundaries. Figures in the table are based on reasonable approximations as follows:

- The Rother Valley figure refers to the parishes in the Deanery of Laughton along with the parishes of Whiston and Wickersley.
- The Yorkshire figure refers to the Dioceses of York, Leeds, and Sheffield.

■ Churches: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[902797]

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what the Commissioners' timetable is for enabling churches to reopen safely for funeral services after the covid-19 lockdown.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners do not have responsibility for setting a timetable for the reopening of church buildings for funeral services. Current guidance from the House of Bishops is not to conduct funeral services in church buildings because of widely expressed concerns about parishes having capacity to conduct such funerals safely, including being able to clean churches thoroughly between services to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. This is guidance, not instruction.

We are acutely aware of the anguish of those not able to have or attend a funeral in their parish church in the current circumstances. Where it is requested a priest will be present to conduct a funeral service, either at a crematorium or at the churchyard. The House of Bishops meets regularly to review its guidance which will be updated in line with changing circumstances, and published on the Church of England website.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[902798]

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what the Commissioners' timetable is for churches to reopen for baptisms, weddings and funerals following the covid-19 outbreak.

Andrew Selous:

The Church Commissioners do not have responsibility for setting a timetable for the reopening of church buildings for funeral services. Baptisms and weddings cannot at present be celebrated inside church buildings, and the relevant Cabinet Office and MHCLG guidance can be seen here:

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

Current guidance from the House of Bishops is not to conduct funeral services in church buildings because of widely expressed concerns about parishes having capacity to conduct such funerals safely, including being able to clean churches thoroughly between services to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. This is guidance, not instruction. We are acutely aware of the anguish of those not able to celebrate significant life events such as baptisms, weddings and funerals in their parish church in the current circumstances. The House of Bishops meets regularly to review its guidance which will be updated in line with changing circumstances, and published on the Church of England website.

Tracey Crouch:

[902801]

To ask the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church of England has made of the potential effect on public health of reopening churches.

Andrew Selous:

The House of Bishops meets regularly to review its own guidance to clergy in light of Government and public health advice.

On 5th May the House of Bishops issued new guidance, which can be seen at:

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

While church buildings remain closed for public worship in line with Government advice, the Bishops agreed in principle to a phased approach to lifting restrictions, in time and in parallel with the Government's approach, with three broad stages. The first, effective immediately, allows clergy limited access to church buildings for activities such as streaming of services or private prayer, so long as the necessary hygiene and social distancing precautions are taken; the decision being made by individual clergy after discussion with their diocesan bishop. The second and third will see access for some rites and ceremonies, and for worship services with limited congregations meeting, when Government restrictions are eased to allow it.

Senior staff of the National Church Institutions have joined two of the Government's 'unlocking' work streams, within the Department for Culture Media and Sport and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

DEFENCE

■ Armed Forces: Recruitment

Sir John Hayes:

[\[46535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to (a) recruit and (b) retain armed forces personnel.

James Heappey:

We remain committed to maintaining the overall size of the Armed Forces.

Importantly, the Services continue to meet all operational commitments, keeping the country and its interests safe. The Armed Forces are fully funded to meet their target strength and we continue to increase funding year on year.

There are a range of measures under way to improve recruitment and retention, and these are kept under constant review. These include the following:

Recruitment

All three Services are closely focused on recruiting processes to ensure they are converting high levels of interest into trained strength, maximising the potential of all applicants.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines operate a Personnel Recovery Programme which includes initiatives to improve inflow (gains to trained strength), throughflow (promotions) and outflow (reducing voluntary resignations).

The Army Confidence 2020 campaign follows the highly successful 2019 'Your Army Needs You' campaign, which focused on seeing beyond stereotypes to spot young people's potential. The campaign has begun well and is directly comparable to last year's iteration which delivered the highest number of applications since 2014. Army Reserve recruitment is improving and performing strongly, with an increase of 29.5% in the last calendar year.

The Royal Air Force established Enterprise Collaboration Teams to oversee critical skills groups and deliver a range of recruitment initiatives. Specialist Recruitment Teams have also been created for hard to recruit branches and trades, Black Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) and female personnel. A major programme to encourage re-joiners is also underway.

Retention

We have increased the attractiveness of our offer to Service personnel by securing a pay rise of 2.9% for all up to 1-star rank. Financial Retention Incentives are also being used to improve retention in certain priority areas.

The Future Accommodation Model (FAM) is now being trialled at scale in selected sites. FAM is intended to give Service personnel greater choice over their housing options to better suit their lifestyles and preferences.

Flexible Service introduces the potential for Service personnel to alter their career commitment for set periods of time. This should see more people staying in the Armed Forces who may otherwise have decided to leave in order to meet competing demands on their time, such as caring or parental responsibilities.

Our People Concept Development project involves collaborating with industry to tackle the critical skills challenge and explore new ways to access the skilled people we need. By looking at demand across the public and private sector, finding ways to share skills and make it easier for people to move around different elements of Defence, we aim to increase retention of skilled people.

■ Army

John Spellar: [\[45953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many regular, full-time serving members of the Army there were on the latest date for which figures are available.

James Heappey:

There were 78,620 Regular Army personnel on strength as at 1 January 2020

Notes/Caveats:

These figures were provided by Defence Statistics (Army)

Figures are for Untrained and Trained Regular strengths and therefore exclude Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) and Gurkhas but include those individuals who have transferred out of the Gurkhas to the Regular Army.

Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes;

■ Army Reserve

John Spellar: [\[45954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Army Reserve personnel, excluding members of University Officer Training Corps, have served for a period of over one year.

James Heappey:

As at 1 January 2020, there were 25,610 Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) Army personnel who had continuous Army Reserve service of one year or more.

Notes/Caveats:

1. Figures provided by Defence Statistics (Army).
2. FR20 personnel includes volunteer reserves who are mobilised, High Readiness Reserves and those Volunteer Reserves serving on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) and Additional Duties Commitment (ADC). Sponsored Reserves who

provide a more cost effective solution than volunteer reserve are also included in the Army Reserve FR20.

3. The above figure is the number of FR20 personnel who were recorded on Strength both on 1 January 2020 and 1 January 2019 . This captures the number of personnel who have a year or more continuous service in Army Reserve, but will not include those who may have accumulated more than one year of service in other areas of the Armed Forces prior to joining the Army Reserves.
4. Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes.

■ **British Overseas Territories: Coronavirus**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[46536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what support his Department is providing to the Overseas Territories during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Heappey:

The Ministry of Defence is playing a significant part in the UK Government's efforts to ensure the Overseas Territories receive the necessary support to manage impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

We have sent a military medical team to the Falkland Islands which has doubled its ICU bed capacity. In Gibraltar, Defence personnel helped build the Nightingale hospital and have provided logistical and planning support. Defence personnel, as part of Security Assistance Teams, have deployed to the Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands to assist local authorities planning for their coronavirus responses. A further team have deployed to the Turks and Caicos Islands to assist local countering-illegal-immigration operations on a short-term basis.

■ **Global Navigation Satellite Systems**

John Healey:

[\[46551\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the defence implications of a satellite navigation system for the UK.

James Heappey:

UK Armed Forces rely upon accurate Positioning, Navigation and Timing information for a variety of critical applications. We have privileged access to US GPS, the world's foremost GNSS system. The Ministry of Defence is committed to a systems-of-systems approach to managing PNT vulnerabilities; we are working across Government, including the UK Space Agency, to develop options for UK Assured PNT to maximise return on investment and meet Critical National Infrastructure requirements.

■ Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

Jonathan Edwards:

[\[47244\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment he has made of the suitability of the F-35 Lightning II for long periods of supersonic flight.

Jeremy Quin:

When required, the Lightning can cruise at supersonic speed for long periods.

However operationally, like most modern combat fast jets, supersonic speeds would only be used in limited tactical situations and would only be required for short bursts; the vast majority of its tactical employment is predicated around subsonic operating speeds. As a result, it is highly unlikely that Lightning would need to be routinely flown at supersonic speed for sustained periods.

■ Maritime Patrol Aircraft: Procurement

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[47165\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the retirement of the RAF Nimrod fleet, for what reason the UK has not replaced its maritime surveillance capability; and what assessment he has made of (a) the disadvantages of the lack of UK maritime patrol aircraft, (b) when such capability could be restored, and (c) the requirement to restore the capability.

Jeremy Quin:

In the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, the Government confirmed that it would close the Maritime Patrol Aircraft capability gap with the procurement of nine Boeing P-8A Poseidon aircraft. The UK's first aircraft was delivered to the Royal Air Force in October 2019 and we declared an initial operating capability on 1 April 2020.

■ Military Aid: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[46539\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the COVID Support Force in supporting public services.

James Heappey:

Defence's COVID Support Force (CSF) was established to provide support, expertise and resilience to the NHS and other Government Departments to assure the continued delivery of public services as part of HMG's response to COVID-19.

In total, Defence has responded to 161 Military Aid to Civilian Authority (MACA) requests, involving nearly 4,000 military personnel. Through the MACA process, Defence has supplied clinical support to the NHS, logistics support to the national PPE distribution effort and support to testing (including the rapid establishment of a Mobile Testing capability), and has provided expert planning support to a number of Government Departments.

Support to the Government's COVID-19 response is the Ministry of Defence's main effort; Defence is committed to supporting the national effort to tackle Covid-19 and

continues to aid other Government Departments such as the Department for Health and Social Care whilst ensuring that critical Defence outputs continue to be delivered.

■ Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Tankers

John Healey:

[\[46552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, with reference to the former Secretary of State for Defence's keynote speech at the Sea Power Conference on 15 May 2019, what progress he has made on (a) commissioning and (b) setting a timescale for completion for work examining the lessons from the Mars tanker procurement; and if he will place a report of the findings of that work in the House of Commons Library.

Jeremy Quin:

For details of the schedule for the MARS (Tide Class) Tanker Learning from Experience report, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the then Minister for Defence Procurement (Anne-Marie Trevelyan) on 4 September 2019 to Question 286672 to the right Hon. Member for North Durham (Kevan Jones).

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar) on 18 May 2020 in response to Question 45955.

Attachments:

1. Royal Fleet Auxiliary [Hansard Extracts.docx]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Coronavirus

Catherine West:

[\[47390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to support the creative industries following the covid-19 lockdown.

Tracy Brabin:

[\[47405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to provide financial support for freelance creative professionals with portfolio careers who are unable to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and universal credit.

Caroline Dinenage:

We appreciate that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge to many of DCMS' sectors including the creative industries, which is why the Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency.

DCMS is engaging with a range of departments to support the economic response, and ensuring that the needs of its sectors, and those who work in them, are fully understood. DCMS will continue to work with these valuable sectors to understand

the difficulties they face and help them access support through these challenging times and through recovery.

To ensure we are assisting all our sectors as effectively as possible, regular ministerially-chaired roundtables are held with business representative organisations as well as trade associations from across the Creative Industries. In addition, officials are in regular contact with stakeholders from these sectors, and we continue to speak with HM Treasury colleagues to ensure that the full spectrum of government support reaches the UK's world-leading media and Creative Industries.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Public Service Broadcasting**

Tracy Brabin: [\[47404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how much his Department has spent on advertising with public service broadcasters in each of the last three years.

Mr John Whittingdale:

DCMS have not purchased advertising with public service broadcasters in the last three years.

■ **Leisure: Coronavirus**

Dr Julian Lewis: [\[47166\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reason (a) leisure parks have been provisionally scheduled for reopening only in step 3 of the covid-19 recovery strategy and (b) open-air facilities have been grouped for reopening with (i) cinemas and (ii) other indoor leisure venues; and if he will make it his policy to reallocate leisure parks to an earlier reopening phase of the recovery strategy.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government will look at reopening sites such as leisure parks and outdoor recreation facilities no earlier than 4 July, in line with the wider hospitality sector. Any decisions will be subject to further scientific advice and the risk assessment at the time.

As part of the Government's leisure and recreation taskforce, my Department has set up a Visitor Economy Working Group to specifically focus on the practicalities and guidelines for opening up the sector during the recovery period. We will issue further guidance shortly on our phased reopening approach, including which businesses could be covered in each phase and the timeframes involved.

■ **Musicians: Visas**

Hilary Benn: [\[46560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether it is Government policy to seek to negotiate an agreement on multi-entry touring visas for UK musicians wishing to perform in the EU as part of the future partnership negotiations.

Mr John Whittingdale:

DCMS has engaged extensively with union bodies, companies, orchestras, individual musical practitioners and cultural organisations. We understand the importance of being able to tour. We recognise that this depends on musicians and crew being able to move quickly and easily between countries, taking necessary equipment with them.

We want a relationship with the EU based on friendly cooperation. On temporary entry for business purposes (mode 4), a reciprocal agreement based on best precedent will mean that UK citizens will be able to undertake some business activities in the EU without a work permit, on a short-term basis. The same would apply for EU citizens making business visits to the UK. The precise details, including range of activities, documentation needed, and the time limit, will be negotiated.

■ Television: Licensing**Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[47206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will hold further discussions with the BBC on their decision to remove the free television licence concession for people aged over 75.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government recognises the value of free TV licences for over-75s and believes that they should be funded by the BBC. The Government is disappointed with the BBC's decision to restrict the over 75 licence fee concession only to those in receipt of Pension Credit. However, the BBC remains responsible for the administration of the concession and it will be responsible for setting out what those affected will need to do.

The BBC and the Government have been discussing the national Coronavirus situation. Recognising the exceptional circumstances, the BBC Board decided to change the start date of its new policy on over 75s. The current plan is to reduce the concession on 1 August and the BBC will keep the issue under review as the situation continues to evolve.

EDUCATION**■ Children: Coronavirus****Richard Burgon:**[\[47377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 41551, how many pupils who have been supplied with a computer or laptop for use at home during the covid-19 outbreak are (a) preparing for examinations in Year 10, (b) receiving support from a social worker, (c) a care leaver and (d) in pre-school.

Richard Burgon: [47378]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 4 May 2020 to Question 41551, how many (a) laptops and (b) 4G internet hotspots his Department has provided to pupils in (a) Leeds, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber and (c) the UK since the schools closed due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Olivia Blake: [47479]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when Government funding will be made available to schools for laptops for remote learning for pupils during the covid-19 lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has committed over £100 million to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children in England to access remote education, including by providing laptops, tablets and 4G routers.

The Department is providing laptops and tablets to disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for examinations in Year 10, receiving support from a social worker or are a care leaver. Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and disadvantaged children in Year 10 do not have internet connections, we are also providing 4G routers.

Local authorities and academy trusts are best place to identify and prioritise children and young people who need devices. The Department is agreeing the number of devices allocated to each local authority and academy trust based on its estimates of the number of eligible children that do not have access to a device.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [47427]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that communication protocols for regular contact between vulnerable children and their schools during the covid-19 outbreak are monitored.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [47428]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) designated safeguarding leads, (b) headteachers, (c) SENCO's and (d) pastoral leads maintain regular telephone communication directly with vulnerable children rather than teachers.

Vicky Ford:

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

Our latest guidance on safeguarding in schools and protecting vulnerable children is set out below:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-safeguarding-in-schools-colleges-and-other-providers>

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

Being at school can be an important lifeline for children who need or have needed a social worker, which is why schools have remained open to them throughout the period of partial closures. Where these children are not attending school, the school should notify the child's social worker. They should then work together with the local authority/social worker to follow up the reasons for absence, strongly encourage attendance where the social worker agrees this is appropriate, and consider how to keep in touch with the child, including through the provision of remote education, particularly where the social worker agrees that attendance would not be appropriate.

Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) is statutory safeguarding guidance that schools should continue to have regard to as per their legislative duty. To help schools do this we have published safeguarding guidance.

This guidance supports governing bodies, proprietors, senior leadership teams and designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) so they can continue to have appropriate regard to KCSIE and keep their children safe. It suggests where schools might consider safeguarding policy and process differently when compared to business as usual. The guidance is clear that revised child protection policies should, amongst other things, reflect the arrangements in place to keep children not physically attending the school safe, especially online and how concerns about these children should be progressed. The guidance also reflects the continued importance for school staff to work with and support children's social workers and have access to a trained DSL or deputy.

Designated safeguarding leads, working with social workers are best placed, on a case by case basis, to put support mechanisms in place for individual vulnerable children not attending school, including who will be best placed (from the school) to keep in regular contact with the child.

The department are providing laptops, tablets and routers, as required, for children with social workers and care leavers to help them keep in touch with the services they need.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus

Florence Eshalomi:

[47497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that free school breakfast and lunch provision continues during the (a) May half-term and (b) summer holidays during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Ordinarily, provision for free school meals (FSM) is during term-time only. However, during the Easter holidays, the department met the costs of offering FSM 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.

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

■ **Nurseries: Coronavirus**

Neil Coyle:

[47303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions his Department has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on business rate exemptions for nurseries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

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

Guidance on the support available to businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Further information on business rates relief for nurseries and eligibility can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-your-nursery-is-eligible-for-business-rates-relief-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19> and;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/877772/Nursery_discount_guidance_April_2020.pdf.

■ **Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**

Andrew Gwynne:

[47220]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to issue pedagogical guidance on safe socially-distanced play-based learning for reception pupils.

Nick Gibb:

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.

The Department for Education has published guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings to prevent the spread of coronavirus, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

The Department has also provided information on planning what to teach, and how, in the case of a phased return of some children into mainstream primary schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools#planning-what-to-teach-and-how>.

It sets out that the priorities for young children at this time should be resocialisation into school routines; speaking and listening, and regaining momentum in particular with early reading.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[47247]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the medical and scientific advice on covid-19 transmission that indicates it will be safe to re-open schools.

Nick Gibb:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) established the Children's Task and Finish Working Group to provide consolidated scientific health advice to the Government. This advice has been used, alongside other sources of information, to inform decision making on potential schools' reopening options.

SAGE are publishing papers from SAGE meetings in tranches. The first batch was released on 20 March 2020 and a second on 5 May 2020. Further batches will be released regularly.

The list of papers to be released to date are available by following the link below, including several schools-related papers. This list will be updated to reflect papers considered at future meetings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>.

Grahame Morris:

[47248]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons different rules on social distancing are being applied in schools compared to other sectors.

Nick Gibb:

Keeping people safe continues to be the Government's main priority. We want all children and young people to be able to get back into school as soon as the scientific advice allows – it is the best place for them to be educated and we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers and teachers.

Our approach for education and childcare settings to prepare for a gradual returning of pupils from 1 June is underpinned by our latest understanding of the science, which indicates that we need to take a phased approach to limit the risk of increasing the rate of transmission. We have specifically factored in:

- severity of disease in children – there is high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus;
- the age of children – there is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus;
- numbers of children going back – which needs to be limited initially then increased gradually as the science permits; and

- systems to reduce the size of the groups coming into contact with each other – such as smaller class sizes spread out across setting.

Early years and primary age children cannot be expected, unlike older children and adults, to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we have also taken this into account.

Protective measures are possible which, when implemented, substantially reduce the risk of transmission of infection.

It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group; and that small group stays away from other people and groups. Public Health England is clear that if early years settings, schools and colleges do this, and crucially if they are also applying regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per the advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered. Where settings are able to keep children and young people in those small groups 2 metres away from each other, they should do so. We have published guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings to support settings to get this right, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Grahame Morris:

[47249]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance he has issued to schools on maintaining social distancing within schools with (a) early years children and (b) limited classroom space.

Nick Gibb:

The safety of pupils and staff returning to school is key. We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account. Protective measures are possible which, when implemented, substantially reduce the risk of transmission of infection. Schools should therefore work through the hierarchy of protective measures:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms;
- frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices;
- regular cleaning of schools; and
- minimising contact and mixing.

It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups. Public Health England is clear that if early

years settings, schools and colleges do this, and crucially if they are also applying regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per the advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered. Where schools are able to keep children and young people in those small groups 2 metres away from each other, they should do so.

Each school's circumstances will be slightly different. Any school that cannot achieve these small groups at any point should discuss options with their local authority or trust. This might be because there are not enough classrooms or spaces available in the school. Solutions might involve children attending a nearby school, or schools prioritising the younger age groups of newly eligible children.

We have published guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings to support settings to get this right, available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[47429]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the spread of covid-19 in school hubs for vulnerable children.

Nick Gibb:

Whilst plans for wider opening of schools have been announced from 1 June at the earliest, in the meantime schools continue to be open to priority groups: vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

With significantly reduced pupil numbers, the Department understands that shared provision through multi-school cluster or hub arrangements may be considered. The Department has published guidance on cluster and hub provision which makes it clear that public health should be a priority and that provision through individual schools and settings, where possible, entails fewer people in a single setting and less social contact, and therefore a reduced risk of spreading the virus. The guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/using-clusters-and-hubs-to-maintain-educational-provision/cluster-and-hub-provision-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Where schools have no alternative but to close and cannot 'pair up' with a neighbouring school, larger hubs may be the only practical alternative. If this is the case, public health should remain a priority and any arrangement should follow the latest guidance on implementing protective measures in education settings, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>.

■ Students: Coronavirus**Catherine West:****[45348]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support university students with accommodation they can no longer use as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Michelle Donelan:

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

We expect universities to communicate clearly with residential students on rents for this period and to administer accommodation provision in a fair manner. A number of universities and large accommodation providers have waived rents for the summer term or released students early from their contracts.

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

Students who are tenants with individual private landlords can discuss with them the possibility of an early release from their tenancy agreement. Tenants without an agreed release are still liable for their rent and should pay this as usual.

If students face financial hardship and struggle to pay rent, [support is available](#). In the first instance, they should speak to their landlord if they think they will have difficulty meeting a rental payment. In this unique context, tenants and landlords are encouraged to work together to put in place a rent payment scheme.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has published guidance on consumer contracts, cancellation and refunds affected by the Covid-19 outbreak: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds>. This sets out the CMA's view on how the law operates to help consumers understand their rights and help businesses treat their customers fairly. Students may be entitled to refunds from accommodation providers, depending on the terms of their contract and their particular circumstances. If students need help, organisations such as Citizens Advice offer a free service, providing information and support.

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

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agricultural Products: Prices****Carla Lockhart:**[\[902735\]](#)

Whether he plans to provide support to the devolved Administrations to help local (a) dairy and (b) beef producers that are facing reductions in farmgate prices.

Victoria Prentis:

This is a devolved matter and so will be for the Northern Ireland Executive to decide what support they provide to their sectors. I meet with Minister Poots regularly and we are working closely to share information and intentions to help develop coherent approaches, for example, a UK-wide campaign has recently been launched to encourage consumers to increase dairy purchases.

■ Agriculture: Environment Protection**Andrew Percy:**[\[46602\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of networks for peer-to-peer advice and support for farmers to promote and share best practice of nature-friendly farming.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has reviewed a range of evidence to understand the effectiveness of networks for peer-to-peer advice and support for farmers to promote and share best practice of nature-friendly farming. There is an increasing recognition in the agriculture sector of the value of peer-to-peer learning and there are already several initiatives that encourage these practices. Defra is considering a range of different models for the provision of advice and support in the Environmental Land Management scheme, including peer-to-peer learning.

Andrew Percy:[\[46603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential for environmentally responsible farming to deliver (a) healthy soils, (b) long-term food security, (c) clean water and (d) a stable climate; and what support the Government is providing to farmers to deliver those outcomes.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to supporting farmers to deliver environmental outcomes. Our Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme is the cornerstone of our new agricultural policy. Founded on the principle of “public money for public goods”, the ELM scheme is intended to provide a powerful vehicle for achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and commitment to net zero emissions by 2050, while supporting our rural economy.

The ELM scheme is due to be in place from 2024. Farmers and other land managers may enter into agreements to be paid for delivering the following public goods:

- Clean and plentiful water

- Clean air
- Thriving plants and wildlife
- Reduction in and protection from environmental hazards
- Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change
- Beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment

Farmers and land managers will be able to decide for themselves how they deliver environmental benefits from their businesses and their land, and how they integrate this into their food, timber and other commercial activities.

Meanwhile, Countryside Stewardship (CS) provides a stepping stone to the future scheme, paying for environmental enhancements now as area-based payments are phased out.

CS supports Defra's strategic objective of "a cleaner, healthier environment, benefitting people and the economy". Through the scheme, farmers can apply for funding to improve their local environment – from restoring wildlife habitats and creating woodlands to managing flood risk.

We know that soil is an essential natural asset and that its careful management can lead to multiple public goods. Having soil specifically named in the Agriculture Bill will mean we can help farmers to protect soil and improve its quality. Soils and food security and production are being considered as part of the development of the ELM scheme. Both clean and plentiful water, and mitigation of and adaptation to climate change have been identified as two of the public goods that the ELM scheme will pay for. We are in the process of determining exactly what actions we will pay for under ELM.

■ Dairy Farming: Coronavirus

David Morris:

[902736]

What steps he is taking to support the dairy industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Dairy farmers are crucial in ensuring that food supplies remain resilient during this difficult period. In addition to the various HM Treasury COVID-19 support packages, Defra has introduced specific measures to support the dairy industry during the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly those impacted by the loss of the food service sector. These include a dairy support scheme, easements to competition law, support for an AHDB milk promotion campaign and the opening of various intervention and storage aid schemes.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Correspondence

Mr David Jones:

[\[47217\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average time taken was for a substantive response to letters to his office from hon. Members in the latest period for which figures are available.

Victoria Prentis:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, Defra has a target of replying to correspondence within 20 working days where a response is required.

As you will understand, Defra is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. All correspondence received from Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

■ Farmers: Coronavirus

Stephen Metcalfe:

[\[902745\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support farmers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra took early steps to support farmers, by designating them as key workers and temporarily relaxing drivers' hours rules. We have worked with banks to help farmers access financial support measures outlined by the Chancellor, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. We have supported dairy farmers by announcing a fund in England to help those affected by the loss of the food service sector. We have also temporarily relaxed competition law rules. We are working with AHDB and Dairy UK, who have launched a new £1 million campaign to drive consumption of milk. A similar campaign is promoting beef. We are also ensuring that farmers and growers are able to recruit the workers that they require as we approach the busy harvest months.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[902737\]](#)

What steps he is taking to maintain food supplies for vulnerable people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Zarah Sultana:

[\[902741\]](#)

What steps he is taking to maintain food supplies for vulnerable people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Afzal Khan:

[\[902759\]](#)

What steps he is taking to maintain food supplies for vulnerable people during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

Shielded individuals can opt to receive deliveries of food and essential supplies if they are without a support network of friends and family while self-isolating at home.

We have been working with food retailers, delivery organisations and volunteer groups to help support the non-shielded vulnerable, who are avoiding going to the shops if possible. A range of options are available for those people, including asking for an NHS Volunteer Responder to do their shopping for them – 100,000 people have had help with community tasks like shopping from NHS responders so far. Many charities and community organisations are also providing voluntary shop and drop services, as are neighbours and other community volunteers. If the situation is urgent, local authorities can also offer support and services, and we are working with them to help make sure that they have a range of ways to help those who contact them.

We are also working to help those having difficulty affording food. The Government has announced up to £16 million to provide food for those who are struggling as a result of the coronavirus crisis. The programme will provide millions of meals over the next 12 weeks and be delivered through charities including FareShare and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme). At least 5,000 frontline charities in England will benefit, including refuges, homeless shelters and rehabilitation services. It will cover rural areas as well as cities, targeting those who are struggling to get food.

■ Supermarkets: Coronavirus

Olivia Blake:

[47480]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps is he taking to ensure that all those who have registered with the Government as extremely vulnerable are contacted by supermarkets for priority deliveries.

Victoria Prentis:

The shielding programme was put in place to protect clinically extremely vulnerable people – those who have been advised by the NHS not to leave their homes, because they are at a high risk of developing complications from coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. Anyone who believes they meet the criteria of extremely clinically vulnerable but who has not received a letter from the NHS should contact their GP.

We have now delivered over 1 million parcels to those in this group who advised that they were unable to access food and continue to support these people. We have also shared the details of individuals who register to receive food parcels with supermarkets so that they can be prioritised for home delivery slots.

The Government is working with a partnership of the food industry, local government, local resilience forums and emergency partners, and voluntary groups, to ensure that essential items can be delivered as quickly as possible to those who need it. For example, just under 600,000 people are now registered as verified NHS Volunteer Responders to help support people who are struggling to access food.

Defra is working closely with charities to estimate the supply of food to charities and demand for food from users of those charities. On 3 April Defra launched a £3.25

million grant opportunity to help surplus food redistributors with infrastructure and associated support to help get more food to charities working on the front line in supporting vulnerable people in need. Additionally, the Government has announced up to £16 million to provide millions of meals over the next 12 weeks. These will be delivered through charities including FareShare and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme).

■ Tuna

Sir Greg Knight:

[\[47196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to encourage fishermen to use fishing methods that are (a) dolphin and (b) turtle friendly when fishing for tuna; and if he will make a statement.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK is a leading global voice in ensuring appropriate management and protection is in place for vulnerable marine species globally. We recognise that bycatch in fisheries is one of the most significant threats to many marine species. The UK continues to press for the establishment of strong bycatch measures of vulnerable species within international Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

RFMOs that manage tuna fisheries have already adopted several conservation measures aimed at minimising the risk of dolphin and turtle bycatch. These measures include for example compulsory reporting of bycatch and safe handling practices, such as the disentangling and releasing of turtles, the use of line cutters and the use of dehooking devices for turtles. It is also prohibited within the Indian Ocean Tuna Convention (IOTC) waters to set a purse seine net around a cetacean if the animal is sighted prior to the setting of the net.

The UK will shortly become a member of RFMOs in its own right. This will provide us with an enhanced opportunity to press for stronger and more effective bycatch measures for vulnerable species to be adopted at an international level. We will work with stakeholders, international partners and international organisations to consider the effectiveness of measures in place and further measures we should support to provide for effective protection of these iconic species.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ Abdullah al-Hamid

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[46088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 29 April 2020 to Question 38936 on Saudi Arabia: Political Prisoners, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of reports that Saudi Arabian human rights defender Abdullah al-Hamid was denied urgent medical attention before his death in detention.

James Cleverly:

We are aware of reports concerning Abdullah al-Hamid's medical attention in detention. While reporting on this case has been limited, we continue to seek information, and will raise any concerns we have with the Saudi authorities. We will continue to regularly raise individual human rights cases and call for political detainees to be given adequate legal representation.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:**[\[45367\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK citizens stranded abroad have (a) made enquiries, (b) applied for and (c) been granted an emergency repatriation loan as at 7 May 2020.

Nigel Adams:

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.

British nationals and UK residents who are overseas and wish to return to the UK, but cannot afford travel costs and have no other options for getting funds to return home, may apply for an emergency loan from the Government as a last resort. Only basic costs can be included in a loan, usually the cheapest one-way ticket to the UK.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) usually issues around 250 emergency repatriation loans per year and so far, this year, has approved over 1,000 loans. Some loans are still being processed. Since 7 April 2020, the FCO has been working with Corporate Travel Management (CTM), which is authorised to administer such loans on behalf of the FCO, to extend the FCO's capacity to consider loan requests from British nationals.

Stuart C McDonald:[\[47327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps he is taking with overseas Governments to (a) protect and (b) facilitate the return to the UK of UK seafarers who are having to work indefinitely onboard ships overseas.

Nigel Adams:

We recognise this is a worrying time for British crew on board cruise ships around the world. It is primarily the responsibility of their employers - the cruise ship operators - to ensure the welfare and safety of their crew. The Government is in direct contact with these operators, as well as directly with many crew members and their families, and we will continue to do what we can to ensure UK crew can access flights home. The Government restated its commitment to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Maritime Organisation (IMO) at the start of this crisis, ensuring we lead globally on our obligations to seafarers welfare, and this is a position we intend to uphold.

Not all British crew are seeking to return to the UK. Some may wish to stay with the ship (with their employer's consent), while others may be required by their role to do

so as part of the minimum safe manning requirements for the vessel. This is a legislative and flag state requirement to ensure the continued seaworthiness of vessels.

■ Caribbean: Coronavirus

John Spellar:

[47178]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many people are registered with his Department as awaiting repatriation from the West Indies as a result of 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 UK Government is working closely with airlines, local authorities and governments in the Caribbean region to help British travellers return 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. Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff have worked round the clock to bring back more than 300 people from Jamaica and Guyana on charter flights on 8 May. We have supported over 11,000 people to return home from the Caribbean via commercial means, and Post's priority remains to continue providing advice and assistance to British nationals in-country.

We are aware that there are British travellers remaining overseas in the Caribbean region and our effort is focused on supporting their return as quickly and safely as possible. British travellers wishing to return to the UK have been actively encouraged to register with their nearest High Commission or Embassy as well as to check travel advice for updates regularly. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. It is difficult to be precise about the numbers because there have been instances of multiple registrations by the same individual, people not reporting their return to the UK via other means, and British Nationals resident overseas registering for flights even though many were not eligible.

■ China: Coronavirus

Brendan O'Hara:

[47316]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Chinese Government on releasing Tibetan prisoners of conscience Wangdu, Geshe Orgyen, Khenpo Pagah, Sonam Lhatso, Lobsang Gendun, Yeshe Choedron, Thardhod Gyaltzen and Jamyang Lodru in light of the threat of covid-19 to detainees in overcrowded prisons.

Nigel Adams:

The risk of the spread of COVID-19 in places of detention is a matter of concern around the world. We will continue to engage closely with the Chinese authorities on the COVID-19 crisis.

We pay close attention to the human rights situation in Tibet, and raise our concerns with the Chinese authorities.

■ **China: Human Rights**

Brendan O'Hara: [\[47317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the selection of China for the United Nations Human Rights Council Consultative Group in light of China's ongoing detention of up to a million Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.

Nigel Adams:

The five members of the UN Human Rights Council Consultative Group are selected by their respective regional groupings. The Chinese official was selected by the Asia Pacific Group; as such the selection is a matter for that regional group.

We have serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, and regularly raise these concerns with the Chinese authorities and at the UN Human Rights Council. The Foreign Secretary raised the issue with State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 9 March.

■ **China: Uighurs**

Afzal Khan: [\[44032\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the humanitarian situation in Xinjiang.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 12 May 2020]: We will continue to make clear to the Chinese authorities our serious concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Xinjiang, including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps". On 9 March, the Foreign Secretary directly raised these concerns with his Chinese counterpart, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Afzal Khan: [\[44033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the (a) availability and (b) adequacy of medical and sanitation supplies in response to the covid-19 outbreak in Xinjiang.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 12 May 2020]: We are not in a position to assess effectively the availability and adequacy of medical and sanitation supplies in Xinjiang, however, we are not aware of a significant COVID-19 outbreak in the region. We will continue to engage closely with the Chinese authorities on the COVID-19 crisis. We will also continue to make clear to the Chinese authorities our serious concerns about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Xinjiang, including the extra-judicial

detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps". On 9 March, the Foreign Secretary directly raised these concerns with his Chinese counterpart, State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Mr David Davis:

[\[44963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what processes he has in place for UK embassies, high commissions and consulates to provide his Department with information on how covid-19 is being handled throughout the world.

Nigel Adams:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials are in regular communication with British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates to monitor COVID-19 developments across the world. Ministers and senior officials also regularly engage with their international counterparts. This includes in multilateral fora such as G7 Foreign Ministers or NATO and bilaterally.

■ **Human Rights and Surveillance: Coronavirus**

Jim Shannon:

[\[45204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, What diplomatic steps he is taking to help (a) safeguard human rights and (b) prevent surveillance overreach overseas during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

We are concerned by reports that some governments are using the current crisis to fail to comply with their human rights obligations, including in relation to the use of surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The protection of civil liberties remains fundamental to our democratic way of life. Through our international engagement, we will continue to make clear that measures taken by States to tackle COVID-19 must be necessary, proportionate, time-bound, transparent and regularly reviewed.

On 9 April, the UK participated in the UN Human Rights Council's first ever virtual conversation with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Discussion focused on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 crisis; both the immediate impact of the response on human rights around the world, and the social and economic consequences, including the prospect of greater inequality. In his statement to the Council, our Ambassador to the UN in Geneva stressed the importance of ensuring that parliaments, media and civil society all play their role to scrutinise the actions of governments and international agencies, and that we make use of the international human rights frameworks. We support the call made by the UN Secretary-General in his message of 22 April that human rights must be at the front and centre of the COVID-19 response and recovery. The UK Government remains committed to standing up for human rights and supports all efforts by the UN to minimise long-term damage to global economies, societies, politics and freedoms.

■ India and Pakistan: Coronavirus**Colleen Fletcher:****[43950]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) British nationals and (b) persons with Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK who remain stranded in (i) India and (ii) Pakistan as a result of the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps his Department is taking to secure adequate flights to the UK for those individuals.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 12 May 2020]: Helping British nationals who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. We have worked with international allies to lobby authorities to keep commercial air routes open and work together to return British travellers globally. In addition, as of 14 May we have arranged 62 charter flights from India and 21 from Pakistan which have repatriated more than 18,500 British travellers.

From the outset, our priority for the charter flight programme has been getting British travellers home. But after we launched the charter flight programme, it became clear that there are people with indefinite leave to remain (ILR) who normally reside in the UK, and want to get back, particularly in countries such as India and Pakistan. So where possible, we are working to help vulnerable UK residents with ILR. This is beyond the scope of our standard consular assistance, which is usually just for UK nationals. But these are exceptional times. We are seeking to help vulnerable people with ILR wherever possible, provided that they have lived in the UK within the last year. It is difficult to offer precise numbers at this stage because there have been instances of multiple registrations by the same individual, people not reporting their return to the UK via other means, and long term residents registering for flights despite being ineligible.

Our consular teams are supporting those British travellers who have not been able to fly home. While there are currently no further flights scheduled after 15 May, we will keep this under review and continue to assess both demand for flights and the situation in India. Commercial options remain available from Pakistan.

■ India: Coronavirus**Preet Kaur Gill:****[45364]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many people have (a) registered for and (b) been allocated seats on repatriation flights from India as at 7 May 2020.

Nigel Adams:

As of 19 May, over 14,900 British travellers have been allocated seats on 64 flights from India since 8 April. Together, these flights will have carried almost all of those in India who registered, are eligible and took up the option of a flight when given the chance to do so. Those British nationals who are unable to travel are being supported

by our consular teams in India. We do not have any further charter flights planned, though we continue to keep this under review.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is working around the clock, through our Posts overseas and in London, to make sure all British people who need help are receiving the support and information they need. As of 19 May, we have now brought home over 32,000 people on 155 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 29 countries and territories.

■ Israeli Settlements

Hilary Benn:

[\[46562\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government supports the annexation of parts of the West Bank by the Government of Israel.

James Cleverly:

As we made clear at the UN Security Council remote meeting on the Middle East Peace Process on 23 April, we are concerned by reports that the new Israeli Government coalition has reached an agreement which may pave the way for annexation of parts of the West Bank. The UK position is clear: any unilateral moves towards annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel would be damaging to efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law. The Prime Minister reiterated our opposition to the unilateral annexation of territory during a call with Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, on 6 February.

■ Libya: IRA

Simon Hoare:

[\[38548\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether William Shawcross, the Special Representative on UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism, has submitted his report on the feasibility of calculating the number of people affected and the compensation due to those people from the Libyan Government.

James Cleverly:

[Holding answer 24 April 2020]: The UK is committed to supporting the victims of Libyan-sponsored IRA terrorism. That is why in March 2019 the former Foreign Secretary appointed William Shawcross as the UK's Special Representative on UK victims of Qadhafi-sponsored IRA terrorism. Mr Shawcross has now submitted his report. Ministers will consider the report in detail once the current need to focus on the Covid-19 crisis has abated.

■ South Asia: Coronavirus

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[43944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent estimate he has made of the number of UK travellers awaiting repatriation to the UK from (a) India, (b) Pakistan and (c) Bangladesh as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 12 May 2020]: Helping British travellers who need and want to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - the majority supported by our work to keep vital routes open. Additionally we have brought home over 31,700 people on 151 flights organised by the Foreign Office from 27 countries and territories.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are priorities for the UK Government and we have been working closely with both airlines and the governments of each of those countries to ensure British travellers can return home. We have worked with international allies to lobby authorities to keep commercial air routes open and work together to return travellers globally. In addition, as of 14 May we have arranged 62 charter flights from India and 21 from Pakistan which have repatriated more than 18,000 British travellers. 1,600 British travellers have been repatriated from Bangladesh. Our High Commissions are providing consular assistance to those who need it, including the most vulnerable, and are continuing to provide regular updates on social media. We encourage British travellers to subscribe to our travel service update. <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

■ United Nations: Females**Anthony Mangnall:****[46796]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions officials of his Department have had with the UN Department of Peace Operations on increasing the proportion of female UN peacekeepers.

Nigel Adams:

The UK strongly supports efforts to increase the proportion of female uniformed peacekeepers, as directed by the UN Department of Peace Operations' Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy. Through negotiations on mandates in the Security Council and in other fora, such as this year's Special Committee on UN Peacekeeping Operations, we ensure the UN works to increase the numbers of women peacekeepers in its missions. In the last financial year the UK provided £1m from the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund for the Elsie Initiative to help troop-contributing countries overcome practical barriers preventing further deployment of uniformed female peacekeepers to operations. UK officials also raise this regularly with the UN Secretariat. More broadly, the UK is a leader among UN Member States championing Women, Peace and Security issues in peacekeeping, and encourages all troop contributors to fulfil their commitments made under the UN Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

■ Vietnam: Coronavirus**Brendan O'Hara:****[47318]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Vietnamese Government on prisoners of conscience

Nguyen Bac Truyen, Nguyen Trung Ton, Nguyen Van Hoa , Bui Van Trung and Phan Van Thu in light of the risk of covid-19 to detainees in overcrowded prison.

Nigel Adams:

The UK is concerned by restrictions on freedom of expression in Vietnam. We regularly raise these issues at the United Nations and in bilateral contacts with the Government of Vietnam. We are concerned by prison conditions, which are affecting many inmates, including prisoners of conscience.

We raised concerns about freedom of expression and assembly, the treatment of prisoners and the protection of civil society in Vietnam during Vietnam's Universal Periodic Review in January 2019, and again in a UN Human Rights Council Item 2 Statement in March 2019.

Bilaterally, the former Minister for Asia and the Pacific, raised the UK's concerns about human rights with the Vietnamese Vice Foreign Minister during her visit to Vietnam in January 2020.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Alcoholic Drinks and Drugs: Misuse

Neil Coyle:

[45253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent people developing (a) alcohol and (b) drug dependencies during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) published advice and information for the public on looking after their mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak, which recommends people avoid using alcohol and drugs. The guidance can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

PHE continues to maintain the FRANK website and helpline, which provides a service for people who are concerned about their own or others' drugs and alcohol consumption. The website can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak drug and alcohol treatment providers are continuing to support and treat people misusing drugs and alcohol.

■ Cancer: Coronavirus**Grahame Morris:** [\[46611\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will meet with members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Radiotherapy to discuss the findings of that Group's inquiry into the impact of covid-19 on cancer services.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: I have spoken with members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Radiotherapy on Wednesday 20 May.

■ Cancer: Health Services**Alex Norris:** [\[41143\]](#)

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 steps he has taken to ensure that patients with suspected cancer are (a) monitored and (b) receive follow-up contact in the event that a GP decides as a result of the covid-19 outbreak not to refer those patients for a consultant appointment within two weeks.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: General practitioners will continue to refer on to cancer pathways in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance so that patients can be managed appropriately, and NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with Cancer Alliances to ensure diagnostic services are available to carry out the necessary investigations.

■ Cancer: Medical Treatments**Rosie Cooper:** [\[41008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle the backlog of cancer treatments that have been delayed or postponed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 4 May 2020]: National Health Service providers have previously been asked to maintain access to essential cancer treatments throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with guidance from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Cancer Alliances will continue to identify surgical capacity for cancer, and providers are working to make Cancer Hubs around England fully operational. Full use should be made of the available contracted independent sector hospital and diagnostic capacity locally and regionally.

■ Cancer: Radiotherapy

Grahame Morris:

[\[46036\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if will he make an assessment on the effectiveness of precision radiotherapy treatment to improve outcomes for cancer patients unable to undertake surgery or immunosuppressive chemotherapy during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: Where it is not possible to proceed with standard care treatments, such as surgery or chemotherapy, it may be clinically appropriate to offer radiotherapy.

These are decisions which are necessarily informed by multi-disciplinary clinical teams and discussion with individual patients in the context of weighing the risks and benefits.

The Royal College of Radiologists has made available to its members a wide body of literature to help guide individual decision making and clinicians are encouraged to make use of this resource.

■ Coronavirus: Chronic Illnesses

Alex Norris:

[\[46134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the health of chronically ill patients who are unable to safely attend hospital for care.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: We have continued to deliver the most urgent treatments, such as emergency and urgent cancer care, throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

With evidence suggesting that we are passing the peak of this wave of COVID-19, and with the National Health Service well-placed to provide world-leading care for those who do still have the virus, we are bringing back non-urgent services that had been temporarily suspended.

In the absence of face-to-face visits, primary and secondary care clinicians have been asked to stratify and proactively contact their high-risk patients to educate on specific symptoms and circumstances needing urgent hospital care and ensure appropriate ongoing care plans are delivered.

Doctors will always have the safety of patients at the centre of any decisions they make.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Dr Lisa Cameron:****[R] [37788]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Government's news story, Coronavirus (COVID-19): scientific evidence supporting the UK government response, published on 20 March 2020, what steps he has taken to ensure that the evidence-base used to develop guidance on behavioural change is effectively communicated to the public.

Jo Churchill:

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) provides timely and coordinated scientific and technical advice to support United Kingdom cross-Government decision-makers during emergencies.

We recognise that transparency is important in these unprecedented times. We are therefore continuing to publish the statements and the accompanying evidence to demonstrate how our understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data emerges, and how SAGE's advice has quickly adapted to new findings that reflect a changing situation.

The most recent advice was published on 5 May 2020 with a more regular publishing cycle to follow.

The scientific evidence supporting the Government response to COVID-19, including the evidence-base used to develop guidance on behavioural change can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage-coronavirus-covid-19-response>

Barry Gardiner:**[40463]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the advice that he received before 1 April 2020 on the development of herd immunity for covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

Herd immunity has never been part of the Government action plan, but it is a natural by-product of an epidemic. Our aims are to save lives, protect the most vulnerable, and relieve pressure on the National Health Service. Every measure that we have or will introduce will be based on the best scientific evidence. None of our measures are aimed at generating herd immunity but we must be aware of the likely levels of immunity in the country over the coming months, to ensure our planning and response is as accurate and effective as possible.

Munira Wilson:**[43180]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure more detailed data collection for the purposes of covid-19 case identification.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England identifies and collects data on laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19. These data include demographic details such as date of birth, sex and

postcode, which can be used to link with other datasets, such as the Hospital Episode Statistics datasets, in order to obtain additional information.

■ Coronavirus: Protective Clothing

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[43712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much personal protective equipment has been allocated to (a) early years settings, (b) SEN schools, (c) children's homes and (d) social workers in each of the last six months.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 11 May 2020]: We are working around the clock to give the social care sector and wider National Health Service the equipment and support they need to tackle this outbreak.

We published a personal protective equipment (PPE) plan on 10 April, setting out clear guidance on who needs PPE and in what circumstances they need to use it; and how sufficient supplies will be secured and distributed to the front line.

We have delivered 94 million items of PPE to local resilience forums (LRFs) between 6 April and 12 May. These multi-agency LRF partnerships are made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. This PPE is intended to help LRFs respond to urgent local spikes in need across the adult social care system and other front-line services, where providers are unable to access PPE through their usual routes. This includes children's homes, secure children's homes, residential special schools and children's social care services in local authorities.

Jonathan Ashworth:

[\[43934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of face mask wearing by the general public for helping to prevent the spread of covid-19.

Beth Winter:

[\[44055\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an assessment of the required (a) design and (b) materials necessary to provide effective protection for the general public in the event that the Government requires the general public to wear non-medical face masks or coverings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 12 May 2020]: The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies considered the very limited evidence available on the use of face coverings and advised that there was some positive benefit for reducing the transmission of COVID-19. However, the main ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are social distancing and washing hands regularly.

The Government is now advising wearing a face covering in situations where it is difficult to manage social distancing and there may be close contact with people the wearer would not usually meet.

Instructions on how to make and use a face covering are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Further guidance on the use of face coverings is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home#face-coverings>

■ Coronavirus: Roma

Gill Furniss: [46117]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the rate of (a) infection and (b) death from covid-19 within the Roma community.

Jo Churchill:

We have not made such an assessment but are working hard to understand more about COVID-19 and establish robust data on the factors impacting the number of COVID-19 cases and health outcomes for different groups within the population where data is available.

As part of this, we have commissioned Public Health England to consider the impact of various factors such as ethnicity, obesity, age, gender and geographical location.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Correspondence

Stella Creasy: [47269]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many pieces of correspondence he has received from MPs on behalf of constituents on matters relating to covid-19 on each date since the outbreak began; and how many responses he has provided to that correspondence in each category of response.

Edward Argar:

The information is not held in the format requested and to obtain it would incur disproportionate cost.

■ Department of Health and Social Care: Finance

Henry Smith: [46610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much funding his Department has been allocated from the £360 million charity sector funding.

Edward Argar:

The £360 million includes up to £200 million support for hospices. Further funding for this Department from within the £360 million total will be announced shortly.

■ Disease Control: EU Action

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[45948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what mechanism will replace the EU Early Warning and Response system on pandemics after the end of the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The United Kingdom uses a range of international information-sharing systems to monitor global health threats, including the European Union's Early Warning and Response System.

As set out in the UK's approach to negotiations with the EU published on 27 February, the UK is open to exploring cooperation in other specific and narrowly-defined areas, where this is in the interests of both sides, for example on health security. The detail of the UK's future relationship with the EU on health security is subject to the outcome of ongoing negotiations.

The UK will maintain its domestic health protection system following the end of the Transition Period through continued access to international systems and we will continue to work alongside other countries and multilateral groups on the response to the COVID-19 and other future cross-border health threats.

■ Emergencies: Disclosure of Information

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[46525\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 12 May 2020 to Question 38420 on Exercise Cygnus, which reports on exercises his Department has published in each of the last four years; and what criteria were applied in each such case to justify publication.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The Department does not routinely publish reports on exercises.

■ Health Services: Procurement

Sir George Howarth:

[\[47190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) assessment he undertook, (b) the value was of and (c) procurement process was for each private sector NHS contract awarded by his Department since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

As part of an unprecedented response to this global pandemic we have drawn on the expertise and resources of a number of public and private sector partners to support the National Health Service and social care sector. Officials across Government have assessed each and every contract that has been entered into to ensure compliance with procurement regulations for exceptional circumstances, where being able to procure at speed has been critical in the national response to COVID-19.

Authorities are allowed to procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency in exceptional circumstances using regulation 32(2)(c) under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The guide to how contracting authorities should respond to coronavirus was published on 18 March. This is applicable to all contracting authorities, including central Government departments, executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies, local authorities, NHS bodies and the wider public sector. We have been clear from the outset that public authorities must achieve value for money for taxpayers and use good commercial judgement.

The Contract Award Notices, containing information on the final agreed value of the contract, are being published on Contracts Finder as quickly as possible in line with Government transparency guidelines at the following link:

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

■ Hearing Impaired: Coronavirus

Mary Kelly Foy:

[42189]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he has made an assessment of the implications of the use of Personal Protective Equipment for people with hearing loss who rely on lip reading during the during-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 6 May 2020]: We recognise concerns about the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), particularly face masks when it comes to people who lip read. Our priority remains saving lives, including those frontline staff who need to wear PPE as they go about their vital work.

■ Hospital Beds: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[46725]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether projected winter bed capacity in NHS hospitals is a criterion in determining the lockdown easing strategy.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The National Health Service currently has sufficient capacity to meet current demand.

A key priority for the Government is to continue to ensure that NHS capacity is able to meet demand, including for winter.

The NHS is planning to retain their demonstrated ability to quickly repurpose and 'surge' capacity locally and regionally, if and when it should be needed.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[46769]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Prime Minister's announcement on 10 May 2020 on relaxing lockdown

restrictions on NHS hospitals' ability to reopen paused services covering elective (a) inpatient and (b) outpatient care.

Edward Argar:

We have continued to deliver the most urgent treatments, such as emergency and urgent cancer care, throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

With evidence suggesting that we are passing the peak of this wave of COVID-19, and with the National Health Service well-placed to provide world-leading care for those who do still have the virus, we are bringing back non-urgent services that had been temporarily paused. We will work on the principle that the most urgent treatments should be brought back first and this will be driven by local demands on the system. The approach will be flexed at local level according to capacity and demand in different parts of the country, and will be gradual, over weeks.

■ **Intensive Care: Admissions**

Justin Madders:

[\[45278\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the intensive care unit admission criteria on reported mortality rates within the UK.

Edward Argar:

Treatment within intensive care units is based on clinical judgement on a case-by-case basis.

Patient safety is the top priority when deciding whether a patient should be admitted to hospital.

■ **NHS and Social Services: Protective Clothing**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[40983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure an adequate supply of personal protective equipment to (a) the NHS and (b) social care facilities.

Jo Churchill:

We are working around the clock to give the social care sector and wider National Health Service the equipment and support they need to tackle this outbreak.

The Government published 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): personal protective equipment (PPE) plan' on 10 April. It incorporates guidance on who needs PPE and when they need it, routes to ensure those who need it can get it at the right time and sets out actions to secure enough PPE to last through the crisis.

Sourcing sufficient supplies of PPE is a challenge that many countries are facing. We are working to expand supply from overseas, improve domestic manufacturing capability and expand and improve the logistics network for delivering to the front line.

The full weight of the Government is behind this effort and we are working closely with industry, social care providers, the NHS, and the army to ensure the right equipment continues to be delivered.

■ Protective Clothing: EU Action

Meg Hillier: [45038]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he was first made aware of EU's personal protective equipment procurement scheme.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: Owing to an initial communication problem, the United Kingdom did not receive an invitation in time to take part in the European Union Joint Procurement schemes for personal protective equipment launched to date, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, no briefing was provided to the Secretary of State on these schemes prior to them being launched.

The Secretary of State has subsequently been briefed on the issues related to EU Joint Procurement and now receives regular updates and advice on current and possible current future EU schemes.

■ Radiotherapy

Grahame Morris: [46035]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the availability of precision radiotherapy as a replacement treatment to (a) surgery and (b) chemotherapy during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: For some patients it may be clinically appropriate to offer treatment with radiotherapy where the standard care, for example surgery or chemotherapy, is not possible to be delivered. NHS England and NHS Improvement have published guidance relating to the management of cancer patients during the COVID-19 outbreak which sets out the importance of multi-disciplinary team input and communication with individual patients when making decisions about treatment plans.

This guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/04/second-phase-of-nhs-response-to-covid-19-letter-to-chief-execs-29-april-2020.pdf>

Grahame Morris: [46037]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing the recommendations contained in the Manifesto published by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Radiotherapy, published on 18 July 2019.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The NHS Long Term Plan set out the priorities for radiotherapy services in the National Health Service in England.

This included £130 million being spent on upgrading radiotherapy machines, which has now been completed.

In April 2012, the Government announced that £250 million will be invested to build proton beam therapy (PBT) facilities at The Christie Hospital in Manchester and University College London Hospital in London. This commitment was reaffirmed in the NHS Long Term Plan, and The Christie PBT centre became operational in August 2018.

Reforms to the specialised commissioning payments for radiotherapy hypofractionation will be introduced to support further equipment upgrades. This is in progress and, in the interim, specialised commissioners have recurrently allocated £12 million to support the expansion of stereotactic ablative radiotherapy provision.

Radiotherapy: Coronavirus**Rosie Cooper:**[\[45059\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) the full use of NHS radiotherapy capacity and (b) that radiotherapy cancer treatments are not being disrupted as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: A letter was issued to trusts on 29 April detailing the Second Phase of Response to COVID-19.

This letter sets out that local systems and Cancer Alliances must continue to identify ring-fenced diagnostic and surgical capacity for cancer, and providers must protect and deliver cancer treatment by ensuring that cancer hubs are fully operational. Full use should be made of the available contracted independent sector hospitals.

Regional cancer Senior Responsible Officers must now provide assurance that these arrangements are in place everywhere.

Cancer treatment, including radiotherapy, must be brought back to pre-pandemic levels at the earliest opportunity to minimise potential harm, and to reduce the scale of the post-pandemic surge in demand.

Radiotherapy: Medical Equipment**Grahame Morris:**[\[45139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many patients have had radiotherapy treatments (a) delayed and (b) cancelled since February 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: This data requested is not held centrally.

■ Smoking: Health Services

Neil Coyle: [46082]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to recommence (a) drug and (b) alcohol cessation support services once covid-19 lockdown restrictions have ended.

Jo Churchill:

Stop smoking services are continuing to be provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined in the 'COVID-19 Prioritisation within Community Health Services' document available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0145-COVID-19-prioritisation-within-community-health-services-1-April-2020.pdf>

Providers of community smoking cessation services have been asked to continue to deliver services, while considering how these services can best support smokers during the pandemic. Any changes to services which are impacted by COVID-19 and how this should be addressed will be an issue for local commissioners, working with providers, taking account of national guidance.

■ Smoking: Hospitality Industry

Mark Pritchard: [46580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps with the hospitality industry to prohibit smoking outside restaurants and food outlets.

Jo Churchill:

The Health Act 2006 and the Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006 made it illegal to smoke in public enclosed or substantially enclosed areas and workplaces. Should a business in the hospitality industry wish to introduce their own non-smoking policy for outside space which is not captured under the Health Act 2006 and the Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006, they are able to do so.

HOME OFFICE**■ Asylum: Finance**

Catherine West: [41562]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will increase financial support for asylum seekers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

We are currently reviewing the level of the cash allowances, as we do each year, to ensure that they remain capable of meeting the essential living needs of asylum seekers. In addition to weekly cash payments, asylum seekers who claim support also receive free furnished accommodation in which utilities are paid for.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[47279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications for Section 4 support have been (a) granted and (b) refused since 23 March 2020.

Chris Philp:

Published stats will be available on gov.uk in due course, recent statistics since March 2020 are not yet ready for release. We can confirm that we have seen an increase in Section 4 application and we have moved people who would no longer be eligible for Section 95 support onto Section 4. We are working to ensure that applications are dealt with efficiently, and that no one should be left destitute.

■ **Aviation: Coronavirus**

Tom Hunt:

[\[46160\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of preventing people from arriving in the UK if they do not have pre-arranged accommodation in which to spend 14 days in quarantine.

Chris Philp:

The Government will require all international arrivals not on a short list of exemptions to self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days on arrival into the UK. Where international travellers are unable to demonstrate where they would self-isolate, they will be required to do so in accommodation arranged by the Government.

All international arrivals will be required to supply their contact and accommodation information and they will also be strongly advised to download and use the NHS contact tracing app.

■ **British Nationality: Assessments**

Peter Kyle:

[\[47382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend leave to remain visas until October 2020 for people that are applying for indefinite leave to remain but are unable to take a life in the UK test during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

Individuals in the UK legally whose visa expired after 24 January 2020 have had their visa extended to 31 May 2020 where they cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus. This is being kept under regular review in case further extensions are needed.

The Home Office is taking steps to ensure nobody will be penalised for not being able to take Life in the UK tests due to circumstances beyond their control. Therefore individuals can still apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain and their application will be held until testing resumes, with their existing leave continuing until their application is decided.

■ Common Travel Area: Coronavirus

Conor McGinn: [\[45301\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on the operation of the Common Travel Area.

Kevin Foster:

Both the UK and Irish Governments are committed to maintaining the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangements. As such, there are no routine immigration controls on journeys from within the CTA to the UK, with no immigration controls whatsoever on the Northern Ireland – Ireland land border.

We continue to work closely with the Republic of Ireland and the Crown Dependencies on our response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recognising the unique nature of the Common Travel Area, as well as the position of Northern Ireland, there are no plans to introduce the recently announced measures at the UK border on journeys from within the Common Travel Area, including on the land border with Ireland.

■ Criminal Records: Disclosure of Information

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[47182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans her Department has to reform the disclosure of criminal records to ensure that (a) minor and (b) historical crimes do not appear on enhanced criminal records checks, affecting the job prospects of those convicted years after their conviction.

Victoria Atkins:

The criminal records disclosure regime is designed to help employers make informed recruitment decisions through the disclosure of appropriate and relevant information, particularly for roles involving children and vulnerable adults.

The Government is considering the judgment in the Supreme Court case of P and others. This judgment found two aspects of the disclosure and barring regime disproportionate. These are the requirements for disclosure where an individual has more than one conviction, irrespective of offence type or time passed and of certain out-of-court disposals issued to young offenders, (in particular, reprimands and warnings).

■ Domestic Abuse: Ethnic Groups

Jim Shannon: [\[45203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office, what assessment the Government has made of the adequacy of funding for black and minority ethnic community specialist domestic abuse services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

We are in frequent contact with the domestic abuse sector, including specialist BAME organisations, as well as the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, to understand the impact of covid-19 on services' ability to operate.

Following increases in calls to domestic abuse helplines and online services, the Home Secretary announced an additional £2m to bolster organisations' capacity on April 11.

This is in addition to £28m of Government funding for domestic abuse charities to help survivors of domestic abuse and their children by providing more safe spaces, accommodation and access to support services during the coronavirus outbreak.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Liz Twist: [\[43738\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the time frame is for the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's review of community-based support.

Liz Twist: [\[43739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the scope is of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's review of community-based support.

Liz Twist: [\[43740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will estimate the number of domestic abuse victims who do not live in safe accommodation and would not qualify for statutory support as set out in clause 53 of the Domestic Abuse Bill.

Victoria Atkins:

To understand the complex landscape for community-based support, in the Government's further response to the Joint Committee on the Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (CP 214), published on 3 March, we indicated that the Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner has agreed to undertake an in-depth exploration of the current community-based support landscape over 2020/21.

The Government also indicated that we must better understand the existing routes by which support services are commissioned and funded and establish best practice within services in order to ensure quality provision. The precise scope and timing of the review is a matter for the independent Commissioner. I understand, however, that the review is expected to take some 12 months.

The Government does not collect statistics on the number of domestic abuse victims who do not live in safe accommodation. I would like us to look more into data in the coming months.

■ Drugs: Organised Crime

Sarah Jones: [47420]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many county line phone numbers have been shut down in each month since December 2019.

Sarah Jones: [47421]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many arrests have been made in operations targeting county lines gangs in each month since December 2019.

Kit Malthouse:

The National Crime Agency's most recent strategic assessment of serious and organised crime found that more than 3,000 unique county lines deal line numbers were identified in 2019, of which 800 to 1,100 lines were estimated to be active during a given month.

The Home Office collects and publishes statistics on the number of arrests conducted by each police force in England and Wales on an annual basis. Data are held at the offence group level only (for example 'Drug offences'). Information on the number of arrests that have been made in operations targeting county lines gangs in each month are not held centrally. The latest bulletin can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2019>

We are investing £20m of dedicated funding in 2020/21 to further increase activity against these ruthless gangs. This builds on the £5m programme of work delivered in 19/20 to uplift the law enforcement response. Initial assessment of the outcomes of £5m investment in 19/20 demonstrate it has had a direct impact in disrupting county lines.

Sarah Jones: [47422]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with the (a) Secretary of State for Education and (b) Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on ensuring that vulnerable children are not exposed to greater risk of county lines recruitment when not in education due to the covid-19 lockdown.

Victoria Atkins:

The Home Secretary attends a regular ministerial group, also attended by the Department for Education (DfE) and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which discusses a range of issues related to COVID-19 including the impact on vulnerable cohorts. The Home Office Minister for Safeguarding also has regular discussions with DfE about the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable children, including those at risk of criminal exploitation through county lines.

In addition, the Home Office is working closely with law enforcement partners and charities to monitor the ongoing threat to young people from county lines exploitation. This year, we are investing £20m to uplift the law enforcement response and increase

the support available to those affected. This is in addition to continuing to the fund the Missing People SafeCall service which provides specialist advice and support to young people and families who are concerned about county lines exploitation.

■ **Homophobia: Hate Crime**

Bambos Charalambous:

[47411]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many Ministerial roundtables on homophobia have been held since the Home Office's Hate Crime Action Plan refresh document was published in 2018.

Victoria Atkins:

Hate crime of any kind is completely unacceptable. The 2018 refresh of the Hate Crime Action Plan addressed homophobic abuse and can be accessed here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hate-crime-action-plan-2016>. The Home Office engaged with Galop's anti-LGBT hate crime roundtable in 2018 in line with the actions in this plan. The Home Office facilitates meetings with civil society partners who are experts in all strands of hate crime on a quarterly basis.

■ **Immigrants: Coronavirus**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[41015]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will hold discussions with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the provision of financial support to local authorities that have taken on the costs of ensuring that residents with No Recourse to Public Funds are able to self-isolate 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 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.

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

■ Immigrants: Finance**Ms Lyn Brown:** [\[41622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, under (a) what circumstances and (b) with what notice period her Department will end the suspension of the No Recourse to Public Funds exception during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The no recourse to public funds (NRPF) condition has not been suspended. The Home Office is working closely with other government departments to support people, including migrants with NRPF, 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 are available to migrants with NRPF.

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: Coronavirus**Stephen Doughty:** [\[43656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what date SAGE first discussed the potential effect of introducing restrictions at the UK borders on the (a) rate of covid-19 infections in the UK and (b) ability of the NHS to respond to that rate; and whether SAGE reported the conclusions of those discussion to her.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser is a participant in SAGE and regularly updates Home Office ministers on all aspects of SAGE relating to their departmental interests.

■ Immigration: EU Nationals**Peter Kyle:** [\[48558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 21 June 2019 to Question 266278, what plans her Department has to review the decision to not provide EU citizens with physical documentation confirming their settled status after the UK leaves the EU.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office is developing a border and immigration system which is “digital by default” for all migrants, which over time means we will increasingly replace physical and paper-based products and services with accessible, easy to use online and digital services. This mirrors the approach adopted by other countries, such as Australia, in administering their immigration systems and the way in which people increasingly live their lives.

Individuals – including those going through the EU Settlement Scheme - will still receive written notification of their immigration status, by email or letter, which they can retain for their own records. They will also be given access to a digital version of their immigration status information, which can be accessed at any time via the online ‘view and prove’ service, and which unlike a physical document cannot be lost or stolen. It also allows individuals to view information about their status whenever they wish and share it securely with third parties such as employers or public and private service providers.

We are making this move because it provides a better level of service. Individuals have greater transparency and control over their immigration status data, and tailored digital services mean that only the information that the individual agrees to share is shown, unlike a physical document which must fulfil many purposes. Digital services also allow us to provide information in a format that is easy to understand and accessible to all users, removing the need for employers, landlords and others to interpret myriad physical documents, complex legal terminology or confusing abbreviations. Users can be confident that they are getting information direct from Home Office systems and that it tells them what they need to know.

■ **Internet: Offences against Children and Terrorism**

Daniel Zeichner:

[\[45259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office, pursuant to the Answer of 6 May 2020 to Question 42080 on Internet: Safety, when her Department plans to publish the interim voluntary codes on tackling online terrorist and child sexual exploitation and abuse content and activity.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government will be publishing interim codes of practice on terrorist use of the internet and child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) as part of the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper. This will ensure that companies are provided with the necessary context to understand the expectations around what companies should do to address CSEA and terrorist content and activity online.

We are working on preparing the interim codes of practice and full government response to the White Paper as soon as possible. We will follow this publication with legislation when Parliamentary time allows.

■ **Migrant Workers: Asylum**

Afzal Khan:

[\[38015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to grant permission to work for (a) medical workers and (b) all other potential workers who have been awaiting a decision on their asylum application for over six months; and if she will make a statement.

Chris Philp:

Asylum seekers with medical experience and qualifications, who have been waiting for a decision on their claim for 12 months or more, can already apply to work for the NHS in the range of medical professions on the Shortage Occupation List.

Asylum seeker right to work is a complex issue. The review of the policy is ongoing, and we are considering the evidence put forward on the issue. It is crucial we take the time to get this right.

■ Migrant Workers: Visas**Emma Hardy:**[\[47424\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make it her policy not to deport the family members of health care workers in the UK on Tier 2 visas who have died as a result of covid-19.

Kevin Foster:

My Rt. Hon Friend, the Home Secretary, confirmed, in a letter to the Home Affairs Select Committee on 29 April, families of eligible frontline healthcare workers who sadly pass away due to contracting the COVID-19 virus, will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain free of charge.

■ Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships: Coronavirus**Munira Wilson:**[\[47463\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that parents can apply for a passport for their child in cases where they are unable to register the birth of that child due to the closure of birth registration services as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

The absence of a birth certificate where they are unable to register the birth of that child does not prevent a passport application being submitted, however alternative evidence will need to be provided.

Munira Wilson:[\[47464\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of allowing new births to be registered over the phone where birth registry offices are closed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kevin Foster:

In England and Wales, the relevant legislation does not allow for birth registrations to be completed by telephone.

The Government is considering options for how births can be registered during the situation, whilst respecting prevailing public health guidance and regulations.

Munira Wilson:

[47465]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to tackle the backlog of appointments to register new births when birth registry offices that are currently closed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak reopen.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office are working with partners across government to develop recovery plans to register all births.

■ Stop and Search: Ethnic Groups

Marsha De Cordova:

[47450]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the (a) ethnicity was of each individual subject to and (b) outcome was of each incidence of stop and search since the beginning of the covid-19 lockdown.

Kit Malthouse:

The information requested is not currently centrally available.

The Home Office collects and publishes statistics on the number of stop and searches including the ethnicity of the person searched and the outcome. Data are published annually in the 'Police Powers and Procedures, England and Wales' statistical bulletin, the latest of which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/police-powers-and-procedures-england-and-wales>

The next bulletin is due to be published in October 2020.

■ Travel Restrictions: Coronavirus

Stephen Doughty:

[43658]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on what dates SAGE provided advice to Ministers on the potential effect of introducing restrictions at the UK borders on the spread of covid-19 in the UK.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser is a participant in SAGE and regularly updates Home Office ministers on all aspects of SAGE relating to their departmental interests.

■ Visas: Turkey

Catherine West:

[47393]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether those on a ECAA-2 visa are eligible for Government support during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

The Government is committed to ensuring people are not unfairly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as a result of their immigration status.

To this end, a person who holds valid leave under the Turkish European Communities Association Agreement as a business person can benefit from the various schemes that have been introduced for businesses, where they meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Details of the support available for persons affected by COVID-19 can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19

■ **Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre: Coronavirus**

Jess Phillips:

[34992]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre has accepted new detainees since the start of the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps that centre is taking to ensure that new detainees are not exposed to that disease.

Chris Philp:

The Government remains committed to removing those who violate our immigration rules and foreign national offenders. Detention plays a key role in securing our borders and maintaining effective immigration control. On that basis, Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre will continue to accept new detainees.

All detainees received into Yarl's Wood receive a nurse triage within two hours and are offered a doctor's appointment within 24 hours.

In line with Public Health England guidance, measures such as protective isolation are considered on a case by case basis to minimise the risk of COVID-19 spreading to vulnerable groups in the immigration detention estate. Further measures including single occupancy rooms and cessation of social visits have been introduced in line with the Government direction on social distancing.

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

■ **Parliament: Coronavirus**

Caroline Nokes:

[46042]

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether the Commission plans to publish a risk assessment of working on the Parliamentary Estate in advance of the House of Commons returning to normal working practices.

Pete Wishart:

The House Service is currently working in conjunction with Public Health England to ensure we meet the government guidelines to become a 'COVID-19 secure' workplace, and to build on our existing measures to ensure all those working on the

estate can do so safely. These include carrying out a Covid-19 risk assessment which will be published on the intranet.

Caroline Nokes:

[46043]

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, whether (a) the guidance entitled, Working Safely During Coronavirus, issued for offices and contact centres on 11 May 2020 applies to the Parliamentary Estate and (b) the Commission plans to implement the measures outlined in that guidance.

Pete Wishart:

The House Service is currently working in conjunction with Public Health England to ensure we meet the government guidelines to become a 'COVID-19 secure' workplace, and to build on our existing measures to ensure all those working on the estate can do so safely. Given the variety of activities that are undertaken on the estate, a number of the sector specific guidance documents are relevant, all of which are being reviewed and measures taken where required.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Domestic Appliances: Coronavirus

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[46518]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether suppliers of bathroom and kitchen fittings can reopen showrooms as part of the easing of the covid-19 lockdown measures.

Mr Simon Clarke:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The Government has introduced regulations which require certain business and venues to close, including many retail stores. There are a number of exemptions to this which are contained in the regulations found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/350> and are also outlined in the guidance found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close>.

It is for each business to assess whether they are exempt from closing, having considered the regulations and associated guidance; this advice applies to businesses supplying kitchen and bathroom fittings. Where stores do remain open they are strongly advised to do so only where staff and customers can adhere to PHE guidelines on social distancing.

■ Homelessness

Karen Bradley:

[R] [47272]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities section 8(3), whether victims of modern slavery and human trafficking fall within the vulnerable

persons category within that guidance and are considered to be in priority need for accommodation.

Luke Hall:

Modern slavery is a barbaric crime which destroys the lives of some of the most vulnerable in our society.

A person who has been a victim of trafficking or modern slavery may have a priority need for accommodation if they are assessed as being vulnerable according to section 189(1)(c) of the 1996 Act.

As detailed in section 25(7) of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the process by which people who may be victims of modern slavery are identified and supported by the UK Government. All potential victims of modern slavery who receive a positive Reasonable Grounds decision are able to access a minimum of 45-days Victim Care Contract support during their recovery and reflection period, which includes access to safe accommodation.

We want to ensure that local areas have the tools they need to identify Modern Slavery where they see it and provide the right support to victims. That is why in the Rough Sleeping Strategy we have commissioned training for frontline staff on how best to identify and support this group. Additionally, we are piloting new approaches with six local authority areas to identify best practice in supporting victims to move out of National Referral Mechanism support and link up with local services. These measures aim to reduce the risk of destitution or re-trafficking for victims.

■ **Homelessness: Coronavirus**

Layla Moran:

[\[47433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to end the Everyone In homelessness policy (a) in the next three months, (b) in the next six months and (c) when lockdown restrictions are lifted further.

Layla Moran:

[\[47434\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans his Department has to stop the allocation of funding to local authorities as part of the Everyone In homelessness policy (a) in the next three months, (b) in the next six months and (c) when covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted further.

Luke Hall:

We have been clear councils must continue to provide safe accommodation for those that need it.

The latest figures show over 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of this crisis have now been made offers of safe accommodation and we have announced Dame Louise Casey will spearhead the next phase of the government's support for rough sleepers during the pandemic.

While councils continue to provide accommodation to those that need it, it is only responsible that we work with partners to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over.

£3.2 billion of additional Government funding has now been made available to help councils respond to coronavirus, including meeting the costs of accommodating some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This is in addition to £3.2 million specifically targeted to help rough sleepers during the coronavirus emergency and the £489 million committed in 2020 to 2021 to help rough sleepers, a £121 million increase in funding from the previous year.

Afzal Khan:

[47445]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether funding for the Everyone In initiative will continue for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Afzal Khan:

[47446]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department has plans to cease the Everyone In scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

We have been clear councils must continue to provide safe accommodation for those that need it.

The latest figures show over 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of this crisis have now been made offers of safe accommodation and we have announced Dame Louise Casey will spearhead the next phase of the government's support for rough sleepers during the pandemic.

While councils continue to provide accommodation to those that need it, it is only responsible that we work with partners to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over.

£3.2 billion of additional Government funding has now been made available to help councils respond to coronavirus, including meeting the costs of accommodating some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This is in addition to £3.2 million specifically targeted to help rough sleepers during the coronavirus emergency and the £489 million committed in 2020 to 2021 to help rough sleepers, a £121 million increase in funding from the previous year.

Afzal Khan:

[47447]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how much funding local authorities are planned to receive from his Department to house homeless populations in (a) hotels, (b) short-term accommodation and (c) move-on accommodation during the covid-19 outbreak.

Luke Hall:

We have made £3.2 billion of additional funding available for local authorities to enable them to respond to COVID-19 pressures across the services they deliver including helping homeless populations. This is in addition to £3.2 million in targeted funding for councils to support vulnerable rough sleepers. We are also continuing our ongoing work to ensure that we deliver the Government's manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament. We have put in place £489 million to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping over 2020/21. This marks a £121 million, or 33 per cent increase in funding from the previous year.

As part of this, £112 million was allocated this year for the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), an increase of £26 million on 2019/20 funding. The Chancellor also announced significant funding at Budget for rough sleeping accommodation (£381 million over 4 years) and substance misuse support (£262 million over 4 years).

Afzal Khan:[\[47448\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what support his Department is providing to people who were made homeless after the lockdown due to the covid-19 outbreak was announced and are ineligible for support under the Everyone In scheme.

Luke Hall:

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £3.2 million in targeted funding to help support individuals who are sleeping rough off the streets, and an additional £3.2 billion provided to local authorities as part of the wider government response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This funding has been provided to help local authorities to reduce risks to public health and to support individuals on the basis of need.

The Government is aware of concerns about those with no recourse to public funds experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis.

The legal position on those with no recourse to public funds has not been amended.

The Government recognises that these are unprecedented times, and expects local authorities to support people who are sleeping rough, and also to minimise unnecessary risks to public health, acting within the law.

Local Government: Coronavirus**Steve Reed:**[\[47302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government has made an assessment of the effectiveness of its coordination with Local Resilience Forums during the covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Government and each Local Resilience Forum partnership will, as with any emergency, seek to identify and learn lessons from the response.

MHCLG engages frequently with all Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) to discuss and manage the response to Covid-19. This includes having a dedicated Government Liaison Officer from MHCLG who provides a direct line of contact into central government; involvement in Strategic Coordination Groups held by each LRF; weekly calls with LRF Chairs; and individual engagement with LRFs by Ministers and senior officials.

■ **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Correspondence**

Stella Creasy: [\[47271\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many pieces of correspondence he has received from MPs on behalf of constituents on matters relating to covid-19 on each date since the outbreak began; and how many responses he has provided to that correspondence in each category of response.

Luke Hall:

To break these cases down in the manner requested would incur disproportionate cost. However, we are able to provide the following information as an overview of all such cases received: COVID-19 cases received from MPs on behalf of constituents = 724 Number of cases that await confirmation of transfer to correct department = 127 Number of cases responded to by MHCLG = 428 Number of cases for MHCLG yet to be responded to = 169

■ **Planning Permission: Coronavirus**

James Murray: [\[47469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's Coronavirus (COVID-19): planning update published on 13 May 2020, whether it is the Government's policy to encourage local authorities to consider whether it would be appropriate to allow developers to defer delivery of section 106 planning obligations including (a) financial contributions, (b) on-site affordable housing requirements, or (c) other planning obligations.

Christopher Pincher:

Contributions from developers play an important role in delivering the infrastructure that new homes require. Local planning authorities already have significant flexibilities to defer section 106 payments of all kinds. We have published additional planning guidance to encourage local authorities to consider using these flexibilities to ensure that infrastructure and affordable housing is delivered at the right time. It remains for the local authority to determine what may be appropriate to defer.

■ **Religious Buildings: Coronavirus**

Stephen Timms: [\[47171\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, under what circumstances the Government plans to authorise the re-opening of places of worship; and if he will make a statement.

Luke Hall:

On 11 May, the Government launched the document “Our Plan to Rebuild”, which outlined the steps it would be taking to ease the lockdown restrictions;

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884760/Our_plan_to_rebuild_The_UK_Government_s_COVID-19_recovery_strategy.pdf

As the document makes clear, the Government’s ambition is to reopen places of worship, with the current assumption that this will be no earlier than 4 July. The Government’s priority is to protect the public and save lives. We are committed to ensuring our faith communities have access to the latest public health advice, and to support them to adapt their practices in line with the Government’s COVID-19 guidance.

As part of the recovery strategy, the Government has launched a Places of Worship Taskforce to look at how places of worship can reopen and operate safely. The first meeting took place on 15 May. Meetings are being led by the Secretary of State for Communities, or the Faith Minister, and comprise of representatives from the country’s major faiths. The Taskforce will work towards the safe reopening of places of worship, including for individual prayer, and services and ceremonies such as weddings. It will also address the specific issues that places of worship face in the course of reopening safely.

Places of worship are essential in bringing our communities together, which is why we want them to reopen them as soon as we can. However, no place of worship will be able to reopen before a final decision by the Government and the accompanying changes to the legal position in the published regulations. Even after we permit places of worship to reopen fully, some may choose to reopen in stages or at a slower pace depending on their local circumstances.

■ Rough Sleeping**Catherine West:****[47389]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps he is taking to prevent rough sleeping after the end of the covid-19 lockdown.

Luke Hall:

The latest figures show over 90 per cent of rough sleepers known to councils at the beginning of this crisis have now been made offers of safe accommodation and we have announced Dame Louise Casey will spearhead the next phase of the government’s support for rough sleepers during the pandemic.

This taskforce will work hand-in-hand with councils across the country on plans to ensure rough sleepers can move into long-term, safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over – ensuring as few people as possible return to life on the streets.

In addition, £3.2 billion of additional Government funding has now been made available to help councils respond to coronavirus, including meeting the costs of

accommodating some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This is on top of £3.2 million specifically targeted to help rough sleepers during the coronavirus emergency and the £489 million committed in 2020 to 2021 to help rough sleepers, a £121 million increase in funding from the previous year.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Bangladesh: Migrant Camps

Rushanara Ali:

[\[46660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what representations she has made to her Bangladeshi counterpart on the internet ban in Rohingya refugee camps.

Nigel Adams:

Ministers and the British High Commission in Dhaka continue to raise the issue of telecommunications restrictions in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps in Bangladesh with representatives of the Government of Bangladesh. The Minister of State for South Asia Lord Ahmad has raised this recently with the Bangladesh High Commissioner.

Restrictions on 3G and 4G communications in the Rohingya camps are hindering COVID-19 preparedness. The first case of a refugee with COVID-19 was confirmed within the refugee camps on May 14th. These restrictions limit the ability of agencies to share information with the refugees and with each other; and for the Rohingya to self-organise. Good communications are critical for preparedness, surveillance, response, delivering critical services, and for maintaining stability in the camps.

■ Burma: Refugees

Nadia Whittome:

[\[47494\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the need for humanitarian aid to support refugees in refugee camps in Myanmar.

Nigel Adams:

There are around 400,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in Myanmar, most of whom were displaced by conflict. This includes 130,000 Rohingya IDPs in Rakhine State, around 77,000 Rakhine IDPs in Rakhine and Chin State, around 110,000 IDPs in Kachin and Northern Shan and around 90,000 IDPs South East/Thai border. In addition to conflict, Myanmar is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. In recent years it has experienced displacement as a result of extreme weather events.

Humanitarian need across Myanmar remains high, especially amongst vulnerable IDP populations. The UN Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 estimates total needs in Myanmar at one million people and \$262 million. Key needs include health care,

food, shelter, water and sanitation, and protection. Conflict and travel restrictions limit access to IDPs for international agencies in many areas.

The UK is concerned about the potential impact of COVID-19 on displaced people and on wider conflict affected communities. A serious outbreak of COVID-19 could increase pressure on, and even overwhelm, the already stretched humanitarian system and could reduce access further. The UK has one of the biggest humanitarian programmes in Myanmar working through the UN, International Committee of the Red Cross, international organisations and civil society to respond to needs.

■ Crimes of Violence: Gender

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[46795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much and what proportion of the UK's Official Development Assistance was spent on projects tackling gender-based violence in each financial year since 2009-10.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) data is collected and reported in line with internationally agreed OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) definitions and standards. These standards include sector codes that are allocated to programmes.

In 2015, following lobbying by the UK and others, the DAC introduced a new sector code to improve the tracking of ODA that contributes to ending of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The UK started reporting on the new code for 2016 ODA spend. Before changes were made to our aid management platform in 2018, however, there were several technological barriers which meant that it was very difficult to track spend accurately.

Our *Statistics on International Development: Final Aid Spend 2018* publication shows that we tracked £32.6 million bilateral aid on ending VAWG for 2018. We also estimated a further £12.4 million UK ODA was spent on ending VAWG through our partnerships with multilaterals. This amounts to 0.31% of UK ODA for that year.

We are doing more to improve the quality and transparency of our data on VAWG spend. For example, we are working to improve the way we track the impact of other sectoral programming, such as humanitarian, health, economic or education programmes that also contribute to ending VAWG, and which may not yet be fully captured as part of our published data.

We are also continuing to scale up our investment in tackling VAWG, for example our new £67.5 million programme *What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale*, is the largest investment by any donor government in programming and research to prevent VAWG globally.

Note: Imputed Multilateral Shares are estimates of how multilaterals spent the UK's core contributions to multilaterals. For more detail on these estimates please see the 'Statistics at DFID' gov.uk page

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Trade Agreements: Japan

Bill Esterson:

[\[47266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 13 May 2020 to Question 42995, if she will publish the responses from the automotive industry.

Greg Hands:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 May 2020 to Question UIN: 42995.

My department published a summary of responses to the Call for Input and the Government's response to those comments on 13 May. This is available on gov.uk, alongside the UK's negotiating objectives for a UK-Japan Free Trade Agreement.

We took the approach of publishing a summary of responses, including from the automotive industry, rather than publishing by individual sector to protect any business sensitive information that was shared.

■ Trade Barriers: Scotland

David Mundell:

[\[45985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she has made representations to her counterparts in the (a) EU and (b) US Administration on urgently suspending tariffs on US and EU consumer goods as a result of the steel-aluminium and Airbus disputes during the covid-19 outbreak, in order to support Scottish exporters that are subject to US tariffs.

Greg Hands:

The UK Government takes the negative impact of US tariffs and the additional impact of Covid-19 on Scottish exporters very seriously.

Last week, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade engaged with her opposite numbers in both the US administration and the European Commission. She will continue to work with the EU, other Airbus nations and the US on a negotiated settlement to the Airbus-Boeing disputes. She will also continue to push the US and work with the EU for the removal of tariffs on both sides of the Atlantic and the rebalancing measures imposed in response.

JUSTICE

■ Prisoners: Uniforms

Philip Davies:

[\[46012\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent equality impact assessment he has undertaken on the application of the prison uniform policy to male and female prisoners.

Lucy Frazer:

In October 2018, following a comprehensive equality analysis, an interim policy change was introduced to ensure that both male and female convicted prisoners were subject to the same national policy on prison-issue clothing. This was confirmed in the Incentives Policy Framework launched on 13 January 2020. The Policy Framework requires all convicted prisoners to wear prison-issue clothing, unless the governor allows them to wear their own clothes as a privilege under their prison's local incentive arrangements.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown: [47226]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Minister of State for Justice to the Justice Select Committee on the 12 May 2020, (a) by and (b) from what date Public Health England has recommended that the prison population should be reduced by 5000-5500 prisoners to reduce the risk of further covid-19 infections; and by what date the Government plans to have reduced the prison population by that amount.

Ms Lyn Brown: [47227]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Minister of State for Justice to the Justice Select Committee on the 12 May 2020, if he will publish the advice from Public Health England in respect of reducing the prison population by 5000-5500 prisoners.

Ms Lyn Brown: [47228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to the oral evidence given by the Minister of State for Justice to the Justice Select Committee on the 12 May 2020, what (a) assumptions in respect of the (i) timing and (ii) speed at which criminal court proceedings would resume following the covid-19 outbreak and (b) other assumptions informed the advice from Public Health England on reducing the prison population by 5000-5500 prisoners.

Lucy Frazer:

The Public Health England briefing paper on the prison population management strategies in response to Covid-19 was published on 27 April and is available on GOV.UK (link [here](#)).

That paper recognises the positive effect that HMPPS's compartmentalisation strategy has in containing the spread of the virus within establishments, alongside other measures. HMPPS has assessed that to fully implement the compartmentalisation strategy requires around 5000-5,500 prison places. This is being delivered through a range of means, including a reduction in the population, support for early release schemes, expediting of remand cases, and expansion of the estate.

The assessment of how to operationalise the compartmentalisation strategy is an iterative piece of work and we are working closely with colleagues across the whole of the criminal justice system, including with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, to understand the effects of renewed court activity and the potential impact this may have on the prison population. Any decisions on the next steps in prisons will follow advice from the NHS and Public Health England and Public Health Wales alongside an operational assessment of what can be achieved in custodial settings with a range of public health control measures in place.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

■ **Members: Coronavirus**

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[47325\]](#)

To ask the Leader of the House, if he will make it his policy to renew the temporary Standing Orders relating to hybrid proceedings to enable hon. Members who are shielding as a result of covid-19 to continue to participate in business remotely.

Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg:

I set out the Government's position during today's Urgent Question and Business Statement. The House cannot be as effective in carrying out its constitutional duties without its members here. I therefore think it essential that all MPs who are able to do so move back to physical ways of working as quickly as possible.

The House Authorities are making every effort to ensure that the return to physical proceedings will be in line with Public Health England guidance and safe for members and the staff of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ **Common Travel Area: Coronavirus**

Colum Eastwood:

[\[47475\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what assessment he has made of the effect of the Government's lockdown measures on the Common Travel Area between the UK and Ireland.

Mr Robin Walker:

The UK Government continues to abide by its obligations under the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangements and we are clearly committed to working closely with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In recognition of the importance of the CTA, as well as the unique position of Northern Ireland, the UK Government's measures on restrictions applying in respect of new arrivals into the UK will not apply to CTA routes.

■ Coronavirus: Northern Ireland**Colum Eastwood:** [\[47476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what recent discussions he has had with the Irish Government on a common approach to tackling the covid-19 outbreak.

Brandon Lewis:

The UK is committed to working with the Irish Government on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and we are communicating at all levels to ensure a joined-up approach. There have been regular discussions between Ministers and officials from the UK and Irish governments and from the Northern Ireland Executive, including a regular Quad meeting, most recently on 19 May, jointly chaired by the Tánaiste and I.

SCOTLAND**■ Coronavirus: Edinburgh****Rosie Duffield:** [\[902840\]](#)

What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the outbreak of covid-19 at the international Nike conference in Edinburgh in February 2020.

Douglas Ross:

It was agreed by the 4 Chief Medical Officers ahead of the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 that each administration would announce their own cases and take their own decisions about what is appropriate to release, so this was a matter for the Scottish Government.

■ Defence: Scotland**Antony Higginbotham:** [\[902850\]](#)

What steps he is taking to support the defence sector in Scotland.

Douglas Ross:

The Scotland Office, the Secretary of State for Scotland, and I are all in frequent contact with stakeholders across the Scottish defence sector to ensure their valuable perspective is heard and understood.

In my Moray constituency, Kinloss Barracks and RAF Lossiemouth have remained busy supporting the efforts to fight COVID-19 and to continue to protect our country. So I place on record our thanks to them for all their efforts.

■ Trade: Scotland**Angela Richardson:** [\[902842\]](#)

What recent assessment he has made of the value of trade between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Douglas Ross:

Scottish exports to the rest of the UK increased in 2018 by £1.2 billion to £51.2 billion.

The official Scottish Government figures show that more than 60 per cent of all Scottish exports go to England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

As a result, the rest of the UK continues to be Scotland's largest market for exports and accounting for three times the value of exports to EU countries.

■ United Kingdom

Ben Everitt:

[\[902851\]](#)

What steps he is taking to strengthen the Union.

Douglas Ross:

This Government has always stressed the importance of the Union. The current crisis demonstrates how valuable it is to have a collective ability to respond.

We have world leading expertise and the economic strength to protect jobs and businesses with generous support packages.

It is the strength of our Union which will enable us to defeat the Covid-19 virus and rebuild our economy quickly and fairly.

TRANSPORT

■ British Transport Police

Karl McCartney:

[\[47261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent meetings Ministers of his Department have had with (a) representatives of British Transport Police and (b) the Home office on the British Transport Police; and what the outcome was of those meetings.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There were conference telephone calls on Monday 4th May and Wednesday 6th May, between the Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris MP and Paul Crowther, the Chief Constable of the British Transport Police. No other Ministers have met with BTP representatives recently. There was also a phone conference between the Rail Minister and the Chair and Chief Executive of the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA) on Thursday 7th May.

There have not been any recent ministerial meetings with the Home Office regarding BTP.

Outcomes

At the 4th May meeting, the Minister and the Chief Constable agreed that BTP and the Department would continue to work closely together to manage the impacts of COVID-19 on the rail network. During the discussion on the 6th May, the Chief Constable was able to give an update on BTP's activities and the Minister did likewise regarding work within the Department.

During the discussion between the Rail Minister and BTPA, the BTPA representatives provided an update on the Authority's work in supporting BTP activity and agreed to keep the Minister updated regarding future developments.

■ **Bus Services and Rapid Transit Systems: Coronavirus**

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[47293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has given of the effect on the revenue of (a) bus and (b) light rail operators of the transport guidance for passengers and operators published on 12 May 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has been working closely with bus and light rail operators to understand the issues they face in providing services whilst ensuring social distancing for both passengers and staff. We are also working urgently to provide further support to the bus and light rail sectors to enable them to ramp up service provision safely for people returning to work.

■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Sir John Hayes:

[\[46542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to ensure that bus services continue to operate during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government announced on 3 April 2020 a funding package totalling £397 million that will keep England's buses serving those who rely on them.

Ian Mearns:

[R] [\[46616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which trades unions representing bus workers (a) he, (b) his Ministers and (c) officials of his Department have held meetings with to discuss the effect of covid-19 on those workers; and on what dates each of those meetings took place.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has been meeting with the Trades Union Congress (TUC), National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) and Unite the Union regularly to discuss the issues affecting the transport sector due to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak.

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[47262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of using tour operators' coaches to (a) increase public transport capacity and (b) reduce overcrowding on the national rail network.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has been working closely with the transport sector to plan for an increase in passenger numbers, while facilitating social distancing where possible.

Train operators have increased service levels to approximately 70 per cent of pre-Covid-19 levels as of 18 May. We continue to work closely with the industry to identify and implement solutions that protect key passenger and freight flows.

Dan Jarvis:

[R] [\[47292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to extend the Bus Services Support Grant beyond the 12 week period announced by his Department on 2 April 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is working urgently to provide further support to the bus sector to enable operators to ramp up service provision for people returning to work whilst observing social distancing, and will confirm the details of this further support as soon as possible.

Liz Twist:

[\[47415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to identifying additional financial resources for (a) bus operators and (b) passenger transport authorities in the North East to help ensure continuation of bus services after the end of the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department has been working closely with bus operators to understand the issues they face in providing services whilst ensuring social distancing for both passengers and staff. We are also working urgently to provide further support to the bus sector to enable operators, working with local transport authorities, to ramp up service provision for people returning to work. An announcement will be made shortly on the further support that will be provided.

■ **Bus Services: Disability**

Anthony Browne:

[\[46187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend the deadline for compliance with the obligation in the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 for coaches over 7.5 tonnes to have been fully accessible by 1 January 2020.

Rachel Maclean:

Operators, local authorities and education establishments have had almost twenty years to comply with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000.

Government has offered temporary exemptions for certain statutory and school procured services whilst compliant vehicles are procured, which will ensure that children are still able to get to and from their place of education.

We are currently liaising with stakeholders to understand the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the ability of operators to comply and what further support might be required.

■ Bus Services: Private Education

Mr Steve Baker:

[\[46044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will extend the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 2000 exemption period for private school coaches from July 2020 to July 2025; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

Operators, local authorities and education establishments have had almost twenty years to comply with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000.

Government has offered temporary exemptions for certain statutory and school procured services whilst compliant vehicles are procured, which will ensure that children are still able to get to and from their place of education.

We are currently liaising with stakeholders to understand the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on the ability of operators to comply and what further support might be required.

■ Cycling and Horse Riding: Mobile Phones

Dr Luke Evans:

[\[46806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to introduce penalties for (a) cyclists and (b) horse riders found to have caused road accidents as a result of using their mobile phone while (i) cycling and (ii) riding.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has no current plans to introduce new penalties for cyclists and horse riders using mobile phones while riding. All road users are required to comply with road traffic law in the interests of their own safety and that of other road users. For those who do not adopt a responsible attitude, there are already laws in place that can make them liable for prosecution. The Official Highway Code explains the law and gives advice for cyclists and horse riders on how to safely use our roads.

■ Cycling: Coronavirus

Alexander Stafford:

[\[46204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what covid-19 guidance people cycling (a) to work and (b) for exercise in (i) Rother Valley constituency and (ii) the UK should follow to ensure that they adhere to the Government's social distancing guidelines.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the 12th May the Government published guidance advising the public how to travel safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in England. This guidance provides advice for cycling and travel by types of transport.

■ Cycling: Finance

Catherine West:

[\[47391\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to continue the recent additional funding for cycling as part of a long-term increase in cycling investment.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the 9th May the Government announced a £2bn package of funding for cycling and walking over the next five years. This includes £250m for the provision of pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling as well as vouchers for cycle repairs and greater provision for bike fixing facilities.

An updated Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy will be launched by the Prime Minister in the summer which will outline the process for the development of the second statutory Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[47163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of holding a public vote on naming the HS2 tunnelling machines.

Andrew Stephenson:

The public vote has been implemented and managed entirely in-house by HS2 Ltd staff utilising existing resources so there is no disaggregated cost.

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[47164\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the cost of attaching nameplates to the HS2 tunnel boring machines being manufactured in Germany.

Andrew Stephenson:

There is no additional cost associated with applying names to the Tunnel Boring Machines ('TBMs') as the cost for applying branding is included in the manufacturing costs for the machines. Once chosen by the public, names of the TBMs will be added to the side of each machine using transfers, not attached nameplates, similar to the standard branding seen on TBMs around the world.

■ Motorcycles: Coronavirus

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[47176\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to promote the use of low emission scooters and light motorcycles as an alternative to public transport during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department's guidance issued on 12 May refers to "Private cars and other vehicles" as an alternative to using public transport, and encourages the public to "consider all other forms of transport before using public transport". This would

include private vehicles such as motorcycles and mopeds where the journey to be made is appropriate.

Motorcycles are an important way of getting around, and we are working on a number of projects, including sorting out potholes, which are a problem for people on motorcycles and other two-wheeled vehicles. I encourage people to adopt the electric motorbike.

■ **Petrol: Biofuels**

Matt Vickers:

[R] [\[46196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what meetings he has held with and what representations he has received from stakeholders on his Department's consultation on the Introduction of E10; and if he will make a statement on the steps his Department plans to take during that consultation process.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department publishes details of ministers' meetings with external organisations on a quarterly basis and this information is made available on data.gov.uk. The consultation "Introducing E10 petrol", on proposals to introduce petrol with a higher bioethanol content, closed on 3 May 2020. The Department received responses from a wide range of stakeholders and is analysing the responses at pace. We plan to publish a Government response later this year, summarising the representations made and setting out next steps.

■ **Public Transport: Coronavirus**

Lilian Greenwood:

[\[47263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to require employers to publish travel plans for their employees which minimise the use of public transport during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government guidance asks employers to consider changes to their working environments to make sure employees are safe while at work. This includes getting to and from their workplace. Workforce travel planning can play an important role in reducing demand on the transport system and controlling the virus. This will keep workers safe and ensuring space on the network for those who need to use it most. Ensuring as many people as possible can continue to work from home, staggering start and finish times for those who need to travel in and enabling those journeys to be on foot or by bicycle wherever possible, or by car, will all help.

Our guidance is not mandatory, but we look to employers to consider the advice closely and make the right decisions for their organisations and employees. We are working with employer organisations to ensure they draw their employees attention to the new guidance.

■ Restoring Your Railway Fund

Jessica Morden:

[\[47225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Government plans to publish the full application form for the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The online form for registering an interest in the second round of the Ideas Fund was sent to Members on 15 May. The full application form will be published on GOV.UK during week commencing 25 May. We will let Members know when the form is available, as we have done at all stages of the Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund. The deadline for applications is 19 June.

We received 60 bids for the first round, which have recently been assessed and the next steps from this round will be communicated to Members and Promoters shortly.

■ Utilities: Coronavirus

Chi Onwurah:

[\[46053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the maximum time required for the completion of repair work to ensure (a) water and (b) other utilities are maintained during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

We expect utility companies to carry out their works in an effective manner and ensure that activity is carried out on site whenever possible. Under the Traffic Management Act 2004, each local highway authority has a "Network Management Duty" to manage its roads effectively to keep traffic moving. The authority is required to coordinate works taking place on their roads, and utility companies have a duty to co-operate with the authority. Most local authorities in England now operate street works permit schemes and will discuss the time needed to complete works with the works promoter on a case by case basis, depending on the type of work and its location, before the permit is issued.

The Department has made no assessment of the time taken by any utility company to complete maintenance work undertaken during Covid-19.

TREASURY

■ Boats: Coronavirus

Munira Wilson:

[\[47461\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support is available to hire and passenger boat companies who are ineligible for Government grant schemes because they do not operate from rateable premises.

Munira Wilson:

[47462]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that passenger boat companies that do not operate from rateable premises are eligible to apply for support from the Government's covid-19 support schemes.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency including almost £300 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP. Hire and passenger boat companies, along with other businesses, may benefit from a range of support measures including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)
- The Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- 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
- A Discretionary Grant Fund for Local Authorities in England to make grants payments of up to £25,000 to businesses excluded from the existing grants schemes
- 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>.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[46530]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of the (a) loan schemes and (b) other fiscal support available for businesses (i) of different sizes and (b) in different sectors 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 almost £300 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of UK GDP. On 12 May the Government published new statistics that show businesses have benefitted from over £14 billion in loans and guarantees to support their cashflow during the crisis. This includes:

- 268,000 Bounce Back Loans (BBL) for small businesses, worth £8.3 billion
- 36,000 loans worth over £6 billion through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) for SMEs
- £359 million through the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) for large firms

Figures from the Bank of England show that over £18.7 billion has been distributed to large firms through the Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF). Together, these schemes ensure almost all viable UK businesses can apply for a government backed loan.

In addition, the Government has implemented a range of further measures which are providing support to millions of businesses of all sizes and across sectors, including:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – now extended until October
- A 12-month business rates holiday for all eligible retail, leisure and hospitality businesses in England
- Grant funding for small businesses, and retail, leisure and hospitality businesses
- 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

■ Charities: Coronavirus

Emma Hardy:

[\[47423\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional financial support he plans to allocate to charities that work with veterans during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

On 12 May the Government announced a £6 million fund to support the defence community during the coronavirus outbreak, including serving personnel, veterans and their families. The funding will be distributed in the form of grants administered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, and the application process for charities is available on the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust website. This latest funding is in addition to the £10 million the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust received in the Spring Budget for support to veterans' health and wellbeing and the annual government contribution of £10 million for the Covenant Fund, £3 million of which has already been protected for veterans particularly affected by the coronavirus.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Rosie Cooper:

[\[47224\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to help ensure that people furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme who are (a) shielding and (b) living in a household where someone else is shielding do not have to return to work in breach of public health advice as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Jesse Norman:

On 12 May, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was extended for four months until the end of October. The scheme has been extended in full until the end of July, and then the Government will introduce changes to the scheme concerning part-time working and employer contributions from August. The Treasury and HMRC are working urgently to finalise the detail of these changes, which will be announced by the end of May.

Stephen Hammond:

[\[47230\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the guidance on the covid-19 job retention scheme to ensure the qualification for that scheme of small businesses that have agreed with HMRC to make annual returns and are not therefore required to make an RTI return.

Jesse Norman:

Employees who are paid annually are eligible for a grant under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme provided they meet the conditions of the scheme. These conditions require that employee to have been notified to HMRC on a real time information (RTI) submission on or before 19 March 2020 which relates to a payment of earnings in the 2019/20 tax year.

The Government has prioritised helping the greatest number of people as quickly as possible, and the scheme has had to be set up to operate at significant scale and with limited manual intervention. Requiring eligible employees to be notified on an RTI submission on or before 19 March 2020 allows as many people as possible to be included by going right up to the day before the scheme was announced, while mitigating the risk of fraud.

Mr William Wragg:

[\[47335\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons the submission of contracts as evidence of employment are not permitted to allow new starters to access the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has prioritised helping the greatest number of people as quickly as possible, and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) will enable millions of people to remain employed.

The Government set up the CJRS to operate at significant scale and with limited manual intervention. To be eligible for the CJRS, employees must have been on their employer's PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020 and HMRC must have received an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee on or before 19 March 2020. The eligibility requirements aim to ensure that as many people as possible are included in the scheme, while allowing HMRC to verify claims using data they hold, mitigating the risk of fraudulent use of the scheme.

Mr William Wragg:

[47336]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the eligibility criteria for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to include new starters who were not on the payroll with their new company on 19 March 2020 but had a contractual agreement in place with that employer.

Jesse Norman:

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is open to any individual who was on an employer's PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020 and for whom HMRC received an RTI submission notifying payment in respect of that employee on or before the 19 March 2020. Processing claims for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme where HMRC did not have RTI data by 19 March would significantly slow down the system while risking substantial levels of fraud. It would also require greater resource for HMRC when they are already under significant pressure to deliver the system designed.

Those not eligible for the scheme may have access to other support which the Government is providing, including a package of temporary welfare measures and up to three months' mortgage payment holidays for those in difficulty with their mortgage payments.

Catherine West:

[47506]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to provide additional support for furloughed workers due to the covid-19 outbreak who are paid partially through troncs.

Jesse Norman:

The objective of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is to enable employers to keep people in employment. To achieve this, the grants compensate employers for the payments that they are contractually obliged to make, in order to avoid the need for redundancies. Covering discretionary payments, for example tips, including those distributed through troncs, would go beyond the objectives of the scheme.

The Government recognises that for some employees, the pay in scope for this emergency grant package will be less than the overall sum they usually receive. The Government is also supporting people on low incomes who need to rely on the welfare system through a significant package of temporary measures. These include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1bn increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing

Benefit claimants. These changes will benefit new and existing claimants. Anyone can check their eligibility and apply for Universal Credit by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

■ Ferries: Coronavirus

Karl Turner:

[46626]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what financial support has been provided by the public purse to employers operating roll-on roll-off passenger ferries from UK ports to mitigate the financial effect of the reduction in (a) passenger and (b) car traffic due the covid-19 outbreak to date.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has already announced a range of measures to support all businesses, including roll-on roll-off ferry operators. In addition, on 24 April Government committed to keeping freight flowing on routes into and across the UK. Following engagement with operators, DfT has awarded contracts for 16 routes with 6 operators, worth an estimated £34m over 2 months. DfT will publish regular updates on this package.

■ Individual Savings Accounts

Kirsten Oswald:

[47329]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing penalties from savers who need to withdraw funds from lifetime ISAs to enable them to tackle financial difficulties as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

As announced on 1 May 2020, to help investors withdraw funds from their Lifetime ISA during the COVID-19 pandemic the withdrawal charge has been temporarily reduced from 25% to 20%. The reduced withdrawal charge applies to all unauthorised withdrawals made in the period from Friday 6 March 2020 until Monday 5 April 2021. This means savers will get back all the money they originally put in, subject to any investment losses incurred on stocks and shares Lifetime ISAs. There is no withdrawal charge if it is made to buy a first home or the investor has a terminal illness.

Further information on the reduced charge is available at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/lifetime-isa-withdrawal-charge-reduced-to-20

■ Members: Correspondence

David Linden:

[46132]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letter of 16 April 2020 from the hon. Member for Glasgow East.

Kemi Badenoch:

HM Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, and apologises for the delay in responding to the Honourable Member. The Honourable Member's correspondence is receiving attention and will be replied to as soon as possible.

■ Minimum Wage: Coronavirus**Richard Burgon:**[\[47374\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of people who are receiving less than the minimum wage while on furlough due to the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Leeds, (b) Yorkshire and the Humber and (c) the UK.

Jesse Norman:

Applications for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) opened on Monday 20 April. By midnight 17 May 2020, 986,000 employers had submitted claims to HMRC representing 8m furloughed employments and £11.1bn.

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.

■ NMC Healthcare: Insolvency**Hilary Benn:**[\[46559\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to support people affected by NMC Health Plc going into administration.

Kemi Badenoch:

NMC Health is a global organisation, with a large presence in the United Arab Emirates. However, its UK operational footprint is significantly smaller with few hospital beds and employees.

As UK administrators have a statutory objective to consider rescuing the company as a going concern, administrators can and do keep employees on to better facilitate a business rescue, as has happened with NMC's UK operations. To support people through this crisis, the Government has announced temporary increases to Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance and will make sure it protects, as far as possible, people's jobs and incomes.

The circumstances leading up to NMC Health's insolvency has triggered an investigation by the regulator, the Financial Reporting Council, so lessons can be learnt and appropriate action taken. However, it would not be appropriate for Government to comment on this ongoing investigation before its completion.

■ Nurseries: Non-domestic Rates

Neil Coyle: [47304]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether his Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of introducing business rate exemptions for nurseries in England.

Jesse Norman:

On 18 March, the Chancellor announced that non-local authority childcare providers would benefit from a business rates holiday for 2020-21.

■ Off-payroll Working

Theresa Villiers: [47213]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the economic value of work that (a) has already been and (b) is projected to be transferred overseas as a result of the extension of IR35 rules.

Theresa Villiers: [47214]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has made an estimate of the number of people deemed to be employees as a result of changes to the remit of IR35.

Jesse Norman:

The off-payroll working rules are designed to ensure that someone working like an employee, but through a company, pays similar levels of tax to other employees. It is fair that individuals who work in a similar way should pay broadly the same amount of tax. The rules do not apply to the self-employed or stop anyone working through their own company.

The reform to the off-payroll working rules does not change the rules by which employment status is determined but moves the responsibility for making the determination from the individual to the end client.

At Budget 2018, the independent OBR did not judge the forthcoming reform to have any specific macroeconomic impacts. This was reiterated in the Tax Information and Impact Note (TIIN) published in July 2019, which sets out HMRC's assessment that the reform to the off-payroll working rules is expected to affect 170,000 individuals. The TIIN can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rules-for-off-payroll-working-from-april-2020/rules-for-off-payroll-working-from-april-2020>.

HMRC have not seen evidence of organisations changing their recruitment practices to hire contractors offshore. Organisations will continue to be free to decide how they engage their workers and it will be for those workers to decide whether they wish to accept the terms and conditions offered.

■ Off-payroll Working: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers:

[47211]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether self-employed workers deemed to fall within IR35 rules are eligible for other Government financial support schemes set up to assist people who have lost work and income as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has announced a package of support for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) and individuals to deal with lost income and the costs of absence due to COVID-19.

Individuals working through a Personal Service Company are not eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. However, they may be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if they pay themselves through a PAYE scheme. They may also have access to support through the temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Individuals who are employed by a Personal Service Company are also entitled to statutory sick pay on the same terms as any other employee, and may be entitled to a rebate where they meet the criteria of that scheme. Those not eligible for Statutory Sick Pay will be able to receive support through the benefits system. Comprehensive information about the full range of business support measures is available at: www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support.

Theresa Villiers:

[47212]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the economic effect of the covid-19 lockdown on people that are deemed by HMRC to be employees under IR35 rules.

Jesse Norman:

Under the off-payroll (IR35) rules, individuals working like an employee, but through a company, will pay similar levels of tax to other employees. In the public sector, it is the end client who determines an individual's employment status for the purposes of the rules. Outside of the public sector, it is the individual's Personal Service Company (PSC) that must determine their status.

The Government has announced a package of support for individuals to deal with lost income and the costs of absence due to COVID-19. For deemed employees working in the public sector, the Government expects many public sector organisations to continue to pay staff and not furlough them.

Owner-managers paying themselves a salary through PAYE can benefit from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Employers can use a portal to claim for 80% of the usual monthly wage costs of furloughed employees (employees on a leave of absence) up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions for that wage. The CJRS is open to all UK employers from 1 March 2020. For companies with a sole director, directors can continue to undertake their statutory duties while

furloughed and still be eligible for the CJRS, as long as they do no work beyond these duties.

In addition, SMEs may also have access to support through the temporary Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. This supports SMEs with loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and asset finance of up to £5 million, for up to six years. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

Individuals who are employed by a Personal Service Company (PSC) are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) on the same terms as any other employee. PSCs which are eligible and make payments under SSP as a result of COVID-19 will be entitled to a rebate where they meet the criteria of that scheme. Those not eligible for SSP (e.g. the self-employed and very low earners) will be able to receive support through the benefits system.

Individuals who have paid sufficient NICs, including through multiple jobs, will be entitled to new style Employment and Support Allowance. If they have not made sufficient contributions, they can apply for Universal Credit. These individuals will benefit from the Budget announcements to remove the seven day wait in new style Employment and Support Allowance and, if they are self-employed, the Minimum Income Floor in Universal Credit.

■ **P and O Ferries: Redundancy**

Emma Hardy:

[46789]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential economic effect on Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle constituency of P&O Ferries' announcement on 11 May 2020 of redundancies among seafarers and shore-side staff on its Hull-Zeebrugge and Hull-Rotterdam ferry routes.

Kemi Badenoch:

The recent news regarding job losses at P&O will be very distressing for the company's employees and their families. The Government has protected, as far as possible, people's jobs and incomes through unprecedented support for workers. Measures such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are being used across the freight sector to protect the sector against the Covid-19 economic crisis.

In addition to economy wide measures on 24 April the Government committed to keeping freight flowing on routes into and across the UK. Following engagement with operators, DfT has awarded contracts for 16 routes with 6 operators, worth an estimated £34m over 2 months.

The Government has increased support for those on the lowest incomes through a package of temporary welfare measures, including a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element. The government has also made over £3.2 billion available to local authorities to address any pressures they are facing in response the COVID-19 pandemic, across all service areas.

■ Pensions: Coronavirus

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[47499\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has plans to provide additional support to people with private pension schemes that have been affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The government continues to consider appropriate actions that it can take to protect both the public and the economy from the impacts of COVID-19. We have already introduced a range of measure to support businesses and individuals, ensure financial stability and reinforce social safety nets.

We recognise that the value of investments may have fallen, including those held in private pensions. However, investments are for the long term and the government does not believe there are proportionate interventions to be made at this time.

On 1 April the Financial Conduct Authority, Pensions Regulator and the Money and Pensions Service published a joint statement urging savers to take their time when making financial decisions, and to visit the Pensions Advisory Service website for free pensions guidance before making any decisions about their retirement savings.

■ Ports: Milford Haven

Hywel Williams:

[\[47197\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans the Government has to establish a free port in Milford Haven.

Steve Barclay:

We plan to introduce up to 10 Freeports across the UK which will be national hubs for trade, investment and innovation. We want to ensure that this is a UK wide offer, not just for England, and we are working with the DAs to pursue this.

Hywel Williams:

[\[47198\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether an economic impact assessment has been undertaken on a potential free port in Milford Haven.

Steve Barclay:

We will take on board suggestions and feedback about our proposed policy from stakeholders during the Freeport consultation to ensure the policy is grounded in local needs and ambitions.

Specific locations will then be chosen in due course according to a fair, transparent and robust allocation process. HM Treasury will not be assessing the detail of individual ports' infrastructure requirements ahead of that.

Hywel Williams:

[\[47199\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when his Department last met with Milford Haven Port Authority to discuss a potential free port in Milford Haven.

Steve Barclay:

HM Treasury has not met specifically with Milford Haven Port Authority to discuss a potential Freeport in Milford Haven. We would welcome a response from Milford Haven Port Authority to the consultation.

Hywel Williams:[\[47200\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the additional infrastructure that will be required to support a free port in Milford Haven.

Steve Barclay:

Specific locations will be chosen in due course according to a fair, transparent and robust allocation process. HM Treasury will not be assessing the detail of individual ports' infrastructure requirements ahead of that.

Hywel Williams:[\[47201\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government plans to fund all additional infrastructure required to facilitate a potential free port in Milford Haven.

Steve Barclay:

We are considering a wide range of measures to create vibrant, innovative Freeports which are attractive to domestic and international investors looking to start or grow their UK operations. We are considering additional targeted funding for infrastructure improvements in Freeport areas to level up communities and increase employment opportunities.

■ Research: Government Assistance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[46061\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what proportion of the £22 billion in funding for research and development announced in Budget 2020 will be used to replace funding from the EU shared prosperity fund.

Kemi Badenoch:

In repatriating the EU structural fund programme, the government has an historic opportunity to take back control and spend this money on this country's priorities. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will replace the overly bureaucratic EU structural funds, levelling up opportunity in each of our four nations, and will have a strong focus on investing in people and improving their life chances.

The Budget allocated 20/21 R&D funding to departments, with most funding from 21/22 onwards subject to allocation in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, when the government will also set out plans for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

■ Revenue and Customs: Coronavirus

Stewart Malcolm McDonald:

[47344]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 13 May 2020 to Question 43059, on Revenue and Customs: Coronavirus, whether HMRC is investigating employers that are accused of breaching national minimum wage regulations.

Jesse Norman:

Everyone who is entitled to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) should be able to receive it.

HMRC continue to discharge their legal obligations and essential functions during the COVID-19 outbreak and will do everything possible to protect individuals, businesses and the economy during this difficult time.

HMRC continue to enforce the National Minimum Wage (NMW) in order to ensure that workers are being paid the wages to which they are legally entitled.

HMRC encourage any worker who suspects they are being paid less than the NMW to contact ACAS on 0300 123 1100 or submit a query online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-and-work-rights-complaints>.

■ Self-employed: Coronavirus

Nadia Whittome:

[47496]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Government support for self-employed people who are structured as a one-person limited company and receive income through an annual payroll near the end of the tax year, and are therefore ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

For an employee, including self-employed people who have a one-person limited company, to be eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, they must have been notified to HMRC on a real-time information (RTI) submission on or before 19 March.

Those paid annually are eligible to claim, as long as they meet the relevant conditions, including being notified to HMRC on an RTI submission on or before 19 March 2020 which relates to a payment of earnings in the 19/20 tax year. Anyone paid annually and notified on an RTI submission after that date will not be eligible for the scheme, as is the case for those who are paid more frequently and were not notified to HMRC on or before 19 March.

This scheme supplements the other significant support announced for UK businesses, including the Bounce Back Loans Scheme for small businesses, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Kevin Brennan: [\[47202\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what equality impact assessment his Department has undertaken in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme rules in respect of women and new mothers.

Kevin Brennan: [\[47203\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what equality impact assessments his Department has undertaken of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury takes care to pay due regard to the equality impacts of its policy decisions relating to the COVID-19 outbreak, in line with all legal requirements and the Government's commitment to promoting equality. There are internal procedural requirements and support in place for ensuring that such considerations inform decisions taken by ministers.

Kevin Brennan: [\[47204\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will amend the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme rules to enable women that took maternity leave in the relevant years to exempt periods of maternity leave from the average income calculation for that scheme.

Kevin Brennan: [\[47205\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the financial effect on self-employed women in the creative industries of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme not discounting periods of maternity leave when calculating financial support.

Kevin Brennan: [\[47505\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential differential effect on the performance of female-led businesses of not discounting periods of maternity leave in the calculation of financial support under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme has been designed to deliver support as quickly and effectively as possible to millions of individuals. The Government understands the challenges faced by those with periods of maternity leave and the existing averaging calculation does account for periods of reduced profits. The Government will continue to work with stakeholders to make sure the correct funding reaches those who need it most, keeping all policies under review, while ensuring that any potential changes do not risk the wider delivery of Government schemes.

Andrew Gwynne:

[47219]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to review the £50,000 cap on earnings in respect of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), including the £50,000 threshold, is designed to target those most in need, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income. Some 95 per cent of people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment could benefit from this scheme.

The self-employed are a very diverse population. They have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations even in normal times. Some may see their profits unaffected by the current situation, while others have substantial alternative forms of income: for example, those who had more than £50,000 from self-employment profits in 2017-18 had an average total income of more than £200,000. The self-employed can also offset losses against profits in other years and other forms of income.

Those with average profits above £50,000 may still benefit from other support. Individuals may have access to a range of grants and loans depending on their circumstances, and the SEISS supplements the significant support already announced for UK businesses, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business-support/.

Stephen Hammond:

[47229]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will (a) expand the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme to include or (b) provide a bespoke support scheme for people who began self-employment in the 2019-20 tax year.

Jesse Norman:

It has not been possible to include those who began trading after the 2018-19 tax year in the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). This was a very difficult decision and it was taken for practical reasons.

The Government recognises that those who started trading more recently will not have submitted a tax return for the 2018-19 tax year, and it considered alternative approaches. HMRC would not be able to distinguish genuine self-employed individuals who started trading in 2019-20 from fake applications by fraudulent operators and organised criminal gangs seeking to exploit the SEISS.

However, the self-employed can also benefit from the Government's relaxation of the earnings rules (known as the Minimum Income Floor) in Universal Credit. They may also have access to a range of grants and loans depending on their circumstances. These include the Bounce Back Loan Scheme for small businesses, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and the deferral of tax payments. More information about the full range of business support measures is available at

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

Alan Brown:

[47351]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he plans to extend the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme in line with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The UK has one of the most generous self-employed COVID-19 support schemes in the world. The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme opened on 13 May, ahead of schedule, and it provides support worth up to £7,500 each to millions of individuals. Recipients will have the grants in their bank accounts within six working days of making an application.

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.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Barristers

Wera Hobhouse:

[47406]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make available financial support for Barristers' chambers carrying out publicly-funded work where barristers are not eligible to apply for support through the Self-employment Income Support Scheme during the covid-19 outbreak.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) is available for those with trading profits of no more than £50,000, with the requirement to have submitted a Self-Assessment tax return for the 2018/2019 tax year. Recipients of the SEISS have must submitted a tax return for 2018/19 to allow HMRC to mitigate the risk of fraudulent applications.

Chambers and individual barristers may be eligible for other Government support, such as the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, and income tax and VAT deferrals. Chambers can also use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) to reduce staffing costs.

The Government will continue to listen to feedback on the support available.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme: Daycare

Tulip Siddiq:

[47383]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate the Government has made of how many (a) childminders and (b) nannies are eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC are unable to report, from the information available, how many childminders or nannies will be eligible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Some 95 per cent of people who receive the majority of their income from self-employment could benefit from this scheme.

■ Unemployment: Young People**Ben Lake:**[\[47419\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support his Department plans to provide to help prevent youth unemployment.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has provided unprecedented support for the economy during this crisis. This includes paying people's wages to help keep as many people as possible in their existing jobs; loans to help support viable businesses to stay afloat; and protecting the incomes of the most vulnerable.

The Government's aim is to maintain the productive capacity of the British economy. As the country starts to recover from coronavirus, the Government will continue to review what can be done to support that recovery.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Gender Recognition: Health Services and Public Lavatories****Fleur Anderson:**[\[47467\]](#)

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether she has plans to bring forward legislative proposals to reduce access to (a) health care for young transgender people and (b) public conveniences for transgender people in the forthcoming reforms to the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA) sets out the process by which a person can change their legal gender. Healthcare for young transgender people and public conveniences for transgender people does not fall within its scope.

The Government is carefully planning next steps on reforming the GRA, so that any changes can have a positive impact on transgender adults who live in the UK.

We have listened closely to all those who engaged with the consultation, and we plan to publish our response this summer, subject to the Government's COVID-19 response.

The Government is also committed to making sure all young people have access to appropriate and timely psychological and medical support.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Arlington Automotive: Insolvency****Jess Phillips:**[\[47312\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department has taken to support disabled employees of Arlington Automotive following the insolvency of that company and resulting job losses.

Justin Tomlinson:

We know this is a worrying time for people, and DWP are ready to support anyone impacted by job loss.

In response to covid-19, DWP has established an alternative service to our usual face to face offer. People will be able to access redundancy help and job search advice on the Department's new Job Help campaign website. There's also information on gov.uk. and updated information packs provided to employers to help them signpost employees to the support that is available. The support available includes:

- Connecting people to jobs in the labour market.
- Help with job search including CV writing, interview skills, where to find jobs and how to apply for them.
- Help to identify transferable skills and skills gaps (linked to the local labour market)
- What benefits they may get and how to claim

In addition, officials in the Solihull Jobcentre have supported both the employer and employees of Arlington Automotive, by providing a factsheet which gives an overview of the help and support through Jobcentre plus; details regarding the National Careers Service and relevant links. The factsheet is also available in alternative formats.

■ Children: Maintenance**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[43665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what information her Department holds on the number of people who have ceased their child maintenance payments having been made unemployed since March 2020.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 15 May 2020]: The information requested is not readily available and to provide it would incur disproportionate cost.

DWP is a learning Department and we will look to understand the impact of the health emergency.

Steve McCabe:

[\[44960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support the Government is providing to victims of abuse who are waiting for missed child maintenance payments.

Mims Davies:

Where parents have reported domestic abuse, agents are trained to signpost clients to additional sources of support, including the new gov.uk page which highlights support routes in a crisis, as well as advice services. The Child Maintenance Options (CMO) website provides advice and signposting information to a number of specialist domestic abuse support organisations, as well as advice and information on staying safe.

Paying Parents have a regular schedule of payments to make and are still expected to pay child maintenance throughout this period.

If arrears do accrue during this period due to missed payments, the Service will deal with the debt once the current situation stabilises, to ensure that receiving parents do not lose out in the long run. The Service will update calculations as soon as possible and collect any unpaid amounts that may have accrued. Any parent found to have abused the system will find themselves subject to the full extent of our enforcement powers – including prosecution through the courts.

Mr David Davis:

[\[44973\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the statutory basis is for the Child Maintenance Service to accept only verbal evidence, without supporting documentation, in relation to changes to the paying parent's financial circumstances.

Mr David Davis:

[\[44974\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department has directed the Child Maintenance Service to introduce greater flexibility in relation to evidence requirements during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr David Davis:

[\[44975\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to provide support to single parents that have lost child maintenance payments as a result of the Child Maintenance Service accepting unsupported verbal assurances from the paying parent.

Mims Davies:

In these unprecedented times, we have seen a significant increase in the number of new claims to UC - it's right that we look to streamline our operations, and ensure that people get the support they need. No one will get away with giving false information to avoid paying what they owe and all decisions carry rights of appeal, so either parent can dispute a decision.

Those found to be abusing the system at this difficult time will find themselves subject to the full extent of our enforcement powers – including prosecution through the courts.

The Government has been clear in its commitment to support families during this public health emergency and we have made a number changes to the welfare system to ensure people are receiving the support they need. These include increasing the standard rate of Universal Credit and working tax credit for this year by around £1000 per year. People who need money urgently continue to be able to access up to a month's Universal Credit advance upfront by applying online. In addition, Statutory Sick Pay now applies from day one, rather than the fourth day of illness. In April, in response to Covid-19 we increased Local Housing Allowance rates for housing benefit and universal credit claimants to the 30th percentile of local rents, providing additional financial support for private renters. This significant investment of almost £1 billion, ensures over 1 million households will see an increase, on average, of £600 per year

Taken together, these 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 the coronavirus outbreak.

Douglas Chapman:

[\[45268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will ensure that clients who have overpaid their child maintenance payments due to departmental error will have those monies refunded within four weeks of the error being discovered.

Mims Davies:

Where overpayments of Child Maintenance occur, these are routinely adjusted from any future Child Maintenance payments due.

Where an overpayment occurs due to incorrect allocation to a case, action to rectify this usually takes place within 48 hours.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: ICT**

Alyn Smith:

[\[45447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps have been taken to increase the server capacity for her Department during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: We regularly monitor capacity of servers and storage and have not had any issues provisioning additional capacity due to COVID-19.

■ **Department for Work and Pensions: Interserve**

Mary Glendon:

[\[46653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what new health and safety measures have been put in place since the start of the covid-19 outbreak to protect cleaners employed by Interserve in her Department's premises who (a) are classed as vulnerable and (b) look after extremely vulnerable dependants.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The Department wrote to all its suppliers, including Interserve, reaffirming that they should follow the guidance issued via Public Health England on Gov.uk and has been working closely with them since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak to ensure appropriate measures are put in place.

Where reasonable adjustments can be made to allow the colleague to attend work, then Interserve is implementing those adjustments. These adjustments can include shorter hours, flexible start/finish times to avoid busy commutes, and social distancing in the workplace. Where reasonable adjustments cannot be made to support a safe working environment for colleagues who identify as vulnerable then arrangements are made for the colleague to remain at home on full pay. Additionally, appropriate PPE in the form of protective gloves is being provided to all cleaning staff.

Interserve colleagues who may be caring for vulnerable dependants who require “shielding” are being advised to raise this with their line manager so that reasonable adjustments such as those above can be explored.

■ Employment: Disability**Vicky Foxcroft:**[\[46746\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to ensure that disabled people have received support to work from home through (a) Access to Work and (b) other measures since 23 March 2020.

Justin Tomlinson:

DWP remains committed to ensuring disabled people continue to receive support they need to move into and maintain employment while working from home through Access to Work. Access to Work is working with employers to ensure assistive technology can be transported from the workplace to support home working. And where support cannot be removed from the workplace, Access to Work will work with the disabled person to consider new adjustments or support adaptations to standard equipment.

During COVID-19 Access to Work has introduced various measures to further support disabled people. These include:

- Accepting email claim forms from customers who request this as a reasonable adjustment
- Accepting employer and support worker signatures via email;
- Extending Support Worker awards that are coming to an end by 6 months;
- Extending the timeframe customers have to submit payment claim forms to 9 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;

- Flexing support and supporting the moving of special aids and equipment from the workplace to home, and providing new equipment for employees working from home where necessary;
- Prioritising new applications from key workers and those with jobs starting within the next 4 weeks.

■ Independent Case Examiner

Kate Osamor:

[43086]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 27 April 2020 to Question 1994 on the Independent Case Examiner, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Independent Case Examiner's Office reduces the time taken to commence an investigation and allocate that investigation to an investigation case manager.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 13 May 2020]: The Independent Case Examiner's Office has begun the process of recruiting additional Investigation Case Managers, to help it reduce the time complaints wait to be brought into investigation, prior to the introduction of the Coronavirus lockdown measures.

Due to the unprecedented number of benefit claims received since the start of the pandemic, we have refocused recruitment on staff needed to process and pay claims, taking the difficult decision to pause recruitment to ICE. We will recommence as soon as it is practicable to do so.

■ Maternity Allowance and Maternity Pay: Universal Credit

Jonathan Reynolds:

[43003]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, for what reasons statutory maternity pay and maternity allowance are treated differently under the regulatory framework for universal credit.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 13 May 2020]: Statutory Maternity Pay is paid by an employer and is considered to be earned income, which can be taxed. Maternity Allowance is a tax-free allowance and is not considered to be earned income.

Maternity Allowance is paid by the state to people who are not eligible for statutory maternity pay but who do meet the eligibility criteria for the allowance. The rate varies according to the criteria fulfilled which principally covers employed people who have worked less than the time before they become eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay, self-employed people and people out of work.

It is a longstanding principle of the welfare system that benefits are not paid to claimants with income available from other sources to support themselves. Unearned income, which is provided to meet everyday living costs, is taken into account in the calculation of UC and their benefit entitlement may be adjusted accordingly.

■ Personal Independence Payment: Coronavirus

Drew Hendry:

[47345]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is to ensure that change of circumstance based PIP2 application forms are assessed in a timely manner during the covid 19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department continues to process both New Claims and Changes of Circumstance and encourage anyone with a change in their needs to contact the Department so that we can ensure they are receiving the correct level of support.

■ Support for Mortgage Interest

Caroline Lucas:

[45099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if he will make it his policy to (a) remove the nine-month qualification period for support with mortgage interest, (b) extend that support to people on qualifying benefits and (c) provide that support provided as a benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mims Davies:

Support for mortgage interest (SMI) is not designed to meet all of a home owner's mortgage commitments. The prime policy objective is to avert the risk of repossession, as far as is reasonable. There are no plans at present to alter any aspects of the scheme.

SMI is not available until the claimant has been in receipt of benefit for nine months. This is because it is considered reasonable that they make their own provision during short periods of sickness or unemployment. This might be through mortgage interest payment protection insurance, savings or by negotiating a re-scheduling plan with their lender. The large majority of claimants go back to work within this timeframe.

SMI already extends to people who are on qualifying benefits, that is, who receive Income Support, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-related Jobseekers Allowance, Pensions Credit and Universal Credit.

Since April 2018, SMI has been available as an interest-bearing loan rather than as a cash benefit. Loans are not recoverable until the property is sold and then only up to the amount of available equity after the primary mortgage has been repaid. These arrangements ensure that claimants receive the same level of protection they enjoyed when SMI was a benefit but enables the taxpayer to recoup their investment. Many taxpayers are unable to afford to buy a property of their own and it would be unfair if only the claimant were the beneficiary of the windfall that their support protected.

■ Universal Credit**Maria Eagle:** [47192]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many universal credit advance payments were made in (a) March and (b) April 2020.

Will Quince:

The department published a set of supplementary management information on the number of Universal Credit Advances paid by the four advance types. It is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-declarations-claims-and-advances-management-information>

This management information will be updated on each Tuesday up to the end of June. Each week the release will include daily data for the time up to a week before the release date.

Maria Eagle: [47195]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to inform universal credit claimants that they can apply to have their historic benefit overpayment debts waived on (a) health and (b) and financial grounds.

Will Quince:

The Department is open and transparent about our approach to benefit recovery, publishing our full Benefit Overpayment Recovery staff guide on gov.uk. Information regarding the waiver process can be found in chapter 8 of this guide. I have included a link below for your information.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/878823/benefit-overpayment-recovery-guide.pdf

In addition, when the Department informs claimants of a benefit overpayment (either by letter, or via the journal in Universal Credit), they are advised to contact the Department's Debt Management Team to discuss repayment. During this discussion, if a claimant expresses concern about repayment, Debt Management staff will inform them that they can request a waiver be considered.

It should be noted that a waiver can only be granted where the recovery of the overpayment is causing substantial medical and/or financial hardship, and where clear evidence of this can be provided.

Stella Creasy: [47267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many families have been newly affected by the two-child limit on universal credit as a result of making a new claim for that benefit since the beginning of the covid-19 lockdown.

Will Quince:

The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Owen Thompson:

[\[47362\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether her Department distinguishes between savings for personal use and savings for the purpose of the ongoing basic maintenance of the applicant's business or self-employment when assessing universal credit applications.

Mims Davies:

Yes - Where a claimant has capital over £16,000 we will contact them to understand their circumstances and determine eligibility. If this money is to be used for business or tax purposes, it will not be counted towards their capital, but they may be asked to prove that the money is for these purposes.

■ Universal Credit and Welfare Tax Credits

Stella Creasy:

[\[47268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of temporarily suspending the two-child limit on the child element of universal credit and tax credit in recognition of the economic effect of the covid-19 outbreak on families with children.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to suspend the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children.

■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[\[45232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to grant transitional protection payments to claimants on legacy benefits that receive a lower benefits payment for applying for universal credit during the covid-19 pandemic.

Will Quince:

Where someone's circumstances change significantly it's right that we reassess their benefit entitlement. A claimant making a new claim due to changes in their circumstances has always been likely to receive a different level of entitlement than they had had on their previous benefit.

As these claimants' circumstances will have changed, it would be not possible to make a meaningful comparison between their previous level of entitlement to legacy benefits and their entitlement to Universal Credit .

Owen Thompson:

[\[47360\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of removing the minimum five week wait before universal credit claimants receive their first payment for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

The Universal Credit Assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of the Universal Credit design. The assessment period runs for a full calendar month from the date of entitlement, and the subsequent Universal Credit pay date will be within seven calendar days after the end of the initial assessment period. It is not possible to award a Universal Credit payment as soon as a claim is made, as the assessment period must run its course before the award of Universal Credit can be calculated. This monthly calculation has been hard-wired throughout the system, and cannot now be changed without significant re-build. At present, all resources are rightly focused on processing new claims.

New Claim Advances are available urgently if a claimant needs support during their first assessment period, and budgeting support is available for anyone who needs extra help.

Owen Thompson:[\[47361\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to relax means testing for universal credit applications for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to relax means testing for Universal Credit.

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 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 the Universal Credit. Equally, as people's pay increases, their Universal Credit payments reduce gradually, and the taper rate ensures that people are always better off in a job.

■ Universal Credit: Housing**Stephen Timms:**[\[47170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how much money from the public purse her Department spent on the housing cost element of universal credit in each of the last twelve months.

Will Quince:

The requested information is not readily available and the cost of undertaking such analysis would exceed the disproportionate cost threshold of a parliamentary question.

■ Universal Credit: Students**Owen Thompson:**[\[47363\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will temporarily amend the eligibility criteria for universal credit to allow students who are in financial difficulty as a result of the covid-19 pandemic to claim during the summer 2020.

Will Quince:

A condition of entitlement for Universal Credit is that the claimant must not be in education, which excludes most students. Financial support for students comes from the system of educational loans, grants and bursaries designed for their needs. To safeguard fairness Universal Credit does not duplicate the support provided by the student support system. Exceptions are made where students have additional needs that are not met through the student support system.

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

■ Vacancies: Internet**Seema Malhotra:****[46663]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 6 May 2020 to Question 42043, what steps she is taking to (a) increase the number of job vacancies posted to her Department's find a job website, (b) increase the take-up of those vacancies and (c) ensure that vacancies are for roles where Government guidance on social distancing during the covid-19 can be observed.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: We are working with departments across Government to understand supply & demand across the labour market and, where there are shortages, we are working with them to promote the Government Find a Job matching service. We are also reaching out to employers and sector bodies through our social channels to encourage them to place vacancies on the site.

The Department has launched a new website for jobseekers to maximise take up of vacancies . [Jobhelp.dwp.gov.uk](https://jobhelp.dwp.gov.uk) provides job search hints and tips as well as crucial advice on transferable skills for those people who need to change sectors. It also highlights live large-scale recruitment in a range of industries as well as the Find a Job Government Skills matching service.

BEIS have issued the Working Safely guidance which was developed in conjunction with HSE and other partners, including ACAS. Under the new guidance, employers should do a risk assessment and employees, or potential employees, can report an employer if they have concerns that the guidance isn't being followed. Contact details to report concerns are on the HSE website.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

TREASURY

■ Small Businesses: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[40554]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are excluded from the Small Business Grants Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund because those SMEs have a rateable value of more than £51,000; and whether it is the Government's policy that not all SMEs are eligible to access financial support made available in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 4 May 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kemi Badenoch:

According to the VOA **official statistics**, there are **around 299,000 205,000** business properties in England with a rateable value over £51,000 **as at 31 March 2019**. Of these, **approximately 83,000 are identified as 116,000** are retail, hospitality and leisure properties **using VOA's administrative data source**.

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

Around 1 million small and medium businesses will receive cash grants as a result of these schemes, and over £12 billion will be paid out to these businesses.

The two schemes have been tied to the business rates system and rating assessments, which together provide a framework for Local Authorities to make payments as quickly as possible. Businesses in the business rates system are also likely to face particularly high fixed costs, such as fixed rents.

In addition to the main grants schemes, Government has made available up to an additional £617m for Local Authorities in England to enable them to pay grants to small businesses which also face high fixed building-related costs but which are excluded from the current system due to the way they fit into the business rates system.

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

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ The European (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks

Minister of State (Chloe Smith):

[[HCWS250](#)]

I am today laying before Parliament a report, 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 December 2019 to 25 March 2020'. I am laying this report because it is a legal requirement under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for quarterly reports to be made to Parliament on the progress of the work to develop common frameworks. The report is available on Gov.uk and details the progress made between the UK Government and devolved administrations regarding the development of common frameworks. This report details progress made during the seventh 3-month reporting period, and sets out that no 'freezing' regulations have been brought forward under section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act. A copy of the 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 December 2019 to 25 March 2020' report has been placed in the library of both Houses. The publication of the report reflects the Government's continued commitment to transparency.

Attachments:

1. [EU \(Withdrawal\) Act and Common Frameworks Report \[Seventh EU \(Withdrawal\) Act and Common Frameworks report.pdf\]](#)

DEFENCE

■ Chemical Weapons Convention - Declaration of Protective Programme for 2019

Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey):

[[HCWS248](#)]

My noble Friend the Minister in the House of Lords (The Rt Hon Baroness Goldie DL) has made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

The UK's chemical protection programme is designed to protect against the use of chemical weapons. Such a programme is permitted by the Chemical Weapons Convention, with which the United Kingdom is fully compliant. Under the terms of the Convention, we are required to provide information annually to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In accordance with the Government's commitment to openness, I am placing in the Library of the House a copy of the summary that has been provided to the Organisation outlining the UK's chemical protection programme in 2019.

Attachments:

1. [Summary of CWC Declaration of Programme 2019 \[20200312-Article X Protective Progs 2019 Annual Declaration.docx\]](#)

■ Contingent Liability

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin): [\[HCWS249\]](#)

I am today laying a Departmental Minute to advise that the Ministry of Defence has received approval from Her Majesty's Treasury to recognise a new contingent liability associated with the operation of satellites conducting in-orbit research by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

The Departmental Minute describes the contingent liability that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will hold as part of its Space Science & Technology Programme.

Dstl has installed a ground station at its Portsmouth West site, which will contribute to supporting space research activities, upskilling civilian and military personnel in satellite mission operations, and task its first research satellites for the Ministry of Defence. Through this programme, MOD will develop the skills and capability to achieve its strategic objectives in the space domain.

The contingent liability will last the duration of Dstl's operation of the satellites and will come into effect if a satellite collision was caused via Dstl operation. Mitigations are in place against risks to minimise likelihood and impact which are deemed to be 0.001-0.01%. Her Majesty's Treasury has approved a value of up to £500 million for the contingent liability to cover the maximum estimated damage cost resulting from a collision. The MOD will note the liability in its accounts. May 2020

Attachments:

1. [Departmental Minute \[20200520.DM.Satellite Tasking \(002\).pdf\]](#)

■ Rebalancing of the Covid Support Force (including Reserves)

Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): [\[HCWS251\]](#)

In late March, as the Government stepped up its response to the global pandemic, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) established the Covid Support Force (CSF), in anticipation of a sharp increase in requests for Military Assistance to the Civilian Authorities (MACA).

Approximately 20,000 personnel, with appropriate planning, logistical, and medical expertise, were grouped within the CSF and held at higher readiness, alongside forward-based aviation assets, to ensure Defence could respond wherever and whenever needed across the United Kingdom.

Since then the CSF has played a key role throughout the national response. On any given day approximately 4,000 are 'deployed' supporting other departments and organisations. Many thousands more service personnel and civil servants are contributing to the response through their routine employment within Defence Medical Services, Defence Science and Technology Laboratories, Defence Equipment & Support, and various military headquarters. Together they have answered 162 MACA requests, from patient recovery in the Orkney Islands to logistical support in the Channel Islands.

Some of this has been highly visible, such as helping to build Nightingale hospitals, delivering PPE to hospitals and Local Resilience Forums, and operating Mobile Testing Units. However, much of it has been out of sight from the public: whether supporting

national-level strategy formation in DHSC and MHCLG; countering disinformation with the Cabinet Office, procuring PPE and medical equipment; or mentoring and liaising within Local Resilience Forums, and their devolved equivalents, as they react to the complex and varied situations in their local communities.

Those situations are currently improving, due to the public's adherence to lockdown measures and the ability of other government departments to maintain essential services. As a result, the demand for CSF support has stabilised and it has not been necessary to deploy most of those personnel currently held at higher readiness.

It is appropriate that the MOD's contribution and force posture are tailored to the evolving situation, so it can both respond to Covid-19 and continue fulfilling other critical defence outputs.

This rebalancing is conditions-based and conducted in consultation with other government departments; assessing how many personnel are required to fulfil current CSF tasks and respond to all future requests, including those requiring uplifts in personnel.

That total is currently determined to be 7,500 personnel and it is now prudent to release the remainder of the CSF – otherwise held indefinitely at higher readiness – so they can return to other tasks and preparations for future operations.

Additionally, 2,000 of the reservists who volunteered for mobilisation but are no longer required to fulfil MACA tasks, are now being engaged about the processes for demobilisation with a view to mitigating the impact both to them and their employers. They are testament to the nation's resolve in this crisis and we are grateful for their enduring commitment.

The crisis is not over, so the CSF will continue assisting civilian authorities wherever required and no personnel – regular or reserve – will be withdrawn from tasks while the demand remains. Likewise, Defence's wider contributions to the Covid-19 response, to the routine functioning of Government, and to the prosperity and wellbeing of society, all remain unaltered.

Defence is much more than its equipment and uniformed personnel. It is a community of public servants committing brains, brawn, and heart to ensure the nation's defence and resilience. That community will continue to support our colleagues in health and social care, providing however many people are required, for as long it takes, to help them defeat this virus.

PRIME MINISTER

■ Honours Update

Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):

[\[HCWS246\]](#)

I would like to update Parliament on the Government's plans for recognising the extraordinary contributions being made by so many in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) - and the forthcoming publication of Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday Honours List.

There is, understandably, huge appetite across the country to say thank you to all those on the frontline, within our communities and in our public services, who are supporting the nation through these unprecedented times.

The Government is clear that there will be a range of opportunities to mark the contributions of so many - but this must come at the appropriate time. Our current priority - and that of the front line services - remains tackling the current public health emergency.

I want to provide assurance today, however, that the moment to mark so many extraordinary actions will not be lost.

The honours system recognises exceptional contributions made across every part of the UK and will play a key role in demonstrating the nation's gratitude to all those involved in the response. In this context, The Queen has graciously agreed that the Birthday Honours List, due to be published in June, should be postponed until the autumn. This step will allow us to ensure that the List, agreed before this public health emergency developed, reflects the COVID-19 effort, and comes at a time when we can properly celebrate the achievements of all those included.

We anticipate that COVID-19 recognition will happen across future honours lists, reflecting the on-going work being done by so many. To ensure we are capturing contributions from across the country I would encourage the public to put forward nominations for those they know are going above and beyond, which they can do through Gov.uk. These cases will be considered by the independent honours committees across a range of future honours lists.

Colonel Tom Moore, recently celebrating his 100th birthday, has become synonymous with the spirit of the current collective national effort. I have, exceptionally, recommended to The Queen that he be awarded a knighthood, in recognition of his extraordinary fundraising achievements, and as a signal of the kind of contributions we will want to mark in the months to come.

Further work is underway to identify the most appropriate ways and opportunities for the nation to express its gratitude and respect. The Government will make a further statement to the House in due course.

TRANSPORT

■ Transport update

Minister of State for Transport (Andrew Stephenson):

[\[HCWS247\]](#)

I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this Written Ministerial Statement. This statement concerns the application of 17 July 2018 made by RiverOak Strategic Partners Ltd ("the Applicant") under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed reopening and development of Manston Airport in Kent.

Under sub-section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the Examining Authority's report unless exercising

the power under sub-section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a Statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline.

The Secretary of State received the Examining Authority's report on the Manston Airport Development Consent Order application on 18 October 2019 and, following an earlier extension of 4 months, the current deadline for a decision is 18 May 2020.

The deadline for the decision is now to be extended to 10 July 2020 to enable further work to be carried out before determination of the application.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.