



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 8 June 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:42 P.M., 08 June 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

ATTORNEY GENERAL

■ **Barristers and Solicitors: Pay**

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[51904\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what the average salary is for (a) trainee solicitors and (b) pupil barristers working for the Crown Prosecution Service as at 1 June 2020.

Michael Ellis:

The average salary for trainee solicitors and pupil barristers working for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) as at 1st June 2020 is as follows:

(a) trainee solicitor **£27,961**

(b) pupil barrister **£26,038**

■ **Crimes Against the Person: Emergency Services**

Simon Baynes:

[\[49866\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the CPS's handling of assault cases against emergency workers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Suella Braverman:

A disappointing feature of this pandemic is the high number of assaults against emergency workers. The CPS is prosecuting cases robustly. During the first month of lockdown, the CPS prosecuted over 300 cases of assaults against emergency workers and it's clear that when an individual threatens to infect an emergency worker by spitting or coughing, it will be treated extremely seriously by prosecutors.

■ **Domestic Abuse: Prosecutions**

Matt Western:

[\[52354\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, what discussions he has had with the CPS on the capacity to deal with the increase in domestic violence cases during the covid-19 outbreak.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is working closely with colleagues across the Criminal Justice System to ensure that these offences continue to be brought to justice. Cases are still being referred to the CPS for charging decisions, trials are being listed and domestic abuse cases are treated as a high priority.

The CPS has worked with police colleagues to introduce an Interim Charging Protocol to ensure that the most serious cases are prioritised effectively and put before the courts at the earliest opportunity. The CPS is committed to working closely with CJS partners and the third sector to make sure victims and witnesses remain at the heart of the process.

■ Metropolitan Police Service's Handling of Non-recent Sexual Offence Investigations Alleged against Persons of Public Prominence Independent Review

Philip Davies: [\[51754\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to paragraph 2.4.137 in the report entitled The Independent Review of the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of non-recent sexual offence investigations alleged against persons of public prominence, published on 4 October 2019, what assessment the CPS has made of the potential merits of seeking the prosecution of the two individuals referred to as potential witnesses A and B for perverting the course of justice and wasting police time.

Michael Ellis:

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. If a crime is reported it is for the police to decide whether to investigate.

The CPS has not been asked to consider any charges against witness A or B, nor have they provided any early investigative advice to the police. It is a matter for the police as to whether they pursue an investigation in to witness A and witness B.

Once a case is referred to the CPS, any decision to prosecute is made in accordance with the Code for Crown Prosecutors, and must meet the evidential and public interest tests.

Philip Davies: [\[51755\]](#)

To ask the Attorney General, with reference to paragraph 1.37 of the report entitled The Independent Review of the Metropolitan Police Service's handling of non-recent sexual offence investigations alleged against persons of public prominence, published 4 October 2019, how many of the 159 cases of false allegations of rape or domestic violence were prosecuted; and how many of the (a) referrals and (b) subsequent prosecutions were related to (i) rape and (ii) domestic violence charges.

Michael Ellis:

The Metropolitan Police Review refers to 159 cases of false allegations of rape and/or domestic violence made between January 2011 to May 2012. These were cases that had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for a charging decision. The Review erroneously refers to the period as being between 2013-14.

The 159 cases were reviewed by the DPP and the Crown Prosecution Service published a report of these cases, entitled "Charging Perverting the Course of Justice and Wasting Police Time in Cases involving allegedly False Rape and Domestic Violence Allegations' in 2013.

Of the 159 cases referred for a charging decision,

- 121 related to an allegedly false allegation of rape – of these 35 were prosecuted; 25 for perverting the course of justice and ten for wasting police time;

- 27 related to allegedly false allegations of domestic violence (the term in use at the time) – six were prosecuted for perverting the course of justice and one for wasting police time.
- 11 related to allegedly false allegations of both rape and domestic violence – three were prosecuted, all for perverting the course of justice.

During the period of the review there were 5,651 prosecutions for rape and 111,891 for domestic violence by the Crown Prosecution Service across England and Wales.

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Airports: Retail Trade

Ian Paisley:

[\[48999\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps the Government plans to take to ensure that non-essential shops and food and beverage outlets at airports are able to effectively operate within the airside and international travel environment.

Paul Scully:

On 11 May, the Government published its COVID-19 recovery strategy which sets out a roadmap to a phased recovery. As per my Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister's announcement of the five ministerial-led taskforces which form part of this recovery effort, BEIS is responsible for two of the five ministerial-led taskforces: Pubs and restaurants and Non-essential retail (including salons). Phase 2 of the approach will look at re-opening closed businesses in these sectors and the taskforces will be working closely with key stakeholders to begin reopening retail businesses in phases from 1 June.

These taskforces will aim to look at various issues which impact the closed businesses and we will develop plans for how and when closed sectors can reopen safely in due time, guided by the science and experts.

■ Batteries: Carbon Emissions

Greg Smith:

[\[52538\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the lifecycle emissions of battery technology.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Department for Transport developed the Transport Energy Model, published in 2018, to provide a clear assessment of the relative environmental impacts of different road vehicle technologies and fuels. This showed that battery electric vehicles (EVs) in the UK have substantially lower greenhouse gas emissions than conventional petrol or diesel cars, even when taking into account the energy mix of the electricity to charge the vehicle and the electricity used for battery production.

In order to obtain their full environmental benefits, EVs and their batteries need to be manufactured using electricity from carbon-free sources. With the Government's announcement of up to £1 billion to support EV supply chains, our increasing use of carbon-free energy sources, and our commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the UK is an attractive option for investment in low-carbon battery manufacture.

■ Bounce Back Loan Scheme

Sir David Evennett:

[\[49598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many applications have been (a) accepted and (b) rejected under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

As of 31 May, 699,354 loans have been approved under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), with a total value of £21.29 billion.

The Scheme has received 873,192 applications. The applications figure includes: approved applications; applications that are still to be processed; applications that have been declined; and applications that may turn out not to be eligible or cases where customers will decide not to proceed.

Sir David Evennett:

[\[49599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much the average loan application is for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

As of 31 May, 699,354 loans have been approved under the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), with a total value of £21.29 billion.

Patricia Gibson:

[\[53474\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of converting loans secured via the Coronavirus Bounce Back Loans scheme into grants for small businesses.

Paul Scully:

The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs) is part of a broad package of support for SMEs, including rates relief, grants and support for wage packages.

Businesses are not permitted to access more than one of either the BBLs, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme or the Covid Corporate Financing Facility Scheme at the same time. The eligibility criteria for BBLs do not require lenders to take into account the other forms of government support that SMEs may be benefitting from, e.g. business rate reliefs or grants unrelated to the CBILs.

■ **British Airways: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[54235\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps is he taking to ensure that British Airways does not misuse the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by terminating staff contracts and subsequently rehiring a new workforce with inferior pay and conditions.

Paul Scully:

During this difficult time, employers should act responsibly and only use the Job Retention Scheme to protect jobs. We would urge employers not to use the Job Retention Scheme to make someone redundant on less favourable terms than they would otherwise have received.

Terms and conditions of employment are for negotiation and agreement between employers and employees (or their representatives). Provided they do not discriminate unlawfully, for example on grounds of race, sex or disability, employers are free to offer the terms and conditions of employment which best suit their business needs.

Once agreed, however, they form a legally binding contract of employment. While it is always open to either party to seek to renegotiate the terms of the contract, if the employer changes any of the terms without the employee's agreement, the employee may be entitled to seek legal redress.

Any redundancy process should be fair and reasonable, with appropriate equalities considerations. Employees can appeal to their employer if they feel they have been unfairly selected or they may be able to make a claim to an employment tribunal for unfair dismissal.

■ **Business: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the effect of a potential recession after the covid-19 lockdown on business investment in research and development.

Amanda Solloway:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer on all aspects of the economy, including research and development and Covid-19.

During the Financial Crisis, R&D performed in businesses in the UK fell in 2008 by 2% (after taking account of inflation) and by a further 3% in 2009. By 2011 it had recovered to levels above those in 2007, and in 2018 was more than 30% higher than in 2007.

The Government is supporting businesses to continue research and development through this crisis. We recently announced [£750 million of investment, delivered](#)

[through Innovate UK, in new measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-coronavirus-business-innovation-support-package) to support innovation in the country's most research-intensive businesses both during and after the coronavirus pandemic, and to support new ways of dealing with global disruption. Details on this package are available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-coronavirus-business-innovation-support-package>.

This is in addition to our existing plans to significantly boost public R&D funding and our ambition to reach 2.4% of GDP spent on R&D by 2027.

Chi Onwurah: **[49679]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the research and development sector is adequately prioritised in the Government's plans for recovery in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government holds research and development as a high priority, and we continue to believe our world-leading excellence in science will be key to ensuring the UK's prosperity and productivity in the long term and to tackling the immediate challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the outbreak, BEIS and DfE have set out to universities and the wider research community early considerations and advice to help the sector deal with some immediate priorities. A joint BEIS/DfE Ministerial Taskforce on the sustainability of university research has been set up to identify and assess impacts and to consider approaches to help manage these over the coming months.

■ **Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership**

Andrew Griffith: **[49884]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much each constituency was allocated from the Coast to Capital Backing Business Grants between 15 March 2020 and 19 May 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Coast to Capital Backing Business Grant is a £2 million fund set up to provide grants to independent small businesses and social enterprises (excluding charities) in Coast to Capital who have been affected by COVID-19 and was established to complement the schemes established by HM government.

The Scheme is administered by the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership and they will hold the information relating to the scheme recipients. They can be contacted at: funding@coast2capital.org.uk

■ **Construction: Coronavirus**

Alex Cunningham: **[48986]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the availability of adequate (a) personal protective equipment and (b) hygiene and sanitary products for construction workers to (i)

protect those workers and (ii) allow those workers to comply with official guidelines as they return to work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In order to ensure that workplaces are safe for workers in the construction sector, the Government has worked with Public Health England (PHE), business representatives, and trade unions to develop guidance on safer working in outdoor environments, including how to undertake risk assessments and implement social distancing.

This guidance includes advice on cleaning and sanitising the workplace, such as maintaining a good handwashing technique as well as providing signage, hand sanitiser, hand drying facilities, and waste facilities. It also states that, when managing the risk of Covid-19 on construction sites, additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) beyond that which is usually worn is not beneficial and should not be encouraged by workplaces. However, PHE is continually reviewing its guidance in line with emerging evidence.

The Safer Workplaces guidance is published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work>.

The Government has also worked with the Construction Leadership Council to develop Site Operating Procedures, which provide practical advice to those seeking to implement PHE's guidance.

Organisations must have effective arrangements in place to monitor and review their compliance with Government and industry guidance.

Alex Cunningham:

[48987]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions the Government has had with professional bodies and trade groups in the built environment on planned timescales for the development and implementation of a recovery plan for the construction industry after the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government has welcomed the recovery plan produced by the Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force, which sets out a plan to ensure the sector can increase activity, work safely, and maximise its contribution to our economic recovery.

We will continue to work with the Task Force, which includes firms, business representative organisations, and representatives of the professional institutions, to support the recovery of the construction sector.

Alex Cunningham:

[48988]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the potential risk of legal disputes arising from the delays and disruption to construction work as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises concerns about the effects of Covid-19 on construction projects, and the resultant inability of some parties to perform their contracts in accordance with agreed terms. We are also aware of the potential for legal disputes to arise from this.

That is why we have published guidance on contractual behaviour, which clearly states that responsible and fair behaviour is strongly encouraged in performing and enforcing contracts where there has been a material impact from Covid-19. A copy of that guidance is attached.

The Construction Leadership Council's Covid-19 Task Force has supplemented this, by publishing further practical guidance for all companies involved in the construction supply chain on how to minimise potential disputes.

Attachments:

1. Guidance on responsible contractual behaviour C-19 [_Covid-19_and_Responsible_Contractual_Behaviour__web_final__7_May_(1).pdf]

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**Patricia Gibson:**[\[53473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of converting loans under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme into grants for small businesses in the event that the money is used to rehire staff or pay commercial rent.

Paul Scully:

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) is part of a broad package of support for SMEs, including rates relief, grants and support for wage packages.

Businesses are not permitted to access more than one of either the Bounce Back Loan Scheme, CBILS, Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme or the Covid Corporate Financing Facility Scheme at the same time. However, the eligibility criteria for the CBILS does not require lenders to take into account other forms of government support that SMEs may be benefitting from, e.g. business rate reliefs or grants unrelated to the CBILS.

■ Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Aberdeen**Stephen Flynn:**[\[49833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses in Aberdeen have (a) applied and (b) been approved for a loan from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

As of 31 May, 45,843 loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), with a total value of £8.92 billion.

Issuing new loans is the priority for lenders and the Government.

At this time, we are unable to provide a breakdown of lending or number of applications by region. We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on regular and transparent data publication going forward.

■ **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme: Scotland**

Stephen Flynn:

[\[49834\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many businesses in Scotland have (a) applied and (b) been approved for a loan from the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Paul Scully:

As of 31 May, 45,843 loans have been issued under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), with a total value of £8.92 billion.

Issuing new loans is the priority for lenders and the Government.

At this time, we are unable to provide a breakdown of lending or number of applications by region or devolved nation. We are working with the British Business Bank, HM Treasury and the lenders on regular and transparent data publication going forward.

■ **Coronavirus Catering**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[53386\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to make it compulsory to use gloves and face masks in the preparation of food in cafes and takeaways during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

Our published [Safer Working guidance](#) is clear: if you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

Unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. However, if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.

■ **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**

Claire Hanna:

[\[53661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, whether employers are required to calculate

statutory redundancy pay based on an employee's pay (a) when furloughed or (b) before the furlough period began.

Paul Scully:

Any redundancy process should be fair and reasonable, with appropriate equalities considerations.

The provisions relating to calculation of a week's pay under the Employment Rights Act continue to apply when an individual is on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This will usually mean that employees whose contract contains standard working hours, where pay does not vary by the amount of work done, would receive their normal statutory redundancy pay as at the date of termination of employment.

For employees whose pay varies weekly, Statutory Redundancy Pay is taken as an average over the 12-week period prior to the date of termination, discounting weeks where there was no pay because there was no work. In most cases the furlough period should be discounted for the purposes of calculating redundancy payments because the calculation of average pay under the Employment Rights Act 1996 is based on hours worked, rather than periods such as furlough, where no work is done.

During this difficult period, we urge employers to exercise discretion and not use the Job Retention Scheme to make someone redundant on less favourable terms than they would otherwise have received.

Wes Streeting:

[\[54193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the conditions attached to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme prevent companies from (a) treating the period during which staff are furloughed as a notice period prior to redundancy and (b) substituting pay for furloughed staff as redundancy pay; and if he will make a statement.

Paul Scully:

An individual's pay during their redundancy notice period is based on their rights under their contract of employment and the statutory right to notice pay.

Employees who are dismissed due to redundancy and who satisfy certain qualifying conditions are also statutorily entitled to a lump sum from their employer, based on their age, length of service and contractual weekly earnings, subject to a statutory upper limit.

While individual's redundancy rights will depend on their contractual terms and statutory protections, the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme does not prevent an individual who is using the scheme from being placed on redundancy notice. During this difficult period, we urge employers to exercise discretion and not use the Job Retention Scheme to make someone redundant on less favourable terms than they would otherwise have received.

■ Coronavirus: Research

Chi Onwurah:

[\[54105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the science budget he plans to allocate to covid-19 related research.

Amanda Solloway:

Our investment in science and research will be critical to our economic recovery and it is already helping us to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of the 4th June, UKRI-funded research projects and other awards related to COVID-19 total over £170m (of which £12m comes from NIHR). This does not include internal re-allocation for example through UKRI-owned institutes and centres. The actual number will be much higher than this. UKRI is also working with partners across the broader research system, for example in supporting the government's ventilator challenge.

Since the start of the crisis UKRI has allocated over £1bn in research and innovation funding to tackle the effects of COVID-19 (this includes funding to assist research-intensive SMEs affected by the crisis).

■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Correspondence

Marion Fellows:

[\[49736\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Nadhim Zahawi:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Department aims to respond to all correspondence within 15 working days, where a response is required.

The average response times for each month in the last two years is set out below. The data is correct as of 27 May and relates to correspondence for which a reply has been issued.

MONTH DUE	DAYS TO COMPLETE
APR-18	14
May-18	15
Jun-18	11
Jul-18	14
Aug-18	17
Sep-18	16
Oct-18	20

MONTH DUE	DAYS TO COMPLETE
APR-18	14
Nov-18	21
Dec-18	17
Jan-19	12
Feb-19	11
Mar-19	12
Apr-19	11
May-19	13
Jun-19	14
Jul-19	13
Aug-19	15
Sep-19	11
Oct-19	10
Nov-19	9
Dec-19	16
Jan-20	9
Feb-20	11
Mar-20	13
Apr-20	11

■ Economic Situation: Coronavirus

Caroline Lucas:

[\[49652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which (a) Departmental and (b) cross-Departmental initiatives are ensuring that the Government's economic response to the covid-19 outbreak contributes to the achievement of the UK's climate and environmental goals; and if he will make a statement.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

As we recover from COVID-19, the Government intends to deliver a UK economy which is stronger, greener, more sustainable and more resilient.

The UK was the first major economy to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050 while showing that growing our economy and cutting emissions can be achieved in parallel - growing our economy by 75% while cutting emissions by 43% over the past three decades. The UK has over 460,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains, and many of the actions we need to take to reach our net zero target will support the future growth of our economy.

Already we have announced that onshore wind and solar projects can bid for contracts in the next Contracts for Difference allocation round and a £2 billion package for cycling and walking. On 8 June, my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a Green Recovery working group, one of five new 'recovery roundtables' bringing together businesses, business representative groups and leading academics, to unleash Britain's growth potential and help the economy recover from the pandemic. This group will explore how to capture the economic growth opportunities from the shift to net zero emissions.

■ Energy: Meters

Douglas Chapman:

[\[53462\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many households in (a) Dunfermline and West Fife constituency, (b) Scotland and (c) the UK have prepayment meters; and what assessment he has made of the change in the number of those meters in each of those areas in each of the last five years.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The latest Ofgem data on Prepayment Meters (PPM) shows that there are 4.3 million customers using PPM meters, which represents around 15% of all customers in Great Britain.

Neither Ofgem nor the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy routinely collect regional PPM customer numbers. However, in 2017 BIES collected a one off local authority area breakdown, which showed there were 460,529 PPM customers in Scotland and 27,413 PPM customers in the Fife Council local authority area. This data does not include customers who pay for their gas using a PPM as this data has not been compiled, however there are fewer gas PPMs as a whole in the market.

The number of Prepayment Meter accounts in the GB energy market over the last five years has remained around 4.5 million. There has, however been an increase in competition in the PPM market over the past five years with PPM specialists providing greater choice for consumers beyond the six large suppliers. A cap on PPM prices was introduced in April 2017 and remains in force.

■ Housing: Construction**Andrew Rosindell:** [\[49608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to help ensure that construction companies are able to access sufficient building supplies to continue building work.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government is working with the industry to ensure the continued and safe operation of the construction supply chain, and to ensure that firms have access to building materials and products.

The Construction Leadership Council's Coronavirus Task Force has established a product availability working group, comprised of product manufacturers, builders' merchants and suppliers, contractors of all sizes, and housebuilders. The Task Force will monitor the supply and demand of products, and identify those in short supply.

■ Hydrogen: Alternative Fuels**Stephen Flynn:** [\[49831\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what funding he has allocated to investment in a hydrogen economy between 2020-21 and 2025-26.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to exploring the option of hydrogen as a strategic decarbonised energy carrier. In line with this we are currently investing up to £121 million in hydrogen innovation, supporting a range of projects exploring the potential of low carbon hydrogen across the value chain. Alongside our innovation activity, we will be engaging with Industry on the design of a £100m Low Carbon Hydrogen Fund in 2020. In addition, we are conducting further stakeholder engagement, notably around building sustainable business models to support hydrogen production. These programmes will be delivered during the period 2020/21 to 2025/26, and further budgetary decisions will be taken in due course.

■ Industrial Health and Safety: Coronavirus**Andy McDonald:** [\[54118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2020 to Question 49014, what estimate his Department has made of the number of businesses with (a) less than and (b) more than 50 employees that have (i) carried out and (ii) made publicly available their covid-19 risk assessments; and if he will publish a register of those businesses that have carried out risk assessments.

Paul Scully:

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is not compiling a list of businesses that have carried out risk assessments.

As stated in the Answer of 2 June 2020 to Question 49014, existing health and safety legislation requires risk assessments. The safer working guidance does not change this.

Publishing risk assessments is not a legal obligation, but we are asking companies to consider publishing the results of their risk assessments whenever possible. We recommend that larger companies – those with over 50 workers – publish the results of their risk assessments.

We think employers will want to do this to help build the confidence of their workers and their customers.

■ **Industry: NHS**

Robert Largan:

[\[52621\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what role the Government plans for the NHS to play as a delivery partner in the UK's Industrial Strategy.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The NHS is an integral part of the UK's Industrial Strategy and is a key partner for the life sciences industry. The two Life Sciences Sector Deals detail the strong partnerships between the Government, industry, universities, and charities, and demonstrate the pivotal role of the NHS as a central delivery partner, which is reaffirmed by the NHS Long Term Plan.

The Government will continue to work with the NHS to build a stronger innovation ecosystem in the UK, including through an enhanced Accelerated Access Collaborative.

■ **Intellectual Property: UK Relations with EU**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[54103\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the (a) national and (b) regional economic effect of the receipt by EEA intellectual property practitioners of unreciprocated access to the Intellectual Property Office.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is aware that this is an important issue for stake holders, in particular UK-based patent and trade mark attorneys.

Officials at the Intellectual Property Office are having ongoing conversations with representative bodies over how to best address this matter once the transition period ends.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[54104\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his officials in his Department have had with the members of the

Government's EU negotiation team on access to the EU Intellectual Property Office for UK practitioners after the transition period.

Amanda Solloway:

Officials have been involved in cross government discussions on many post transition period issues.

We are currently in negotiations with the EU as we seek a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. On legal services, our starting point is precedent based. We aim to secure market access commitments for lawyers and minimise barriers to the cross-border supply of services and investment, on the basis of commitments like those in the Canada FTA. We cannot comment on on the status of live negotiations.

However, rights of representation, whether before domestic courts in Member States or EU institutions, such as the EU Intellectual Property Office, are the preserve of the Single Market and so do not form part of the UK approach to negotiations with the EU.

■ **Living Wage**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[49640\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the GMB Union April 2020 statistics citing that 3 million key workers do not earn the Real Living Wage; and if he will take steps to ensure that all key workers earn the Real Living Wage as determined by the Living Wage Foundation.

Paul Scully:

This Government is committed to building an economy that works for everyone. Through the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and the National Living Wage (NLW) the Government protects the lowest paid workers and ensures they are fairly rewarded for their contribution to the economy.

The NMW and NLW rates are legal minimum thresholds. These are different from the Living Wage, which is a voluntary minimum rate of pay. The Government commends the work of the Living Wage Foundation and those employers who commit to paying the voluntary Living Wage when they can afford to do so.

A substantial number of key workers are paid at or just above the National Minimum Wage. It is right that we support these workers as they are supporting the country during this crisis. This is why the Government 2020 increased the National Living Wage on 1 April.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Manufacturing Industries**

Catherine West:

[\[54200\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the future of sustainability of car manufacturing in the UK in the event that no trade deal is agreed with the EU before the end of the transition period.

Nadhim Zahawi:

We are confident we can reach a deal and will continue to work hard to reach an agreement with the EU, for as long as there is a constructive process ongoing. The Political Declaration sets out our ambition for a zero tariff and zero quota Free Trade Agreement.

Extensive engagement has taken place and continues between the Government and the automotive sector on future trade negotiations. We shall continue to work with companies over the next few months to ensure that they are well prepared for the end of the transition period.

In addition, the Government has a long-standing programme of support to maintain the competitiveness of the UK automotive sector.

■ Offshore Industry

Stephen Flynn: [\[49823\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when discussions first took place on an oil and gas sector deal.

Stephen Flynn: [\[49824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timescale is for the conclusion of discussions on an oil and gas sector deal.

Stephen Flynn: [\[49825\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, when he plans to announce the details of an oil and gas sector deal.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

In 2018, the upstream oil and gas industry sent BEIS its first proposal for a Sector Deal. This proposal was not formally pursued as a complete package but certain aspects were taken forward, such as establishment of the National Decommissioning Centre which opened in January 2019. Following our manifesto commitment to a transformational oil and gas Sector Deal aligned to the energy transition, we have recommended discussions with the industry, which we are committed to delivering this Parliament.

Discussions have been held at both official and Ministerial levels and have also involved the Oil and Gas Authority. This conversation will develop further over the next few months as the sector seeks to develop its proposals and consults with a wide range of stakeholders.

Whilst there is no formal timescale for concluding a Sector Deal we recognise that the challenges facing the sector from the collapse of the oil price and the operational challenges of Covid-19 provide an opportunity to channel the Sector Deal as part of the recovery for the sector.

The meeting of the MER UK Forum on 11 June will provide an opportunity for the sector to bring forward its ideas for a Sector Deal proposal and to discuss these with industry leaders and Ministers.

■ Offshore Industry: Coronavirus

Stephen Flynn: [\[49826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what sector-specific support has been put in place to support the oil and gas industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government has put together a far-reaching package of support to help businesses through the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to engage extensively with businesses across all sectors, including with the oil and gas industry, to understand current challenges and consider what more we can do in support. Oil and gas staff were amongst those deemed essential workers and have therefore been supported in continuing to work safely, including having access to priority testing for COVID-19.

The Department has rapidly stood up resources to address the twin challenges of COVID-19 and the low oil price following the collapse in global demand, working closely with the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) and the sector to monitor impacts and track and mitigate any risks to critical infrastructure.

Our Manifesto included a commitment to deliver a transformational Sector Deal for the UK's oil and gas industry. This is likely to focus on the energy transition and will be critically important for the sector as it seeks to recover from the current crisis.

■ Postal Services: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[49595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to ensure the (a) reliability and (b) continuity of postal service during the covid-19 outbreak and (c) the protection of postal service workers.

Paul Scully:

The postal service plays an important role in helping to mitigate the impacts of coronavirus on individuals, families, and businesses up and down the country.

Royal Mail has well-established contingency plans to mitigate disruption to postal services overseen by Ofcom, the independent regulator. Royal Mail continues to work closely with Ofcom to do everything it can to maintain service levels during this period.

Safety of workers is the number one priority for the Government. The Government is clear that we will support people in work during the COVID-19 outbreak. We are regularly engaging with industry stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the latest guidance.

Postal operators should make sure they put appropriate measures in place to follow the latest public health guidance and the legal obligations set out under health and safety legislation to protect their staff at work. Postal workers should continue to follow the advice of their employers and make sensible workplace adjustments.

■ **Public Houses: Coronavirus**

Clive Lewis: [\[54187\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the British Pubs Confederation on the re-opening of pubs after the covid-19 lockdown is eased.

Paul Scully:

The Government have engaged with the British Pubs Confederation through correspondence and continue to engage with a broad variety of representatives across the industry on the challenges facing the pub sector, including on the re-opening of pubs.

Clive Lewis: [\[54188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what criteria his Department used to decide which organisations would be consulted as part of the working group on the re-opening of pubs as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Paul Scully:

The Pubs and Restaurants working level Technical Group comprised stakeholders from a cross-section of the sector, with representation from trade bodies to small and medium sized operators, unions, as well as the supply chain. We consulted these stakeholders due to their expertise and real-life knowledge and experience of the challenges faced by the industry during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive also took part in the Technical Group discussion to ensure the COVID-19 secure guidance for restaurants, pubs, bars and takeaway services is consistent with the latest scientific and health and safety advice.

In addition to the Technical Group, we consulted over 400 stakeholders from the hospitality sector in the development of the guidance. This includes ongoing discussions that I have had with business leaders.

■ **Renewable Energy: Aberdeen**

Stephen Flynn: [\[49829\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has for an energy transition zone in Aberdeen.

Stephen Flynn: [\[49830\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to make financial support available for an energy transition zone in Aberdeen.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department is in early stage discussions with the oil and gas industry over plans for a transformational upstream oil and gas Sector Deal as set out in the Conservative Party Manifesto 2019. My officials have had high-level discussions on ideas around energy transition zones and I will be interested to be updated once a formal detailed proposal is available. At this stage of the process it is too early to discuss whether the proposed Sector Deal will include such plans for Aberdeen.

Renewable Energy: Scotland**Stephen Flynn:**[\[49827\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial support his Department is planning to ensure a sustainable energy transition for (a) Aberdeen and (b) the north east of Scotland.

Stephen Flynn:[\[49828\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what new support he plans to put in place to ensure a sustainable energy transition for (a) Aberdeen and (b) the north east of Scotland.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The oil and gas industry supports c.270,000 jobs in the UK, around 40% of which are in Scotland, with Aberdeen and the north east of Scotland being a major hub. This sector has a key role to play as we move to a net zero economy. The Department is in early stage discussions with the oil and gas industry over plans for a transformational upstream oil and gas Sector Deal as set out in the Conservative Party Manifesto 2019. There is no formal proposal at this early stage of the process.

Research Councils: Finance**Chi Onwurah:**[\[54106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the science budget for 2020-21 will be allocated to each of the science councils.

Amanda Solloway:

We have set ourselves the target of at least 2.4% of GDP being spent on R&D by 2027. This was supported by the unprecedented commitment at the Budget to increase public investment in R&D to £22 billion a year by 2024-25.

This figure covers all R&D spending across government. The allocation of the spend to particular departments and programmes will be confirmed at the Spending Review, later in the year.

On Friday 29th May we announced allocations to BEIS partners and programmes for 2020-21. UKRI will confirm allocations to individual research councils in due course.

■ Retail Trade: Coronavirus

James Wild:

[\[54265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to paragraph 5.5 of the Government's guidance, Working safely during COVID-19 in shops and branches, last updated on 25 May 2020, what reason it is advised that clothes and shoes that have been handled should be placed in a container or separate room for storage for 72 hours or cleaned prior to be returned for display on the shop floor whereas other products in essential retail stores are not subject to such advice.

Paul Scully:

The guidance is designed to help employers, workers and the self-employed understand how to work safely, including what employers need to think about to adapt a workplace to manage risk in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

We worked closely with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive to develop this guidance and continue to be guided by the science, so we do not put lives at risk.

We will keep the guidance under review and will consider updating it as circumstances change. We are being led by the science and we will make changes to the guidance when they are needed as determined by the science and as we learn best practices from businesses.

■ Science: Finance

Chi Onwurah:

[\[54107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to allocate funding from the science budget 2020-21 to replace EU Horizon funding.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government is committed to ensuring the UK becomes a global science superpower and continues to collaborate with Europe on scientific research. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear that the UK is ready to consider a relationship in line with non-EU Member State participation in Horizon Europe, provided that this represents value for money and is in the UK's interest. Any agreements relating to Union programmes should contain fair terms for UK participation.

I refer the Hon. Member to a Written Ministerial Statement made by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 19 May (HCWS245), which sets out that discussions covered all workstreams including: general terms for UK participation in programmes, including provisions for financial contribution.

As a responsible government, we are also developing alternative schemes to support international research and innovation collaboration. This includes options which can address immediate needs and work through to any future funding scenario.

In the Budget, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that government investment in R&D will increase to £22bn by 2024/25, the largest and

fastest ever increase. The increase in investment in R&D will include funding for any continued participation in EU research and innovation Programmes or EU replacement schemes, subject to allocation at the Spending Review.

■ **Sizewell C Power Station: Environment Protection**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[54079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department will take to ensure that the proposed EDF development of the Sizewell C nuclear power station conforms to the highest environmental standards and ensure that the Suffolk Coast is protected as (a) an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and (b) a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Development Consent application for the proposed new nuclear power station, known as Sizewell C, was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 27 May 2020.

The Planning Act 2008 ensures a robust Environmental Impact Assessment is undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of my Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to consider relevant matters. Relevant matters include the environmental and conservation grounds, such as the potential effects on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The Secretary of State will also undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment of potential impacts on internationally designated Natura 2000 sites. If the application is accepted, the Examining Authority will thoroughly assess these matters before providing its recommendation to the Secretary of State. The development will also require environmental permits to be granted by the Environmental Agency.

■ **Universities: Research**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of business research and development contracts held by UK universities that have been paused as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Amanda Solloway:

Government announced a package of support for UK universities on 4th May to ensure that the university research base can fully contribute to the UK recovery and our economy in the longer-term post COVID-19. The Department does not hold any information about the number of business R&D contracts held by UK universities that have been paused as a result of COVID-19. However, BEIS is working with the sector to gather information and intelligence about the impact of COVID-19 on business-funded research.

Chi Onwurah:

[\[49681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made on the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on levels of (a) aviation and (b) manufacturing research funding to universities.

Nadhim Zahawi:

The Government recognises that the aviation and manufacturing sectors have been strongly impacted by Covid-19.

We do not have an assessment of the effect of the Covid-19 outbreak on the level of research funding to universities for aviation or manufacturing. According to the Office for National Statistics, UK business finance for Research & Development (R&D) in higher education in 2018 was £389 million. This is approximately 4% of all R&D performed in higher education. We do not have a breakdown by product or sector.

A Ministerial Taskforce, jointly led by BEIS and the Department for Education, on the sustainability of university research including those funded by businesses, has been established. The Taskforce will identify and assess impacts, as well as consider approaches to help manage these impacts over the coming months.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Cabinet: Lord Saville of Newdigate

Gavin Robinson:

[\[53446\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what (a) discussions, (b) meetings and (c) correspondence took place between members of the Cabinet and Lord Saville in (i) 1997, (ii) 1998 and (iii) 1999.

Chloe Smith:

The information requested is not held centrally. It could be held across a very wide range of paper files and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Under the Public Records Act, the records from 1997-1999 will be reviewed and transferred to The National Archives by 2022.

■ Elections: Proof of Identity

Cat Smith:

[\[52143\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans the Government has to introduce voter ID requirements in the May 2021 local elections.

Chloe Smith:

The Government is committed to introducing Voter ID to strengthen the integrity of our electoral system and give the public confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century.

We will bring forward legislation enabling the implementation of Voter ID and wider electoral integrity measures as stated in the Queen's Speech. Further announcements will be made in the usual way.

■ **Electrical Safety: Standards**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[53288\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will make it the policy of the Government that all relevant Government contracts involving electrical installation should comply with the eighteenth edition of BS7671 published in 2018; and if he will make a statement.

Chloe Smith:

All suppliers providing services under Government contracts must ensure they are maintained at optimum performance in accordance with manufacturers' and installers' recommendations and statutory obligations, including the BS7671 IET Wiring Regulations.

■ **House of Lords: Reform**

Martyn Day: [\[52229\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals on House of Lords reform in the current Parliament.

Chloe Smith:

The House of Lords has a key role in scrutinising the executive and as a revising chamber. It is important that the way it is constituted reflects that role and the primacy of the House of Commons as the elected chamber.

The Conservative manifesto committed to looking at the role of the Lords, but any reform needs careful consideration. We do not want to do so in a piecemeal way.

■ **Marriage: Coronavirus**

Hilary Benn: [\[54003\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his timeframe is for reviewing the restrictions imposed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak on weddings taking place; and if he will make a statement.

Alex Cunningham: [\[54102\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the timeframe is for allowing the restarting of small weddings.

Darren Jones: [\[54224\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to Command Paper CP 239, The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, when the Government plans to allow people to gather in slightly larger groups to facilitate small weddings.

Simon Jupp:[\[54280\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to enable outdoor, social distance compliant (a) wedding ceremonies and (b) receptions to take place in summer 2020.

Penny Mordaunt:

[Our Plan To Rebuild](#), the Government's COVID-19 Recovery Strategy, is published on gov.uk and includes details on plans for weddings. We understand the frustration couples planning a wedding must be feeling at this time. We are keeping these restrictions under review and will ease them as soon as it is safe to do so. We will continue to work closely with faith leaders and local government over the coming weeks to go through the practicalities of doing so.

Marriages and civil partnerships under the special procedure for those who are seriously ill and not expected to recover, are taking place in some cases where it is safe to do so in line with PHE guidance.

■ Ministerial Responsibility**Lloyd Russell-Moyle:**[\[54223\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answers of 2 May 2020 to Question 48583 and of 11 May 2020 to Question 43737 and with reference to the oral contribution of 6 May 2020 of the Leader of the House, Official Report, column 583, on Business Statement, what the date is for the publication of Government Ministers and responsibilities.

Chloe Smith:

I refer the Hon. member to the answer given to PQ [43737](#) on 11 May 2020.

■ Mortuaries: Coronavirus**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[53443\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, pursuant to the Answer of 29 May 2020 to Question 45531 on Mortuaries: Coronavirus, how many of the of the procured temporary mortuary spaces have (a) been built and (b) are in use.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the answer given to PQ [45531](#) on 29 May 2020, additional mortuary capacity has been procured by a range of organisations in the private and public sectors, including central government, to ensure that the deceased are treated with dignity and respect. Cabinet Office does not hold complete data on specific utilisation of additional storage units.

■ Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group**Louise Haigh:**[\[53503\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, when the Technical Alternative Arrangements Advisory Group last met.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQs [23533](#) and [23539](#) on 2 March 2020.

■ UK Trade with EU: Parliamentary Scrutiny**Fleur Anderson:**[\[53649\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what steps he is taking to ensure adequate Parliamentary scrutiny of the future trading relationship with the EU.

Penny Mordaunt:

Further to the comments I made during the debate on the [EU-UK's Partnership](#) in the House on 4 June 2020, this Government is determined to give Parliament appropriate opportunity for scrutiny.

On 27 February the Government laid a Command Paper before Parliament setting out its approach to negotiations. On 19 May the Government published 12 draft legal texts which represent the legal articulation of the document published on 27 February and which have been used in discussions with the EU.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has appeared before the Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union three times since negotiations began.

■ Unemployment: Linlithgow and East Falkirk**Martyn Day:**[\[54958\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people with learning difficulties and seeking work were unemployed in Linlithgow and East Falkirk constituency in each year since 2010.

Martyn Day:[\[54959\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people aged 18 to 25 are classified as long-term unemployed in Linlithgow and East Falkirk constituency.

Chloe Smith:

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

Attachments:

1. UKSA Response [PQ54958_ 54959.pdf]

DEFENCE**■ Aerospace Industry: Coronavirus****Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[53274\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the short- to medium-term equipment procurement projects which, if brought forward ahead of schedule, could provide economic support to (a) the UK aerospace industry and (b) its supply-chain

companies; and if he will hold urgent discussions with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to obtain flexibility in his Department's budget to enable the acceleration of procurement projects for this purpose.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence is working closely with HM Treasury and our industry partners to fully assess the impact of the pandemic on the UK Defence Sector. The Ministry of Defence has continued to place orders throughout the COVID pandemic and we continue to identify opportunities within the departmental portfolio to provide economic support to UK industry.

■ **Armed Forces: Recruitment**

Carol Monaghan: [\[54136\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of recruits to the armed forces with a reading age of between (a) five and seven, (b) seven and nine and (c) nine and eleven years in 2019.

Carol Monaghan: [\[54137\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what estimate he has made of the number of recruits with a reading age of five to seven years that will join the armed forces in 2020.

Carol Monaghan: [\[54138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the minimum reading age requirements are for recruits to the armed forces.

Carol Monaghan: [\[54139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how the reading age of recruits to the armed forces is determined.

Johnny Mercer:

In 2019 the number of Army recruits with reading ages between five and eleven were as follows:

READING AGE	NUMBER OF RECRUITS
Five – seven	20
Seven - nine	220
Nine – eleven	760

Notes:

In 2019 the Royal Air Force had no recruits join with a reading age below 11.

The Royal Navy does not assess recruits' reading ages.

All numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

Candidates have been permitted to join the Army with a reading age of five to seven on the understanding that they attend organised training at a local college to bring them up to the required minimum standard (Entry Level 2) before they commence Basic Training.

No recruits have joined the Armed Forces to date in 2020 with a reading age of five to seven years.

The UK Armed Forces use standard academic qualifications as entry criteria where relevant, and requirements vary depending on trade group. Entry is not determined by reading levels.

Over 94% of non-commissioned recruits, no matter their age, will enrol in an Apprenticeship Programme each year.

In line with Government Apprenticeship policy, all Service personnel undertaking an apprenticeship are required to attempt to gain a Functional Skills (FS) Level 2 award in literacy and numeracy - equivalent to at least a Grade 4 at GCSE level.

Since September 2012, Defence has adopted FS qualifications (English) and (Mathematics) as the accredited measures of literacy and numeracy skills for all Service personnel accessing in-Service literacy and numeracy provision.

■ **Armed Forces: Uniforms**

Gavin Robinson:

[\[53447\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how much and what proportion of British armed forces dress and combat uniforms are produced in (a) the UK, (b) China and (c) other countries.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has a number of contracts for clothing with UK and international suppliers. However, details of the quantities and location of where British Armed Forces dress and combat uniforms are produced are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

■ **Arms Trade: Exports**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[52033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many staff in his Department worked on the export campaigns for (a) Eurofighter Typhoon, (b) complex weapons and (c) F-35 sustainment as of 1 April 2020; in which teams those staff are placed; and what the budget is for those campaigns in 2020-21.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence Exports team lead on strategic export campaigns including Eurofighter Typhoon and Complex Weapons for the Department. The team is currently comprised of three RAF, one contractor, one industry secondee and seven civil servants, who, alongside their industry colleagues, provide policy and technical expertise to export campaigns. The team's budget is drawn from the wider Security

Policy and Operations budget, so we are unable to provide a staffing cost for the team. Budgets for export campaigns are a commercial matter for industry.

■ Army

John Spellar: [\[48946\]](#)

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

James Heappey:

As at 1 April 2020 the strength of the Regular Army was 79,620 personnel.

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: [\[48947\]](#)

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 April 2020, there were 25,580 Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) Army personnel who had continuous Army Reserve service of one year or more.

Notes/Caveats:

- Figures provided by Defence Statistics (Army).
- 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.
- The above figure is the number of FR20 personnel who were recorded on Strength both on 1 April 2020 and 1 April 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.
- Figures have been rounded to 10 for presentational purposes.

■ AWACS: Procurement

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[51648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the contract awarded to the STS Aviation Group for the work on the E-7 Wedgetail will be paid in US dollars.

Jeremy Quin:

Payments to STS Aviation under the conversion contract are being managed by Boeing, as the prime contractor.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[51652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether any of the five E-7 Wedgetail purchased by the UK will be second-hand aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The E-7 Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft is produced by modifying and militarising a Boeing 737 Next Generation airliner. As has been stated previously, the first two airframes to be inducted into the modification process are low-hours, previously-owned aircraft.

In preparation for modification, Boeing will undertake a thorough overhaul of these airframes to ensure a standard form, fit and function across the whole fleet. This will enable all aircraft to be operated and maintained by the RAF in the same manner.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[51653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timescale is for the delivery of each E-7 Wedgetail aircraft.

Jeremy Quin:

The current forecast for delivery of the first E-7 Wedgetail AEW Mk1 aircraft to the Royal Air Force is 2023, with the last expected in 2026. However, I am withholding the detailed delivery schedule as this would, or would be likely to, prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of our Armed Forces.

■ Hercules Aircraft

Layla Moran: [\[52415\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many hours the RAF fleet of C-130Js has flown in each year since entering service; and what the average cost was per flying hour for the C-130J in that period.

Jeremy Quin:

The first C-130J was delivered in 1998. The information requested on the C-130J is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, figures for actual flying hours from financial years 2001-02 to 2019-20 are given in the table below. Information is only available from financial year 2001-02 onwards and figures reflect the total C-130 fleet, irrespective of aircraft Mark, and therefore include the C-130K which is now out of service.

RAF C-130 Fleet - Actual Flying Hours

FINANCIAL YEAR	ACTUAL FLYING HOURS
2001-02	39,830
2002-03	38,870
2003-04	35,170
2004-05	30,640
2005-06	27,910
2006-07	28,840
2007-08	27,650
2008-09	27,300
2009-10	20,650
2010-11	17,970
2011-12	16,920
2012-13	16,110
2013-14	13,850
2014-15	13,690
2015-16	13,640
2016-17	12,440
2017-18	9,520
2018-19	7,460
2019-20	5,660

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

■ International Military Services: Arbitration**Tulip Siddiq:****[49080]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information he holds on the date of the next court hearing on IMS arbitration.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence understands that the next court hearing on the dispute between IMS Ltd and Iran's Ministry of Defence and Support to the Armed Forces is listed for 3-4 November 2020.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Contracts****Owen Thompson:**[\[54161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether his Department holds contracts for the supply of (a) tear gas, (b) rubber bullets or (c) riot shields, to the (i) US Federal or State Governments, (ii) US Law enforcement agencies, or (iii) US Army.

Jeremy Quin:

The Ministry of Defence has not entered into any contracts with the US for the provision of tear gas, rubber bullets or riot shields.

■ **Ministry of Defence: Correspondence****Marion Fellows:**[\[49742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Johnny Mercer:

This information is not held in the format requested. In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Ministry of Defence has a target of responding within 20 working days where a response is required. We also ensure that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised and take steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible. All correspondence received from hon. Members is reviewed and responded to as soon as possible. Statistics for each month since May 2018 are included in the table below:

DATE	PIECES OF CORRESPONDENCE FROM PARLIAMENTARIANS DUE FOR RESPONSE	RESPONSE SENT ON TIME
May 2018	190	183
June 2018	208	203
July 2018	248	246
August 2018	218	214
September 2018	169	166
October 2018	164	161
November 2018	202	201

DATE	PIECES OF CORRESPONDENCE FROM PARLIAMENTARIANS DUE FOR RESPONSE	RESPONSE SENT ON TIME
December 2018	204	200
January 2019	176	176
February 2019	180	180
March 2019	184	183
April 2019	239	236
May 2019	200	199
June 2019	203	202
July 2019	233	233
August 2019	205	200
September 2019	172	169
October 2019	195	192
November 2019	212	207
December 2019	72	67
January 2020	44	43
February 2020	183	178
March 2020	216	204
April 2020	190	167
Total	4,507	4,410

■ **Navy: Deployment**

Douglas Chapman:

[\[53458\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether all naval vessels could currently be put to sea safely and with a full complement of trained personnel on board for each class of vessel.

James Heappey:

The Royal Navy has the workforce required to meet their commitments, and we remain committed to ensuring they have the ships and capabilities required to fulfil Defence commitments now and in the future.

All Royal Navy ships rotate through planned operating cycles involving routine maintenance, repair, training, deployment, leave, essential modification and upgrades and will, therefore, be at varying levels of readiness in accordance with Defence requirements.

■ Type 45 Destroyers: Repairs and Maintenance**Douglas Chapman:**[\[53459\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, which Type 45 ships are (a) undergoing engine refits, (b) planning to undergo engine refits, (c) fully refitted and back in service with a fully trained complement of personnel on board.

Douglas Chapman:[\[53460\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the timeframe is for the (a) completion of the engine refit programme on Type 45 ships and (b) for those ships to be in service.

Jeremy Quin:

All Type 45 Destroyers will receive new diesel generators under the Power Improvement Project conversion programme. Work is currently underway on HMS Dauntless, the first ship to enter the programme, and she will return to sea for trials in 2021. Following completion of these sea trials, she will return to the fleet.

It is planned that all six Type 45 ships will have received this upgrade by the mid-2020s. The programme is dependent on the availability of ships to undertake the upgrade, balanced against the Royal Navy's standing and future operational commitments.

The Type 45 Destroyers are hugely capable ships and have been deployed successfully on a range of operations world-wide and they continue to make an enormous contribution to the defence of the UK and our international partners.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ BBC Northern Ireland: Bullying****Mr Gregory Campbell:**[\[53320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will hold urgent discussions with representatives of the BBC on investigating internal allegations of bullying by BBC Northern Ireland employees.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The BBC is operationally and editorially independent from the government and the government cannot intervene in the BBC's day-to-day operations, including with

regards staffing matters. The BBC Board is responsible for the governance of the BBC. The government established Ofcom as the BBC regulator to ensure the BBC is robustly held to account as the nation's broadcaster. Issues such as these are therefore to be dealt with by the BBC, the BBC Board and, when appropriate, Ofcom.

■ **Broadband: Infrastructure**

John Nicolson:

[\[52105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the contribution of the Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill towards meeting the Government's target of delivering gigabit-capable connectivity for all by 2025.

John Nicolson:

[\[52106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the need to revise legislation in respect of the rights of telecoms operators to build infrastructure on privately owned land in order to meet the Government's target of delivering gigabit-capable connectivity for all by 2025; and if he will make a statement.

Matt Warman:

The Government remains committed to providing gigabit-capable connections to every home and business in the country as soon as possible.

The Telecommunications Infrastructure (Leasehold Property) Bill contributes to that commitment. It creates a faster, cheaper process than that which currently exists, so as to allow operators to apply to courts for rights under the Electronic Communications Code ("the Code") to install infrastructure and provide a connection. It applies only where a landowner (or otherwise 'required grantor') is repeatedly unresponsive to an operator's attempts to agree to those rights for access.

It is also necessary for those attempts to have been prompted in the first place by a request made to the operator by a tenant, for the operator to provide a service.

The Bill applies to multiple dwelling buildings (e.g. blocks of flats) of which there are an estimated 450,000 in the UK and housing around 10 million people. Information provided by the industry indicates that approximately 40% of operators' notices to the owners of multiple dwelling buildings attempting to agree permission to install infrastructure receive no response. This leaves residents in those properties unlikely to receive faster, more reliable, more resilient broadband. The Bill addresses this issue by providing for a specific process allowing operators to apply for rights under the Code.

As regards any further changes to the legislation regulating operator rights to build infrastructure on privately owned land, my department is working closely with stakeholders to understand whether the existing statutory framework supports delivery of the 2025 targets. This includes assessing whether Government interventions - including possible further legislative reforms - may be of assistance in achieving the 2025 targets.

■ Charities: Finance**John Nicolson:**[\[52102\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to his announcement on 20 May 2020 that £150m released from dormant bank accounts would benefit charitable causes,; whether funds from those bank accounts registered in Scotland contributed to that figure; and whether charities in Scotland benefit from that release of funds.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The dormant assets scheme enables banks and building societies to voluntarily transfer dormant accounts into the scheme from across the UK, and for customers to reclaim their money at any point. Surplus funds unlocked through the scheme are apportioned among England and each of the devolved administrations to be directed to social or environmental causes of each nation's choosing. Dormant assets funds are apportioned to each nation according to the Distribution of Dormant Account Money (Apportionment) Order 2011, which was based on the Barnett formula.

The £150m announced on 20th May is the English portion of currently available funds, £71m of which is new funding alongside £79m of previously announced funds that have been repurposed to respond to Covid-19. Approximately £25m is currently available to the devolved administrations, of which circa £13m is available for Scotland. We understand The National Lottery Community Fund is working with ministers and officials in Scotland to determine how the Scottish government wishes to direct their portion.

Rachael Maskell:[\[52180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how small (a) national and (b) local charities specialising in loneliness can access the £5 million covid-19 loneliness grant fund.

Mr John Whittingdale:

As part of a major effort to tackle loneliness during the Covid-19 outbreak, on 13th May the government launched a £5m grant fund. This closed for applications on 29th May.

Applications were invited from national organisations and umbrella organisations able to fund local organisations in their networks. The grants will support them to adapt and continue their work to tackle loneliness and to deliver effective, targeted relief for those most at risk of loneliness as a result of Covid-19.

Loneliness is also a priority category of the £200m Coronavirus Community Support Fund provided by The National Lottery Community Fund, targeted at small and medium sized VCSE organisations to help them maintain and enhance services for vulnerable people affected by the current crisis.

■ Charities: Voluntary Work

Rachael Maskell:

[\[52181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on enabling furloughed charity staff to (a) volunteer for their organisation, (b) volunteer for their organisation in a different role from that of their substantive work, (c) volunteer to assist with fundraising and (d) engage in raising funds for their organisation by participating in fundraising events akin to other members of the public.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is working with other Government departments and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to identify areas where volunteers can contribute to the COVID-19 response.

To mitigate the risk of fraudulent claims and to protect individuals, the Government made it clear that under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, those furloughed cannot work or volunteer for their own organisation. If workers were allowed to volunteer for their employer, the employer could ask them to work in an effectively full time way while only paying 80% of the wages.

The Government recognises and values the role volunteers are playing in the Covid-19 response and their contribution to broader charitable causes; furloughed employees can take part in volunteer work, provided that it does not provide services or generate revenue for their employer or another company associated or linked to their employer.

■ Chatham Dockyard: Coronavirus

Tracey Crouch:

[\[54086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what support his Department has provided to Chatham Historic Dockyard during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

During the COVID-19 outbreak DCMS has maintained a consistent line of communication with Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust. Officials have worked closely with the Trust to understand the challenges they are facing and ensure they are aware of the support available to them at this time.

DCMS supports Chatham Historic Dockyard through an ongoing funding arrangement that enables vital conservation and maintenance work.

■ Churches: Radio

Mr Gregory Campbell:

[\[51633\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps with the OFCOM to waive the temporary licence fee required for churches to use radio wavelengths for drive in church services.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government understands that Ofcom has recently published updated licensing information for people and organisations wishing to put on drive-in services. These events need a 'restricted service licence', so people in their cars can hear what is being said on their car radios.

It is for Ofcom, as the independent regulator, to set tariffs to cover their licensing costs, and to ensure that these are reasonable attributable to the sectors from which they recover them.

Fees for restricted service licences will vary according to the band, the power and the duration for which the applicant requires the licence, and the options and associated costs are set out in Ofcom's annually published tariff tables.

■ Cultural Heritage: Railways**Philip Davies:**[\[53351\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he and his Ministers have had discussions with Ministers in the Departments for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the potential effect on heritage railways of the (a) proposals in the DEFRA consultation on the cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood and (b) number of planning permissions granted by MHCLG for new surface coal mines; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Huddleston:

I attended an MP-level meeting on the future of coal for heritage railways in March of this year. My Defra Ministerial colleague was in attendance at this meeting, at which discussions included the economic and social benefits of the heritage rail industry, the industry's efforts to diversify the sector through carbon offsetting and seeking alternative fuels, and the status of extant planning permissions for mines in the UK.

My Defra Ministerial colleague confirmed that the consultation on the cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood applies only to residential settings, thereby placing heritage railways outwith the scope of this consultation.

Heritage railway representatives took an action from the meeting to contact officials at MHCLG regarding planning permissions for new and existing surface coal mines.

■ Culture and Tourism: Coronavirus**Matt Western:**[\[52355\]](#)

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

Nigel Huddleston:

We will continue to engage with stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support the heritage and tourism sectors through this crisis.

Businesses and workers in these sectors can access the Government's comprehensive economic support package, including the recently extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Bounce Back Loans scheme.

Through VisitEngland, we announced a £1.3 million scheme to provide financial support to Destination Management Organisations at risk of closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Historic England (HE) have made emergency funding available for the heritage sector. The NLHF's £50 million Heritage Emergency Fund and HE's £2 million Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund extend a safety net to a wide variety of heritage organisations struggling with financial losses and cash flow issues.

My Department's Cultural Renewal Taskforce - which contains specific Heritage and Visitor Economy Working Groups - is developing guidance to help these sectors to safely reopen.

■ **Cybercrime: Business**

Douglas Chapman:

[\[53461\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many businesses have enrolled on the Cyber Essentials Scheme in Dunfermline and West Fife constituency.

Matt Warman:

From 2016 until the end of April 2020, 48 Cyber Essentials certificates have been awarded to organisations in the Dunfermline and West Fife constituency. This is an estimate, as there is incomplete location data for some historical certificate entries.

A total of 44,443 certificates have been awarded to organisations across the UK.

A search function to find organisations with Cyber Essentials certificates is available at www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberessentials/search.

■ **Cybercrime: Manufacturing Industries**

Ben Everitt:

[\[52610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that manufacturers have adequate cyber security measures in place.

Matt Warman:

The Government's National Cyber Security Strategy (2016-2021) is backed with £1.9 billion investment to transform the nation's cyber security and make the UK the safest place to live and do business online. As part of the strategy, in 2016 we established the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). The NCSC engages with organisations and businesses across the economy and society, including those in the manufacturing sector, to encourage the take-up of good cyber security measures. The Government is currently undertaking a Review of Cyber Security Incentives and

Regulation to understand what more can be done to ensure businesses of all sizes are effectively managing their cyber risks.

For manufacturers of 'Internet of Things' (or "smart") devices used by consumers, we have developed a Code of Practice for Consumer IoT Security to help manufacturers ensure cyber security measures are embedded in their devices. We intend to introduce legislation to support the manufacturing of more secure "smart" devices.

■ **Cybercrime: Small Businesses**

Ben Everitt:

[\[52609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to improve the uptake of the Cyber Essentials scheme for SMEs in (a) Milton Keynes and (b) the UK.

Matt Warman:

As part of the National Cyber Security Strategy, the Government is helping organisations across the economy and society improve their digital security. We are promoting the uptake of the Cyber Essentials (CE) scheme in a number of ways, including through the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) extensive engagements with industry sectors and via police regional organised crime units, which engage with businesses locally.

The Government's Cyber Aware campaign helps the public and small businesses take up secure online behaviours, including signposting businesses towards Cyber Essentials and other guidance and support.

■ **Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Correspondence**

Marion Fellows:

[\[49733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Caroline Dinéage:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, DCMS has a target of responding within 20 working days where a response is required. As you will understand, we are currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. DCMS ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised, and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

■ Disinformation: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:** [\[49685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of technology companies on auditing those companies efforts to reduce disinformation during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinéage:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with technology companies, on a range of issues, including their work to reduce disinformation during the covid-19 outbreak. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

Owen Thompson: [\[53510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to tackle fake news and disinformation on covid-19 as part of its campaign entitled Don't feed the Beast.

Caroline Dinéage:

It is vitally important that the public has access to credible and verified information about COVID-19. As part of our counter disinformation campaign, "Don't Feed the Beast", we are increasing audience resilience by educating and empowering users who see or inadvertently share false and misleading information. The campaign promotes the SHARE checklist, providing the public with five easy steps to identify false information and actions to consider prior to sharing content online. It is currently running on Facebook and Instagram. Alongside publicly promoting the campaign, we continue to raise awareness of Don't Feed the Beast with wider stakeholders, including social media platforms, civil society and academia.

The campaign was previously targeted at 18-34 year olds, as this audience is considered vulnerable to disinformation. In March 2020 the campaign was relaunched to tackle misinformation and disinformation related to the coronavirus pandemic. It now targets all UK adults.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to his question number 48542 on 2 June, which captures the wider actions we have taken to counter misinformation and disinformation related to COVID-19. This includes working closely with social media platforms to help them identify and remove incorrect claims about the virus, as well as promoting authoritative sources of information.

■ Holiday Accommodation: Coronavirus**Dr Dan Poulter:** [\[51839\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the viability of self-contained holiday rentals being treated in the same manner as second homes when lifting covid-19 restrictions as long as relevant public health guidance is followed.

Nigel Huddleston:

We will look at opening forms of holiday accommodation in Step 3 of the government's recovery strategy, currently planned for 4 July at the earliest. This will be subject to the further scientific advice and the latest risk assessment at the time.

My Department has launched the Cultural Renewal Taskforce to help our sectors' businesses prepare to reopen when it is safe to do so. To inform this Taskforce, we have set up a Visitor Economy Working Group to specifically focus on the practicalities and guidelines for restarting tourism activity during the recovery period. We remain in regular contact with holiday rentals stakeholders as part of this Group.

■ Illegal Broadcasting: Sports

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[51661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answers of 19 May 2020 to Questions 45015, 45016 and 45017, whether illegal streaming of premium UK sports content and UK broadcasters by via beoutQ boxes has ceased in addition to beoutQ's satellite piracy being stopped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[51662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answers of 19 May 2020 to Questions 45015, 45016 and 45017, what discussions he has had with representatives from UK sporting institutions on the effect of (a) beoutQ's IPTV piracy via beoutQ boxes and (b) illegal streaming of live UK sport across Saudi Arabia generally on broadcast revenue.

Mr Alistair Carmichael: [\[51663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answers of 18 May 2020 to Questions 45015, 45016 and 45017, what assessment he has made of the effect on the value of UK sports' broadcasting rights of beoutQ boxes and the illegal streaming of live sport through those boxes in (a) Saudi Arabia and (b) throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Nigel Huddleston:

Together with FCO, DIT and IPO colleagues, we continue to monitor and protect the intellectual property rights of UK rights holders, including UK sports institutions, in international markets. We also continue to maintain a dialogue with them and secondary rights holders, whenever we are requested to do so. We have received reports of continuing infringements of intellectual property rights in the Middle East. Where we do so, we will continue to pursue those with the relevant authorities.

■ Internet: Epilepsy

Dan Jarvis: [\[53436\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to safeguard people with epilepsy from online harm.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government published the initial response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation on 12 February 2020. This confirmed that the Government is developing legislation on online harms to establish a new duty of care on online companies towards their users, overseen by an independent regulator. The duty of care will require companies to put appropriate systems and processes in place to deal with harmful content on their services to keep their users safe. We are aiming to publish a full government response to the Online Harms White Paper consultation later this year, and this will include more detailed proposals on online harms regulation.

Internet: Safety**Chris Elmore:**[\[49797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what data his Department holds on the amount of harmful online content which was removed in (a) April 2020 and (b) April 2019.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Department for State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport does not own, or store, any data relating to the removal of harmful online content.

Many tech companies publish transparency reports on their websites, which may contain this data. These reports are published on a voluntary basis.

The Online Harms White Paper set out our plans for a world leading regulatory framework, addressing a comprehensive spectrum of online harms in a single and coherent way. Developing a culture of transparency, trust and accountability will be a critical element of the new regulatory framework. The regulator will have the power to require annual transparency reports from companies in scope, outlining the prevalence of harmful content on their platforms and what measures they are taking to address this. These reports will be published online by the regulator, so that users and parents can make informed decisions about internet use.

Chris Elmore:[\[49798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether further funding has been allocated from the public purse to the reduction of online harms during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Government is committed to making the UK the safest place to be online and, earlier this year, dedicated resources to responding to online harms as a result of Covid-19. This included standing up the DCMS-led Cross-Whitehall Counter Disinformation Unit. In response to the current situation, we have trebled the size of this coordination team at DCMS. Both the disinformation cell and the online harms Covid-19 team have been resourced through existing headcount.

In addition, the Government has pledged £750 million to ensure charities can continue their vital work during the Covid-19 outbreak. Many of these organisations

are providing support for online harms during this period. This includes £7.8 million which has been allocated to the Home Office in emergency support for charities helping vulnerable children who have been impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak. We have been working closely with the Home Office on the online harms element of this work.

■ **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**

Navendu Mishra:

[\[53656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the Listed Place of Worship Grant beyond March 2021.

Nigel Huddleston:

The Government is fully committed to supporting listed places of worship and has committed to the present level of funding until March 2021. An extension to the scheme is on hold until the completion of the Spending Review, which has been delayed from July to later this year to ensure that HM Treasury and departments can remain focused on responding to the immediate public health and economic emergency.

■ **Local Broadcasting and Local Press: Coronavirus**

Thangam Debonnaire:

[\[52130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps the Government is taking to support independent local (a) print, (b) online and (c) broadcast news providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

To support the vital role of local news outlets, the government has clarified that all journalists including broadcast journalists, and other ancillary staff, are 'key workers' for the purposes of access to childcare and educational places. The government also issued guidance to local authorities on the importance of newspaper delivery, which has been critical to the continued dissemination of public interest news.

News publishers in particular are facing existential pressures due to the steep drop in advertising revenues resulting from the impacts of Covid-19. The government has therefore sought to maximise advertising opportunities for the sector, implementing a public information campaign to ensure the distribution of authoritative, up-to-date information about Covid-19, while also alleviating publishers' financial pressures.. The current partnership brings together over 600 titles across the UK, of which the vast majority are local papers.

For online media outlets, the government has taken steps to ensure the use of 'keyword blocklisting' technology is not inadvertently damaging news publishers' online advertising revenues for Covid-19 related stories. Additionally, the Chancellor brought forward the commencement of zero-rating of VAT on e-newspapers in order to bring savings to readers and support digital publishing.

We are in regular dialogue with stakeholders about ensuring the support offered to local news outlets is as effective as it can be. Ministers are also engaged with national and local broadcasters on a regular basis to understand the impacts of Covid-19 on their day to day operations, including broadcast news provision.

■ **Mobile Phones and Telecommunications: Infrastructure**

Steve McCabe:

[\[51569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what measures are in place to ensure that operators are required to remove redundant mobile and telecommunications equipment.

Matt Warman:

The Electronic Communications Code regulates the installation and maintenance of telecommunications equipment on public and private land. Under the Code, landowners can require the removal of telecoms equipment for a range of reasons - including where the equipment is no longer in use - by giving notice to operators. Where necessary, the court may enforce these rights by ordering operators to remove their equipment and restore the land to its original condition.

In addition, the Ofcom Code of Practice for the Electronic Communications Code requires operators to ensure that sites that are no longer required (i.e. redundant) are decommissioned within a reasonable time period. As it may be preferable to leave some telecoms equipment safely in place, such as underground ducts and cables, operators are advised to discuss decommissioning proposals with landowners.

When a landowner requests that the operator remove redundant equipment, operators should respond within a reasonable time, either by agreeing when the apparatus will be made safe or removed, or by explaining that the equipment will still be needed.

■ **Mobile Phones: Equipment**

Steve McCabe:

[\[51570\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what information his Department holds on the reasons why operators cluster mobile and cellular network equipment at the same locations.

Matt Warman:

A key factor that explains why mobile network operators cluster mobile and cellular network equipment at the same locations is their need to take advantage of specific locations that provide optimum mobile coverage and capacity to their customers.

A number of other factors also influence mobile network operators' decision making. Planning considerations are important because where a local planning authority has already granted permission for telecommunications infrastructure to be built at a specific location for one operator, it is much easier for new operators to deploy there too. In doing so it also reduces the environmental impact of numerous sites in an area. In addition, where a wayleave agreement for backhaul transmission and site

access has already been granted, or power supply to a site installed, incremental costs and associated barriers for new operators to use this site will likely be reduced.

The Government supports the view that the mobile network operators, wherever viable, should share mobile sites and network infrastructure, such as masts and antennas, as this can make the deployment of mobile networks more cost effective, minimise the number of masts needed and, in doing so, help to minimise any environmental impact.

Industry already has extensive mast sharing arrangements in place that cover many sites. Vodafone and O2 have a mast sharing agreement for which they founded a joint venture called Cornerstone Telecommunications, while EE and Three also have a similar agreement in place through their joint venture, Mobile Broadband Network Limited.

While a site might be the optimum location for multiple mobile network operators to ensure that their radio networks deliver the best service for their customers, it is not, however, always possible to share infrastructure or equipment at a specific site. An operator may need to build a second site at a shared location to handle increased capacity demand for example.

Site sharing will be essential to the delivery of the Shared Rural Network Programme which will deliver 95% 4G coverage across the whole of the UK by the end of 2025.

■ Service Industries: Coronavirus

Andrew Gwynne:

[\[51718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans his Department has to create a tailored support package for the events industry to support that sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

We are aware that COVID-19 has significantly impacted multiple aspects of the events industry. My officials continue to gather intelligence from the sector and I regularly engage with events stakeholders to monitor the situation through the Visitor Economy Working Group, the Events Industry Board, and the Tourism Industry Emergency Response Group.

Government support for the events sector is set out in the International Business Events Action Plan, which was published in June 2019. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to assess how we can most effectively support the sector's recovery from COVID-19.

Businesses and workers in the events industry can access the Government's comprehensive economic support package, including the recently extended the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the Bounce Back Loans scheme.

■ Telecommunications: Disconnections

James Murray:

[\[53653\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether his Department holds data on the number of disconnections as a result of unpaid bills of (a) broadband, (b) mobile phone and (c) landline services on a (i) daily, (ii) weekly, (iii) monthly and (iv) any other basis over the last two years.

Matt Warman:

Ofcom, the independent telecoms regulator, monitors and carries out research on issues faced by vulnerable consumers, including those around debt and affordability. Ofcom is currently monitoring the affordability of communications services, looking at households which have difficulty paying for these, in particular in relation to broadband. It will publish its findings in Q3 2020/21.

Ofcom's 2018 Access and Inclusion report found that around one in ten (9%) of those responsible for paying for their household's communication services said they had experienced difficulties paying their bills.

More broadly, as part of Government's response to Covid-19, we have agreed a package of measures with the UK's major fixed and mobile providers to support and protect consumers with their connectivity needs. This package was agreed on 29 March 2020, with further companies signing up on 18 May. As part of the commitments, providers have agreed to work with customers who find it difficult to pay their bill as a result of Covid-19, to ensure that they are treated fairly and appropriately supported.

■ Television: Licensing

Darren Henry:

[\[52569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the over 75s TV licence fee is kept under review during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Following discussion between the BBC and the Government, and recognising the exceptional circumstances of the national Coronavirus situation, the BBC Board decided to postpone the start of its new restricted policy on over 75 licence fees to 1 August this year. The BBC has promised to keep the issue under review as the situation continues to evolve. The Secretary of State said on 20 May 2020 during the government's daily Coronavirus briefing: 'I very much hope that if we are in a similar situation come the beginning of August the BBC will show similar flexibility again'. 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.

■ Tourism: Social Distancing**Dr Luke Evans:** [\[52541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the tourism industry to ensure the safe resumption of tourism with relevant social distancing measures in summer 2020.

Nigel Huddleston:

My officials and I continue to regularly discuss this matter in detail with representatives from across the tourism industry.

My Department has launched the Cultural Renewal Taskforce to help our sectors prepare to reopen when it is safe to do so. To inform this taskforce, we have set up a Visitor Economy Working Group to specifically focus on developing guidance for restarting tourism activity. We remain in regular contact with tourism stakeholders through both this group and the Tourism Industry Emergency Response Group.

■ Voluntary Organisations: Coronavirus**Sir John Hayes:** [\[53306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to work with the voluntary sector during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Volunteers and the voluntary sector are playing a vital role in tackling the challenges of COVID-19.

Our pledge of £750 million, including my Department's £200 million Coronavirus Community Support Fund, along with an additional £150 million from dormant bank and building society accounts, is providing essential funds to enable voluntary and community organisations to deliver services at the local and national level.

My Department is working closely with the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership to match the country's strong base of willing volunteers with priority needs and to target support to areas of greatest need. We are also working with the voluntary sector to ensure that government guidance is effective and that volunteer mobilisation schemes are consistently rewarding, effective and safe.

EDUCATION**■ Children in Care: Cumbria****Tim Farron:** [\[49631\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children were in care in South Lakeland in each of the last 12 months.

Vicky Ford:

The information is not available in the form requested. The department is currently in the process of collecting looked after children data from local authorities for the

reporting year ending 31 March 2020. Information on the number of children in care in 2019-20 will not be published until later in the year. This data is not collected below local authority area level. The latest annual figures on children in care were published in the statistical release 'Children Looked after in England including adoptions 2018-19': <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>.

Information at local authority and regional level can be located in the underlying data table 'CLA2019'.

■ Children: Bus Services

Neil Coyle: [\[53453\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect that the policy to charge children for bus travel in London will have on (a) school attendance, (b) late arrivals and (c) the ability of schools to maintain social distancing.

Neil Coyle: [\[53455\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to work with schools in London to ensure that children can travel to school while public transport limitations are in place as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible pupils. The aim of the duty is to ensure that no child is prevented from attending school because they cannot walk there, whether that is because of distance, the safety of the route, or their special educational needs or disability. In London, local authorities do not need to provide free home to school transport for children who are able to travel for free on Transport for London (TfL) services.

On 15 May, the Government announced that, as part of a £1.6 billion funding package to protect TfL services, free travel for under 18s will be temporarily suspended. This will help reduce the risk of crowding on transport at busy times by encouraging those who can to walk or cycle instead. As part of the deal, arrangements will be put in place to ensure that children eligible for free home to school transport can still travel to school for free. The cost of this will not fall on London boroughs.

The Department for Transport has published guidance for the public on safer travel during the COVID-19 outbreak. Parents and children may wish to refer to this when planning their journeys to school. The guidance is available here:

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers.

■ Children: Coronavirus**Alex Cunningham:** [\[51944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans he has to ensure that local authority children's services are adequately funded to prepare for a potential increase in referrals after lockdown restrictions are eased after the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Cunningham: [\[51947\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the analysis by The Children's Society, Barnardo's, Action for Children, NSPCC and the National Children's Bureau, published on 18 May 2020, what steps he is taking to ensure that local authority children's services are adequately prepared for a potential spike in referrals after the covid-19 lockdown is lifted.

Vicky Ford:

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has provided over £3.2 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures including on children's services. We will keep this under very close review over the coming weeks and months.

The department has set up dedicated regional teams that are in frequent contact with local authorities. Bringing together expertise from across the department, these teams monitor the challenges local authorities are facing and can provide support and guidance where appropriate. To assist in this, Ofsted has suspended routine inspections of children's care services and only urgent inspections for specific concerns will go ahead so that children's safety is prioritised. Ofsted inspectors have been deployed to support our regional teams and local authorities to provide their expertise.

We have recently set up a fortnightly data collection from local authorities to capture timely intelligence on referrals. This will allow the department to support local authorities to respond to any changes as the COVID-19 lockdown is lifted.

The department has committed over £100 million to support access to social care services and remote education, including by providing laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to vulnerable and disadvantaged children. We are also in continual discussions with charities on the support they provide and currently need. We have committed additional funding worth £26.4 million directly to support them, including £1.6 million to expand NSPCC's helpline.

We are working closely with local authorities to ensure workforce capacity is sufficient to cope with any potential spike in referrals. This includes weekly discussions between the Chief Social Worker and practice leaders.

Through emergency legislation and with Social Work England, we have reinstated the professional registration of 8,000 former social workers so that they can re-join the profession, providing additional resource where it is required.

We have also developed The Social Work Together online tool in partnership with Social Work England and the Local Government Association, so those social workers who have registered are available to support their local community if needed.

■ Children: Day Care

Rachael Maskell:

[\[49048\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will put in place additional childcare support for parents when care provided (a) by grandparents and (b) under other informal settings is unavailable as a result of shielding.

Vicky Ford:

During the period of partial closures, the government asked schools, early years settings and childminders to remain open for children of critical workers, as well as children who are vulnerable.

As my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, has set out, employers should take into account employees' access to childcare when making arrangements for any return to work.

As of 13 May, childminders can choose to look after the children of one household if they are not already looking after vulnerable children or those of critical workers.

From 1 June, schools and early years settings opened more widely – allowing more children to attend and more parents to return to work. This includes childminders, who will be able to look after children of all ages, in line with their current Ofsted registration, and within usual limits on the number of children they can care for.

Out-of-school settings will not be allowed to reopen, but wraparound childcare can operate on school premises for children currently eligible to attend that school (in nursery, reception, year 1, year 6 or priority groups). Any such provision which does open from 1 June should ensure they are following the same protective measures being taken by schools during the day, and work with schools to follow their arrangements, such as implementing social distancing or keeping children in the same small consistent groups that they are in during the school day.

■ Children: Social Services

Alex Cunningham:

[\[51945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to incentivise local authority children's services to allocate additional funding to early intervention services.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[51948\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the analysis published on 18 May 2020 by The Children's Society, Barnardo's, Action for Children, NSPCC and the National Children's Bureau, if he will take steps to incentivise local authority children's services to invest in early intervention services.

Vicky Ford:

Early help plays an important role in promoting safe and stable families. It is about supporting and intervening with the right families, at the right time, and, most importantly, in the right way. It is right that local authorities are free to decide how to use their children's social care budget to manage local priorities and deliver the best services for children. The statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children is clear that local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early.

The government has provided over £3.2 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures. We will keep this under very close review over the coming weeks and months. The government also announced at the Local Government Finance Settlement that English councils' core spending power is rising by over £2.9 billion this financial year. This includes £1 billion of new grant funding that can be used flexibly by local authorities to deliver adult and children's social care services, including early intervention services. Longer term funding considerations are a matter for the next spending review.

■ **Curriculum****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has held discussions with representatives from Ofsted on the introduction of an academic recovery curriculum for the next academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The Secretary of State meets regularly with HM Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, to discuss a wide range of matters including the school curriculum. The Department for Education and Ofsted continue to work in partnership to understand the impact of COVID-19 on schools, and what steps will be needed to support schools over the coming months.

■ **Department for Education: Consultants****Layla Moran:**[\[49816\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the cost to the public purse was of consultants advising his Department in each financial year from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

Nick Gibb:

The Department's consultancy expenditure is presented in the table below by each financial year as requested from 2017 to 2020.

	DFE CONSULTANCY EXPENDITURE	2016-17	2017-2018- 18 19	
£M	£M	£M		
Department	6.0	9.0	12.0	

	DFE CONSULTANCY EXPENDITURE		2017-2018-19	
		2016-17	18	19
Agencies	0.1	0.4	1.1	
Non-departmental public bodies	6.0	5.2	-	
Total	12.1	14.6	13.1	

Expenditure for financial year 2020/21 has not been included as the financial year commenced as of 1 April 2020 and this information has not been released in the public domain. For financial year 19/20 the Department has not published the annual accounts and is waiting sign off and audit approval to release the data. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic an extension for the submission of annual accounts has been applied across Government Departments.

■ Department for Education: Correspondence

Marion Fellows:

[\[49734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has a target of responding within 18 working days where a response is required. In 2019 the Department responded to 94% of correspondence from hon. Members within 18 working days, and 89% in 2018. A breakdown of the data by month is available in the attached table.

As you will understand, the Department is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. The Department ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised wherever possible, and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

Attachments:

1. 49734 Table [49734_Correspondence_timeliness_statistics.xls]

■ Education: Coronavirus

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[51795\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to tackle unequal access to education as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

Schools are continuing to receive additional funding in the form of the pupil premium – worth around £2.4 billion annually – to help them support their disadvantaged pupils. This includes those who have been in receipt of free school meals at any point in the last six years, and looked after and previously looked after children.

The government has also committed over £100 million to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children in England to access remote education, including by providing laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers. The department has ordered over 200,000 laptops and tablets for vulnerable and disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access and are preparing for examination in Year 10, receiving support from a social worker or are a care leaver.

We are providing over 50,000 4G wireless routers to disadvantaged children with a social worker in secondary school, care leavers and children in Year 10 who do not have access to a suitable internet connection through other means. We are also working with the country's major telecommunications providers to make it easier for children in vulnerable and disadvantaged families, who are relying on mobile data, to access online educational resources.

To support the hard work of schools in delivering remote education, 40 teachers have come together to develop the brand-new Oak National Academy, launched at the start of the summer term. The Oak Academy provides 180 video lessons for free each week, across a broad range of subjects, for every year group from Reception through to Year 10. Education resources are also available offline. Children will be able to draw on support from the BBC, which is broadcasting lessons on television, and may choose to access the many hard copy resources offers which have been produced by publishers across the country.

We recognise that, for some children, there will be a need for additional support where they have not been able to learn in the same way that we would have expected this term. We are working with a range of partners, including the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), to establish how schools can best help their pupils – including those from disadvantaged backgrounds – to make up lost ground. In particular, we are very supportive of the work being taken forward by the EEF and other organisations to pilot online tutoring for disadvantaged pupils during the summer term.

■ Foster Care: Coronavirus**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:**[\[53444\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that foster carers who have had to shield during the covid-19 outbreak are financially supported until they can return to fostering.

Vicky Ford:

The government has provided over £3.2 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures, including within children's social care. We will keep this under very close review over the coming weeks and months.

We are continuing to work with fostering services and sector organisations to better understand the specific challenges that foster carers are facing, including those who have had to shield during the COVID-19 outbreak. We know that local authorities and fostering agencies are responding to the challenge by finding innovative ways to continue to support their foster carers.

We want to ensure that the right level of support is put in place to keep foster families together, retain capacity and provide stability for children in foster care. This includes working closely with Fosterline, an independent advice and support line funded by the department, to consider what additional support can be offered to foster families struggling at this time.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:[\[53445\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that (a) the fostering workforce and (b) retention levels in that workforce are supported during and after the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

It is vital that we continue to support foster families both during and after the COVID-19 outbreak, to keep them together and continue to provide safety and stability for vulnerable children. We understand the pressures that foster families have been under during this difficult time and our priority has been to protect foster carers.

We have ensured that foster carers are able to request personal protective equipment should they need it from their local authorities and that children in foster care are eligible to receive free IT devices and equipment to support their education.

In addition, the government has provided a national scheme to offer supermarket vouchers, worth £15 a week, to families of children who receive benefits-related free school meals. This is to cover the cost of meals for children who are currently unable to attend school.

The department continues to fund Fosterline, an independent advice service for current and prospective foster carers, to provide impartial and free-to-access support. We are working closely with sector organisations and fostering services to better understand the challenges currently faced by foster families, and the ways in which the needs of these families can be met going forward. We also want to support fostering services to build capacity to ensure that we have enough of the right carers in the right places as we emerge from the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Free School Meals: Coronavirus**Daniel Zeichner:****[49712]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether children who receive school meal vouchers will continue to be entitled to those vouchers if they do not return to school during the proposed partial reopening of schools during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

During this period of partial school closures, we are asking schools to support children at home who are eligible for and claiming benefits-related free school meals, by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. We know that many schools are successfully delivering food parcels or arranging food collections for eligible children, and we encourage this approach where it is possible.

As schools prepare to open more widely, they should speak to their school catering team or provider about the best arrangements for school meals. Schools should ensure that catering teams and food suppliers are supported to return to school to provide meals both for those children attending school and for those remaining at home who are eligible for free school meals. If a school catering service cannot provide meals or food parcels for children who are at home, the school can continue to offer vouchers to families of eligible pupils if needed.

Our guidance on free school meals during this period is available here:

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

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

Daniel Zeichner:**[49713]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reason schools that are able to reclaim the costs of making alternative arrangements to the National Voucher Scheme to provide free school meal vouchers are required to draw on the Emergency Fund that is capped dependent on the size of the school; and whether he plans to allocate additional funding to schools where the costs of (a) free school meal vouchers and (b) other covid-related emergency costs exceed the limit placed on their Emergency Funds.

Vicky Ford:

We are providing additional funding to schools, on top of their existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak that cannot be met from their existing resources. The fund is targeted towards the costs we have identified as the biggest barrier to schools during the period of partial closure, including providing free school meals to eligible children who are not in school where the national voucher scheme is not appropriate.

As this funding relates to several categories of exceptional costs that schools may face it is reasonable to limit the overall amount that each individual school can claim for all of these costs together to make sure public funding is spent appropriately.

Where schools have exceptional circumstances, we will consider extending limits on a case by case basis. This is set out in the guidance on the fund. We will continue to review the scope of the fund and the overall support available as the COVID-19 outbreak develops.

■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

Layla Moran:

[\[49814\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to include (a) Iceland and (b) Lidl in the Edenred free school meals voucher scheme.

Vicky Ford:

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

The national voucher scheme for free school meals currently includes a variety of supermarkets. Initially, the scheme included supermarkets that already have e-gift card arrangements in place with our supplier, Edenred, including Asda, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Morrisons, M&S and Waitrose. On Monday 27 April we added Aldi to this list and on Wednesday 29 April we added McColl's. We have been working with other supermarkets to encourage them to join. Any additional supermarkets would need to have the right infrastructure to deliver e-gift cards across their network of stores.

Schools are best placed to make decisions about the most appropriate free school meal arrangements for eligible pupils during this period. In the first instance, we are asking schools to speak to their catering teams and food suppliers about preparing meals or food parcels that could be collected by or delivered to families that are not in attendance. Where this is not possible, schools can use the national voucher scheme or make alternative voucher arrangements locally. Our guidance for schools sets out that they can be reimbursed for costs incurred where the national voucher scheme is not suitable for their families and this can include alternative voucher arrangements with supermarkets that are not part of the national voucher scheme.

Kate Osborne:

[\[53645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether free school meal vouchers will still be sent to parents and carers who decide to not send their child back to school as covid-19 lockdown restrictions as eased.

Vicky Ford:

As schools open more widely, and their kitchens reopen, we expect schools to make food parcels available for collection or delivery for any children that are eligible for free school meals who are staying at home.

Arranging food parcels helps ensure that eligible children have access to a healthy free meal and can also help the school to stay in contact with those families. We

know that many schools have made excellent food parcel arrangements throughout this period.

If a school cannot provide meals or food parcels for children who are at home, they can continue to offer vouchers to families of eligible pupils.

Our guidance on free school meals during this period is available here:

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

■ Higher Education: Foreign Students

Carol Monaghan:

[53482]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of changes in the level of international students numbers on the higher education sector.

Michelle Donelan:

In the 2018/19 academic year, tuition fees from international students at UK higher education providers accounted for around £7 billion of sector income. The government recognises that the COVID-19 outbreak will have an unparalleled impact on all elements of the global and UK economy. The higher education sector, including student recruitment, is no exception. We have been working closely with the sector to monitor the likely impacts of COVID-19 on international student numbers, including restrictions on travel. We understand that the COVID-19 outbreak and a possible reduction in the number of international students poses significant challenges and we stand ready to help the sector with various mitigations.

The government is working to ensure that existing rules and regulations, including visa regulations, are as flexible as possible for international students under these unprecedented circumstances. Higher education providers will also be flexible in accommodating applicants' circumstances where possible, including if applicants are unable to travel to the UK in time for the start of the academic year.

On Monday 4 May, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced the package of measures to stabilise university admissions this autumn and ensure sustainability in higher education at a time of unprecedented uncertainty. I wrote to all hon. Members on 4 May with full details of the package, which have also been published on GOV.UK: www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students.

The new graduate route, due to be launched in summer 2021, provides an opportunity for international students who have been awarded their degree to stay and work in the UK at any skill level for 2 years. This represents a significant improvement in our offer to international students and will help to ensure that our world-leading higher education sector remains competitive internationally.

On Friday 5 June, the Department for Education announced Sir Steve Smith as the International Education Champion, a key deliverable of the 2019 International

Education Strategy. Sir Steve will assist with opening up export growth opportunities for the whole UK education sector, tackling international challenges such as those posed to attracting international students and forging lasting global connections. The International Education Strategy, published in March 2019 by the Department for Education and the Department for International Trade, set out a commitment to review progress following its publication. The review, which we intend to publish this autumn, will ensure that the International Education Strategy responds to this new context and the challenges that are posed.

■ Higher Education: Students

Dan Jarvis:

[\[53437\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has issued to universities on support for students who are due to begin their studies in the 2020-21 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

We expect universities to be open for the autumn term and for them to offer a blend of online teaching and in-person tuition as they consider appropriate, while taking account of the need to minimise the risk to staff and students.

We have now published guidance for higher education providers on reopening campuses and buildings. This will support them in deciding when and how they can make facilities accessible again to students and staff, as long as they follow the relevant public health advice, available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>.

■ Home Education: Disadvantaged

Olivia Blake:

[\[53670\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much of the funding allocated for digital devices, to help support home learning of disadvantaged students, has been spent.

Nick Gibb:

The Government has committed over £100 million to help schools and young people continue their education at home and access online social care services. We have committed over £14 million on technical support to give schools access to cloud-based education platforms, nearly £6 million to support a new EdTech demonstrator school network, and over £85 million to provide laptops, tablets and 4G internet devices, including security and e-safety packages and their distribution, and to top up the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund.

■ National Skills Fund

Cat Smith:

[\[52146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his oral contribution of 20 May 2020 (Volume 676 Column 574) on the new national skills fund worth £2.5 billion to

support young people during the pandemic, what additional objectives have been allocated to the fund since it was announced in the Queens Speech.

Gillian Keegan:

Over the course of this Parliament, the government are providing £2.5 billion (£3 billion when including Barnett funding for devolved administrations) for a new National Skills Fund to help adults learn new skills and prepare for the economy of the future.

The National Skills Fund will re-energise the adult skills landscape and help to ensure that businesses can find and hire the workers they need and help people fulfil their potential.

Work is progressing to develop detailed plans for the National Skills Fund, and a consultation will be launched at a time when all those who have an interest will be better able to engage actively in it. We will continue to engage closely with users, employers and stakeholders throughout the process, before setting out more detailed plans after the consultation.

The insights gained will help to build an understanding of how best to target the fund and which groups will benefit and what types of training it should cover, to ensure we can provide the best return on investment.

■ **Private Education: Coronavirus**

Kate Osamor:

[\[49784\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department is taking steps to encourage independent schools to reopen on 1 June 2020.

Nick Gibb:

As a result of the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the transmission rate of COVID-19 has decreased and the Government's five tests have been met. Based on all the evidence, the Department asked primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups (vulnerable children and children of critical workers), from 1 June. From 15 June, secondary schools can invite year 10 and 12 pupils (years 10 and 11 for alternative provision schools) back into school for some face-to-face support with their teachers, to supplement their remote education, which will remain the predominant mode of education for these pupils this term. Priority groups can continue to attend full-time.

To support schools the Department has published guidance on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020#year-groups-in-first-phase-of-wider-opening>.

The guidance makes clear that we expect all mainstream schools, including independent schools, to follow the same approach.

Both officials and ministers are in frequent contact with the Independent Schools Council about the wider opening of schools.

■ Pupils: Digital Technology

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[53384\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he plans to take to tackle the digital divide between pupils from poorer and wealthier backgrounds.

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 wireless routers. The Department has ordered over 200,000 laptops and tablets for vulnerable and 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.

We are providing over 50,000 4G wireless routers to disadvantaged children with a social worker in secondary school, care leavers and children in Year 10 who do not have access to a suitable internet connection through other means. We are also working with the country's major telecommunication companies to make it easier for children in vulnerable and disadvantaged families, who are relying on mobile data, to access online educational resources.

■ Pupils: ICT

Emma Hardy:

[\[52388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to his Department's guidance, Get technology support for children and schools during coronavirus (COVID-19), how many pupils in England had received either a laptop or a dongle directly from his Department before the start of half term on 22 May 2020.

Nick Gibb:

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

Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and disadvantaged children in Year 10 do not have internet connections, we are providing 4G wireless routers to them so that they can learn at home.

Local authorities and academy trusts are best placed to identify and distribute the laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to children and young people who need them. The Department has invited local authorities to order devices for the most vulnerable children first - children with a social worker and care leavers.

To date, the Department has delivered nearly 50,000 devices and 10,000 4G wireless routers to local authorities distribute to eligible children. Deliveries will continue throughout June.

■ Schools: Ancillary Staff

Sarah Champion: [\[54116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will issue national guidance on payments to (a) exam invigilators and (b) other school ancillary staff employed on zero hour contracts who have not been offered any work hours during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

It is for schools and local authorities to make appropriate decisions to protect the interests of their staff and workers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Government's Procurement Policy Notice 02/20 sets out information and guidance for contracting authorities, including schools, to consider before making individual decisions regarding payment of their suppliers. The guidance sets out that, under certain circumstances, public bodies can make payments of 80% of previously agreed rates to suppliers and contingent workers.

The Department is not involved in arrangements between suppliers and schools. We encourage schools to follow the guidance, but the guidance is advisory and does not mandate or prescribe what schools should do in individual circumstances.

This guidance can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19>

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Daniel Zeichner: [\[49022\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with his counterparts in other countries on best practices on the reopening of schools during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nick Gibb:

We want to get all children and young people back into education as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers, carers and teachers.

As a result of the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the transmission rate of COVID-19 has decreased and the Government's five tests have been met. Based on all the evidence, the Department asked primary schools to welcome back children in nursery, Reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside priority groups (vulnerable children and children of critical workers), from 1 June. From 15 June, secondary schools can invite year 10 and 12 pupils (years 10 and 11 for alternative provision schools) back into school for some face-to-face support with

their teachers, to supplement their remote education, which will remain the predominant mode of education for these pupils this term. Priority groups can continue to attend full-time.

Our approach is in line with other countries across Europe. Schools in countries such as Germany, Denmark and France have opened to more pupils using a similar phased approach and we will continue to watch their progress closely. Official level discussions are continuing to take place with counterparts in other countries on all aspects of the education response to the outbreak.

However, each country will make their own decisions based on a range of local information, including infection rates and the structure of their education system.

Rachael Maskell:

[49050]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional funding his Department has allocated to the deep cleaning of schools as a result of covid-19.

Nick Gibb:

Schools will continue to receive their budgets for the coming year as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure. That will ensure that they are able to continue to meet their regular financial commitments.

We are also providing additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak that cannot be met from their existing resources. The fund is targeted towards the costs we have identified as the biggest barrier to schools during the period of partial closure and includes additional cleaning costs required due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements.

Schools can claim up to a maximum amount that will depend on their size and will be no more than £75,000 per school. The total amount of funding we provide for additional cleaning will depend on the individual claims made by schools.

Guidance on this additional funding is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-schools/school-funding-exceptional-costs-associated-with-coronavirus-covid-19-for-the-period-march-to-july-2020>.

Neil Coyle:

[53454]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has plans to reimburse schools in Southwark for additional costs resulting from the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

Schools will continue to receive their budgets for the coming year, as usual, regardless of any periods of partial or complete closure.

We are providing additional funding to schools, on top of existing budgets, to cover unavoidable costs incurred due to the COVID-19 outbreak that cannot be met from their existing resources.

Schools, including those in Southwark, are eligible to claim for increased premises related costs associated with keeping schools open over the Easter and summer half term holidays; support for free school meals for eligible children who are not in school, where schools are not using the national voucher scheme; and additional cleaning costs required due to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, over and above the cost of existing cleaning arrangements.

Further information on this funding can be found here:

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

■ Schools: Southwark

Neil Coyle: **[53456]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what resources his Department has allocated to schools in Southwark to help ensure that pupils are aware that their school schedules may have changed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department for Education has published a planning guide for primary schools to help them prepare for wider opening:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools>

This makes clear that schools should communicate with parents to make sure they know whether their child will be able to attend school, and what they need to do with respect to taking their child to school and picking them up.

We have published guidance for secondary schools on how to welcome back students from year 10 and year 12 from 15 June:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june/planning-guide-for-secondary-schools>

The Department has also published advice to schools on communicating online with parents, carers, and pupils:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19#communicating-with-parents-carers-and-pupils>

■ Schools: Standards

Theresa Villiers: **[53325]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will take steps to ensure that the partial re-opening of schools in England from 1 June 2020 does not lead to a reduction of school hours offered to the children of key workers.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has provided guidance explaining that the children of any parent who works in a critical sector or are critical to the COVID-19 response will be prioritised for education provision regardless of the year group they are in:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

It makes clear that, now that we have made progress in reducing the transmission of COVID-19, we are encouraging all eligible children to attend school (where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household), even if parents are able to keep their children at home.

The Department has also published guidance for schools to prepare for wider opening of schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from-1-june>

The planning guide for primary schools explains that if schools cannot reach an arrangement that enables all eligible children to attend consistently, schools should focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups of all year groups (children of critical workers and vulnerable children).

The advice to secondary schools on preparing for wider opening from the 15 June states that children of critical workers and vulnerable children in all year groups should be encouraged to attend school full-time.

■ Schools: Transport**Rachael Maskell:****[49049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the adequacy of (a) safety and (b) provision of school transport when the schools reopen after the lockdown.

Nick Gibb:

Local authorities continue to be required to provide free home to school transport for eligible pupils that are able to attend school. They should work with schools, bus companies and other transport operators to put in place arrangements which fit local circumstances and minimise the risk of transmission. This should include making sure transport operators follow hygiene rules. They should refer to the Department for Transport's guidance for transport operators and the public here:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-transport-and-travel-guidance#walking,-cycling,-driving-and-travelling-by-public-transport.

The phased wider opening of schools will initially limit the number of children travelling home on school transport. Where transport capacity allows, local authorities could consider substituting smaller vehicles with larger ones, or running two vehicles rather than one, to reduce the number of passengers per vehicle and help

passengers keep their distance. Further information is available in the Department for Education's guidance on implementing protective measures:

<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>.

We are working closely with local authorities to help ensure they can put in place arrangements to suit their local area.

■ Sixth Form Education: Admissions

Neil O'Brien:

[53617]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many upper sixth form students there were in (a) state and (b) independent schools in each year since 1990.

Gillian Keegan:

The table below contains the number of 17 year olds in full/part-time education in either state-funded or independent schools in England. The estimates relate to a snapshot of activities at the end of the calendar year, and are based on academic age, defined as 'age at the start of the academic year' i.e. age as at 31 August. The latest figures available are for the end of 2018.

Participation in full/ part-time education of 17 year olds by institution type, England, 1990 onwards:[1]

END OF CALENDAR YEAR	ALL STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS[2]
end 1990	96,700	33,400
end 1991	101,800	33,500
end 1992	105,500	33,600
end 1993	106,500	33,200
end 1994 (a)[3]	108,000	33,400
end 1994 (b)	108,800	32,600
end 1995	112,600	33,400
end 1996	123,800	34,900
end 1997	131,200	34,900
end 1998	132,900	34,600
end 1999	134,300	33,400
end 2000	138,900	33,500

END OF CALENDAR YEAR	ALL STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS	INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS[2]
end 2001[4]	135,200	33,700
end 2002	139,600	34,900
end 2003	142,900	35,300
end 2004	147,300	34,600
end 2005	153,600	36,200
end 2006	153,600	35,500
end 2007	159,000	37,100
end 2008	164,100	37,800
end 2009	175,300	39,000
end 2010	177,400	38,200
end 2011	180,800	39,400
end 2012	183,200	39,200
end 2013	184,800	39,300
end 2014	190,700	40,500
end 2015	189,500	40,600
end 2016	190,900	40,900
end 2017	197,400	40,300
end 2018 (prov)	202,700	40,000

This data is published in the National Statistics release 'Participation in education, training and employment: 2018' in table B4 of the 'Additional tables – numbers: participation and NEET 2018', available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810822/16-)

[ent_data/file/810822/16-18_participation_and_NEET_statistics_additional_tables_numbers .xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810822/16-18_participation_and_NEET_statistics_additional_tables_numbers.xlsx). In the publication the school numbers are sourced from the annual School Census.

[1] Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.

[2] Includes all pupils in independent schools and independent special schools.

[3]The break in time series (1994) is due to changes in the source of further and higher education data.

[4]Pre 2001, includes all pupils in maintained/non-maintained special schools and pupil referral units. From 2001, these are reported under 'Special Schools' and are not included in the figures presented.

■ Universities: Scotland

Carol Monaghan: [\[53480\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions the Government had the Scottish Government on the policy to limit the number of English-domiciled students studying at Scottish universities prior to the announcement of that policy on 1 June 2020.

Michelle Donelan:

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I have regular meetings with Scottish ministers, and ministers from all the devolved administrations, about higher education issues. Meetings have included discussions on the development of student number controls policy.

Officials in the department also have regular meetings and discussions with their counterparts. Following the COVID-19 outbreak, we will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations on strengthening and stabilising the higher education system.

Student number controls for institutions in the devolved administrations only apply to the number of English-domiciled entrants who will be supported with their tuition fees through the Student Loans Company. The funding of English-domiciled students is not a devolved matter, and it is right and fair that this policy should apply consistently wherever they are studying in the UK.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Agriculture: Subsidies

Mr Richard Holden: [\[49871\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will assess the potential merits of delaying the roll-out of Environmental Land Management Scheme as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government remains committed to developing a new agricultural policy now we have left the EU. This includes moving to a system that rewards farmers and land managers for delivering public goods with public money, while ensuring we can continue to produce food in an environmentally sustainable way. The new scheme will be launched in England in 2024 and will be tested and refined through a National Pilot which will begin in 2021.

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[49872\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what contingency plans his Department has made for supporting farming in the event of potential disruption at the end of the transition period.

Victoria Prentis:

The Agriculture Bill provides powers for the Government to act in a crisis related to severe market disturbance.

As we are doing now, we will be closely monitoring all agricultural sectors. We have developed the UK Agricultural Market Monitoring Group which is meeting in shadow form during the transition period. This allows officials in Defra and the Devolved Administrations to monitor UK agricultural markets, to share the latest stakeholder information and to provide warning of atypical market movements. This will help prepare the evidence base for the cause and possible range of interventions that may be needed in specific markets.

It is in everyone's interests to secure a good trade deal with the EU and that is exactly what the Government is committed to doing.

Selaine Saxby:

[\[52626\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ensure that opportunities to improve access to the natural environment are included in the Environmental Land Management scheme.

Victoria Prentis:

Our Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme is the cornerstone of our new agricultural policy. Founded on the principle of "public money for public goods", ELM 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.

Farmers and other land managers may enter into agreements to be paid for delivering the following public goods:

- clean air
- clean and plentiful water
- thriving plants and wildlife
- reduction in and protection from environmental hazards
- beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment
- mitigation of and adaptation to climate change

Beauty, heritage and engagement with the environment is a public good identified in the 25 Year Environment Plan and an important objective of ELM. ELM could support this through providing funding for access to infrastructure or educational visits, for example.

We will engage with a range of stakeholders as we develop the scheme.

■ Agriculture: Trade Agreements

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[53390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on British farmers of any prospective UK-USA trade deal.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK seeks an ambitious and comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States (US) that strengthens the economic relationship with our largest bilateral trading partner, promoting increased trade in goods and services and greater cross-border investment.

An FTA with the US offers significant opportunities throughout the economy, including in agriculture. In a UK-US FTA, we will seek to reduce or remove tariffs for UK exports, making them more competitive in the US market.

British consumers want high-welfare produce – and if our trading partners want to break into the UK market, they should expect to meet those standards. This Government stood on a clear manifesto commitment that in all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards. The Government will stand firm in trade negotiations to ensure any deals live up to the values of our farmers and consumers.

All food coming into this country will be required to meet existing import requirements. At the end of the transition period the Withdrawal Act will convert all EU standards into domestic law. These include a ban on using artificial growth hormones in both domestic and imported products. Nothing apart from potable water may be used to clean chicken carcasses. Any changes to these standards would have to come before Parliament.

We have a rigorous and extensive programme of analytical work to understand how best to deliver the best possible deal for UK farmers, consumers and producers from future Free Trade Agreements (including that with the US).

■ Angling

Scott Mann:

[\[52261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Sea Angling Survey will be published for 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The annual UK Sea Angling Survey for 2020 is underway. The final report will be published in summer 2021.

■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Correspondence

Marion Fellows: [\[49740\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years..

Victoria Prentis:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, Defra has a target of responding 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. Defra ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

■ Dogs: Imports

Kenny MacAskill: [\[52515\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 21 May 2020 to Question 46162 on Dogs: Imports, how many Intra-Trade Animal Health Certificates were issued for dogs entering the UK in each month from February 2019 to May 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) is a European Commission system employed by EU member states to facilitate and record animal and animal product movements into and throughout the EU.

The below data regarding the number of Intra-Trade Animals Health Certificates (ITAHCs) issued for dogs entering the UK was extracted from TRACES.

MONTH	ITAHCS ISSUED
Feb-19	2037
Mar-19	2393
Apr-19	1895
May-19	2244
Jun-19	1929
Jul-19	2081
Aug-19	1954

MONTH	ITAHCS ISSUED
Sep-19	2623
Oct-19	3244
Nov-19	2287
Dec-19	2025
Jan-20	2580
Feb-20	2373
Mar-20	1321
Apr-20	660
May-20	3220

■ Dogs: Pet Travel Scheme

Kenny MacAskill: [\[52516\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many dogs have entered the UK under the Pet Travel Scheme in each month between January 2020 and May 2020.

Victoria Prentis:

The data regarding the Pet Travel Scheme covers pets entering Great Britain and is based on information provided by checkers employed by approved carriers of pet animals.

The number of dogs entering Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme from January 2020 to April 2020 is as follows.

Jan-20: 22,454

Feb-20: 12,160

Mar-20: 13,233

Apr-20: 1,546

Data for dogs entering Great Britain under the Pet Travel Scheme in May 2020 is not yet available. This is because checkers are not required to submit their throughput returns to the Animal and Plant Health Agency until the end of the following month.

■ Fishing Catches

Theresa Villiers: [\[51700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what conclusions have been issued by the joint working party on reforming the rules on fish discards

referred to on page 32 of the 2018 White Paper on Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government remains fully committed to ending the wasteful discarding of fish and working closely with the UK fishing industry and other stakeholders to address this issue.

Since publishing the 2018 Fisheries White Paper, Defra has held a number of workshops with industry and other stakeholders, including NGOs, on how the rules on fish discards can be reformed so that they are tailored to our industry and our marine environment. This engagement will continue throughout the development of our future policy.

■ **Food Supply**

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[49870\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to formally recognise food security as a public good.

Victoria Prentis:

Food security is not deemed to be a public good that necessitates public provision. A public good refers to a good or service that when consumed does not reduce its availability to others, and of which no one can be deprived.

The resilience of food supply lies with the food industry. The Government's role is to regulate and support the industry, including on contingency planning and in the event of an incident that has the potential to disrupt supply.

We are including a new requirement in the Agriculture Bill for the UK Government to report on food security to Parliament at least once every five years, demonstrating the importance we place on this subject. The report will contain information on food supply including the role of strong domestic production alongside diverse sources of supply.

■ **Food: Coronavirus**

Kate Osborne:

[\[53646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether food parcels will continue for people who have shielding status as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Victoria Prentis:

Whilst the Government's existing advice on shielding remains in place, we are committed to providing a range of support to individuals who need to shield so that they can access the essential supplies they need.

■ Food: Northern Ireland**Theresa Villiers:** [\[51686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to paragraph 33 of CP226 The UK's Approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol, what steps he plans to take to ensure document and inspection requirements are not onerous in relation to the movement of lorries with mixed loads consisting of various different food products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is working to consider options to facilitate the movement of mixed loads. We will inform industry later this year about actions they need to take to ensure they can continue trading after the transition period has ended.

Theresa Villiers: [\[51688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to paragraph 33 of The UK's Approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol, published May 2020, what steps he is taking to ensure that there will be an adequate number of vets available to sign off the export health certificates which might be required for the shipment of food from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

Our aim has been to support the market in meeting likely demand for Certifying Officers to certify export health certificates. We provided funding for training of veterinarians to become Official Veterinarians (OVs) which enables them to certify exports of products of animal origin. In addition, we have created a Certification Support Officer role freeing up certifier time and increasing capacity. As of May 2020 1,217 OVs have completed this training.

■ Giant Hogweed: Health Hazards**Sir Greg Knight:** [\[51620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice he is giving to local authorities, members of the public and others on the risk to health posed by giant hogweed; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is an invasive non-native species with established populations in the UK. If the sap of giant hogweed comes into contact with human skin it causes blistering if exposed to sunlight. This toxic sap complicates eradication efforts.

Giant hogweed is listed in England and Wales, under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 (the Order). As such, it must not be imported, kept, bred, transported, sold, used or exchanged, allowed to reproduce, grown, cultivated, or released into the environment. Under the Order, the Government has recently published a set of management measures for widespread

listed species and advises the control and safe removal of giant hogweed, where possible.

Local Authorities may use Community Protection Notices made under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to tackle the impact to their communities of invasive non-native species including giant hogweed. The Home Office guidance on using community protection notices to tackle invasive non-native plants can be found at:

www.nonnativespecies.org/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1176.

Local Action Groups, with support from the Government, are actively involved in reducing and eradicating giant hogweed. They are supported by a project led by the Animal and Plant Health Agency which has published a good practice management guide for giant hogweed that provides health and safety advice relevant to the species. The guidance can be found by following the link below.

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?pageid=624>

■ Horticulture: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[49583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the financial challenges facing ornamental horticulture commercial growers.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[49584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to provide a specific stock grant aid fund for commercial ornamental horticulture growers.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[49585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a scheme similar to the ornamental horticulture grant aid scheme provided for growers in the Netherlands by the Dutch Government.

Victoria Prentis:

Coronavirus represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy, including the ornamental horticulture sector. A vibrant and successful ornamental horticulture sector brings significant benefits. The Government continues to work closely with representatives from the horticulture supply chain including the Horticultural Trades Association to understand the short-term and long-term impacts on the UK sector.

Defra has already been in close discussion with banks to ensure the ornamental horticulture sector has access to financial support. This will ease cashflow problems during this period, including through the Government-backed Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Bounce Back Loan scheme, which was

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

On 13 May, the Government announced that all garden centres in England which are able to adhere to social distancing measures were legally able to reopen. This measure has been widely welcomed by growers, garden centre owners, and consumers.

■ Inshore Fishing

Theresa Villiers:

[\[51703\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to page 27 the 2018 White Paper on Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations, what steps he has taken in response to the scientific trial of an effort system for fishing in English inshore waters.

Victoria Prentis:

In the 2018 Fisheries White Paper Defra stated that we would consider a targeted scientific trial using an effort (days at sea) based regime in place of a quota regime for some low impact inshore fisheries.

In summer 2019, Defra ran a call for evidence on developing a new approach for allocating additional fishing quota in England. This included a question on trialling effort for some low impact fisheries, to determine whether fishing can be carried out sustainably under an effort based regime.

For 2020, we will continue to work with industry and other stakeholders to develop our approach for allocating and managing any additional quota in England. This includes whether we should trial an effort based approach. We plan to consult on this later this year.

■ Office for Environmental Protection: Bristol

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[54035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made on securing appropriate premises in Bristol for the base of the Office for Environmental Protection, as recommended by the Cabinet Office Places for Growth Programme.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is committed to setting up an Office for Environmental Protection. Work is ongoing to identify suitable premises and we will take into consideration any workplace guidance requirements in light of coronavirus over the coming months.

■ Seafood

Luke Pollard:

[\[52469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps his Department plans to take to assess the effectiveness of the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme in meeting its objective to increase the supply of local seafood to domestic markets.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will shortly tender for an independent evaluation of the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme (DSSS), as well as of the Fisheries Response Fund (FRF). The evaluation will focus on both the implementation process and the impact of each intervention. The evaluation will be delivered in adherence to guidance issued by HM Treasury and a final report will be published on project completion following external peer review.

■ Seafood: Marketing

Luke Pollard:

[\[52472\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what the cost is of his Department's Sea for Yourself campaign; what the performance indicators are for that campaign; and whether an estimate has been made by his Department of the net gain to the English fishing industry of that campaign.

Victoria Prentis:

The Sea For Yourself campaign is an initiative to promote seafood species caught in UK waters delivered by Defra in partnership with Seafish. The campaign directs consumers across the UK to the Fish is the Dish (FD) website, with tips and recipes to show consumers how they can cook these species, as well as to information on online sales to help them find out where to buy local fish and shellfish.

The campaign is funded by Defra and Seafish and has a budget of £424,000. The campaign was set up to support the fishing industry and encourage people to eat/buy UK seafood. The campaign is measured by consumer awareness of seafood species caught in UK waters, visits to the FD website and visits to the online sales page on FD, along with propensity to buy UK seafood.

■ Veganism

Luke Pollard:

[\[52482\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what estimate he has made of the effect of people moving to a vegan diet on levels of carbon emissions from agriculture.

Victoria Prentis:

Defra has not made a specific assessment of the impact of a vegan diet on carbon emissions from agriculture, but our evidence shows that plant-based food products are generally less carbon intensive to produce than livestock products. However,

while food choices can have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions, well managed livestock also provide environmental benefits such as supporting biodiversity, protecting the character of the countryside and generating important income for rural communities.

Achieving the net zero target is a priority for the Government, and we are developing a range of measures through the Agriculture Bill, our future farming policy, the National Food Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Plan, all with the aim of enabling farmers to optimise sustainable food production, reduce emissions from agriculture and allow consumer choices to drive those changes.

■ Zoos: Coronavirus

Andrew Rosindell: [\[49609\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits allowing zoos to reopen with social distancing measures in place as the covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased..

Jack Lopresti: [\[49669\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether his Department plans to include zoos in the early reopening of leisure facilities in the post-covid-19 lockdown recovery plan.

Victoria Prentis:

We understand the challenges faced by zoos and aquariums during these unprecedented times. We also appreciate the significant opportunities zoos can provide for the public to access well managed and controlled outdoor spaces, and the potential to improve general wellbeing.

However, the Government has taken the decision that zoos and aquariums should not yet reopen, and the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020, which came into force on 1 June, provide greater clarity and certainty on this. While each individual attraction can be made safer, it's vital that we do not move too quickly in reopening to ensure public health is protected.

We are continuing to work with the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) to understand how we can reopen zoos in a safe way as soon as possible with social distancing measures in place.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus

Alan Brown: [\[52170\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many repatriation flights the Government has chartered to date; and what the (a) departure airport and (b) UK arrival airport was of each flight.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: .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. Since the Foreign Secretary announced £75m to support repatriation efforts on 30 March, the Government has so far delivered a programme of over 170 charter flights from where commercial options are no longer viable. These flights have brought over 35,800 people from 36 countries and territories, back to UK airports in the East Midlands, London and Manchester.

■ British Overseas Territories: Coronavirus**John Spellar:**[\[51573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to help the Overseas Territories maintain access to education during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is firmly committed to supporting the Overseas Territories (OTs) in dealing with Covid-19. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development are leading a cross Whitehall effort, working closely with the Governments of the permanently inhabited Overseas Territories, and the Minister for the Overseas Territories and Sustainable Development is in regular contact with the political leaders and Governors of the Territories to ensure support meets the individual needs of each OT.

Education is, constitutionally, the responsibility of the locally elected Territory Governments, but the UK Government is committed to supporting the Territories to handle the impact of the pandemic, including maintaining access to education.

■ China: Uighurs**Caroline Lucas:**[\[49635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to the Chinese authorities on the ongoing detention of Uyghur Muslims in the north-eastern region of Xinjiang during the covid-19 pandemic; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

On 9 March, the Foreign Secretary raised our concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the extra-judicial detention of over a million Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in "political re-education camps", with his Chinese counterpart. During the UK's 'Item 4' statement at the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council on 10 March, the UK raised concerns about systematic human rights violations and reports of forced labour in Xinjiang.

■ Colombia: Demonstrations

Fabian Hamilton: [\[51590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of protestors being killed during protests against forced eradication programmes in Colombia.

Wendy Morton:

The United Kingdom is committed to the implementation of the Peace Accords of 2016, and we remain steadfast in our support of the Colombian authorities as they seek to ensure sustainable peace in Colombia. Part of this includes direct support to the Government's voluntary crop substitution programme and to supporting state capacity to better protect community leaders involved in this work. We are aware of reports of two deaths during coca eradication operations in recent months. As we mentioned at the UN Security Council session on 13 January, we are particularly concerned about the persistent level of violence towards human rights defenders and community leaders and have called on the Colombian Government to prioritise the tackling of this violence. We have regularly raised the need for a holistic approach to improving security conditions in rural areas.

■ Colombia: Politics and Government

Fabian Hamilton: [\[51588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of progress on the rural reform chapter of the peace agreement in Colombia.

Wendy Morton:

President Duque's Government has publicly committed to implementing the Peace Accords of 2016 in their entirety, and we remain steadfast in our support of the Colombian authorities as they seek to ensure sustainable peace in Colombia. We are proud to be the penholder on the issue at the United Nations Security Council, and have committed almost £53 million over 5 years through the United Kingdom Conflict Stability and Security Fund for Colombia to support development across conflict-affected regions. We regularly raise progress in implementation of the peace agreement with the Colombian authorities, including the need to prioritise rural reform, where progress is crucial to sustainable peace. UK-funded programmes across a range of areas are helping to improve the socio-economic conditions in rural areas, particularly through the implementation of the rural development programmes (PDETS) set out in the peace accords.

Fabian Hamilton: [\[51589\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Colombian counterparts on the security of former combatants living in newly created areas outside the official reincorporation zones.

Wendy Morton:

The United Kingdom welcomes the Colombian Government's longstanding commitment to assisting former guerrilla fighters transition to civilian life following the peace agreement of 2016. We have committed almost £53 million over 5 years through the United Kingdom Conflict Stability and Security Fund for Colombia to support development across conflict-affected regions. This includes programmes designed to build state capacity to ensure the safety of former fighters and of other vulnerable individuals and groups, including outside of official reincorporation zones.

Our Embassy regularly raises concerns about specific communities with the relevant state actors in Colombia.

We also raised our concern about this issue at the United Nations Security Council session on Colombia on 14 April, where we called on the Colombian Government to accelerate its reintegration programmes for former combatants. We will continue to work closely with the Colombian Government and civil society on the peace process and related matters.

■ Falkland Islands: Coronavirus**Mark Pritchard:**[\[51770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what support the Government has provided to the Falkland Islands to tackle the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is firmly committed to supporting the Falkland Islands and all of the Overseas Territories in dealing with Covid-19. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development are leading a cross-Whitehall effort to provide bespoke support to the Territories. For the Falkland Islands specifically, the UK has procured and transported medical supplies, ventilators and oxygen generation facilities, as well as the necessary equipment to develop an on-island testing capability. This has been supported by facilitating access to UK medical expertise through Public Health England. To support the Falkland civilian population and the British military base on the islands, a military clinical team of six personnel has also been sent to the main hospital on the islands.

I am in regular contact with the political leaders of the Falkland Islands to understand the impact the virus is having on both public health and the economy, to ensure they are receiving support from the UK where needed.

Stephen Doughty:[\[52014\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Falkland Islands on the effect of the (a) covid-19 pandemic and (b) negotiations for the UK's future relationship with the EU on the (i) economy, (ii) wool industry and (iii) fishing industry in that Overseas Territory.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is firmly committed to supporting the Falkland Islands and all of the Overseas Territories in dealing with Covid-19. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development are leading a cross-Whitehall effort to provide bespoke support to the Territories. For the Falkland Islands specifically, the UK has procured and transported medical supplies, ventilators and oxygen generation facilities, as well as the necessary equipment to develop an on-island testing capability. This has been supported by facilitating access to UK medical expertise through Public Health England. To support the Falkland civilian population and the British military base on the islands, a military clinical team of six personnel has also been sent to the main hospital on the islands.

Economic management is devolved to the Falkland Island Government, who have put various measures in place to support their economy through the crisis. Fishing has been mostly unaffected thanks to the conclusion of the season before the peak of the virus, and the Falkland Island Government has offered to buy any unsold wool this year at pre-crisis prices. In addition, a local business support package has been put in place, modelled on the UK package.

I am in regular contact with the political leaders of the Falkland Islands to understand the impact the virus is having on both public health and the economy, to ensure they are receiving support from the UK where needed.

We are seeking a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU and want to have the greatest possible tariff and barrier-free trade with our European neighbours. We have been engaging closely with the Falkland Islands on their interests in these negotiations and have been representing these robustly in negotiations.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Correspondence**Marion Fellows:**[\[49731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Nigel Adams:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has a target of responding within 20 working days where a response is required.

As you will understand, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised, and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

■ Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Staff

Catherine West:

[\[52293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of his Department's work is directed at each worldwide geographical region.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The total number of staff employed by the FCO will be published in the department's annual report later this year.

The breakdown of staff working in each geographical region is set out in the table below and includes both UK based staff working in roles at home and overseas as well as Local Staff:

REGION	TOTAL
Africa	16%
Americas	10%
AsiaPacific	10%
Eastern Europe & Central Asia	4%
Europe	16%
Middle East & North Africa	11%
Multilateral	4%
Overseas Territory	1%
South Asia & Afghanistan	11%
Non-Geographical Directorates (inc Ops & cross cutting units)	18%
Total	100%

■ George Floyd

Chi Onwurah:

[\[51963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his US counterpart on the death of George Floyd.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have been clear that the death of George Floyd was appalling, inexcusable and deeply distressing. We are aware that a

suspect has been charged and there is a federal review underway. We would hope and expect justice to be done.

The violence we have seen is clearly very alarming. People must be allowed to protest peacefully - peaceful protest remains a vital part of a democratic society and we understand the strength of feeling around this issue.

■ Hong Kong: National Security

Lisa Nandy: [\[53419\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans he has to hold discussions with his counterparts in the G7 on the planned introduction of national security legislation in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary is engaging with partners across a number of likeminded groupings, including with G7 countries, in response to China's proposed national security legislation. We will continue to call on China to uphold its international obligations in respect of Hong Kong. The UK also raised the issue at the UN Security Council on Friday, alongside the US.

■ Hong Kong: Police Brutality

Lisa Nandy: [\[53420\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Hong Kong counterpart on establishing an independent, judge-led inquiry into the reports of police brutality against protesters and journalists in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

We have repeatedly called for the Hong Kong authorities to facilitate a robust inquiry into the police's behaviour, independent of the Hong Kong and Chinese Governments. Addressing police accountability remains essential for rebuilding trust in Hong Kong. The Foreign Secretary raised the need for such an inquiry with Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam at the height of the protests last year. Officials have continued to raise the issue at senior levels with the Hong Kong SAR government since then.

■ Hong Kong: Politics and Government

Lisa Nandy: [\[53421\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of establishing an international contact group in consultation with his international counterparts to monitor the political situation in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

The Foreign Secretary is engaging actively with a range of international partners to set out our position and impress on them the gravity of the events that have taken

place. We want to build up a groundswell of those who share our commitment to international law. We believe that is the most effective means of getting China to live up to its obligations and responsibilities as a leading member of the international community. We will also work within international institutions such as the UN Human Rights Council to ensure that China upholds the commitments they made as co-signatory to the Joint Declaration.

■ Hungary: LGBT People

Stephen Farry:

[\[52622\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Hungarian counterpart since legislation was passed by the Hungarian Government on 19 May 2020 that ends the legal recognition of transgender people and wider discrimination against LGBTQ citizens.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to the principle of non-discrimination on all grounds, including on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. We are concerned by the amendment to Hungary's Registry Act that was passed through by the Hungarian Parliament on 19 May, and the impact this will have on the rights of transgender people.

I raised these concerns with the Hungarian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Levente Magyar, on 30 April. Officials in our Embassy in Budapest have also discussed the amendment with senior Hungarian officials, as well as with civil society. We will continue to maintain a dialogue with Hungary, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination towards LGBT people.

■ Ilois: Coronavirus

Matt Western:

[\[53569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans his Department has to allocate funds from the £40 million package for Chagossians living in the UK to help with financial issues caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The Chagossian Support Package is discretionary Government funding to address the most pressing needs of the Chagossian community in the UK and overseas by improving access to health and social care and to improved education and employment opportunities. It is not intended to help with the immediate financial issues caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are other UK Government financial support schemes to provide assistance to businesses and individuals affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

■ Libya: Armed Conflict**Paul Girvan:** [\[52375\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help prevent an escalation of tensions in Libya and neighbouring countries.

James Cleverly:

We remain deeply concerned by the situation in Libya and the risks to wider regional stability. The UK is actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to end the conflict. We continue to call on all parties to de-escalate, commit to a lasting ceasefire and return to UN-led political talks. We welcome the recent announcement by the UN that the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army have agreed to resume talks on the framework for a ceasefire. It is essential that both sides engage fully with this process.

■ Mexico: Religious Freedom**Sir George Howarth:** [\[51597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his Mexican counterpart on freedom of religion and belief in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government continues to engage regularly with Mexican authorities at ministerial, official, and state levels to discuss human rights, including Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), and to support a broad human rights agenda in Mexico. Most recently, I discussed human rights with the Mexican Deputy Foreign Minister when he visited London on 9 March. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Mexico in August 2019, he raised human rights with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, who expressed his support for working with the UK both bilaterally and multilaterally to protect human rights. Additionally, Baroness Williams raised FoRB with the Mexican Interior Minister in September 2019.

■ Montserrat: Coronavirus**John Spellar:** [\[51574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps the Government is taking to support the Government of Montserrat on maintaining access to education during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government is firmly committed to supporting Montserrat and all of the Overseas Territories (OTs) in dealing with Covid-19. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development are leading a cross Whitehall effort, working closely with the Governments of the permanently inhabited Overseas Territories, and the Minister for the Overseas Territories and Sustainable Development is in regular contact with the political leaders and

Governors of the Territories to ensure support meets the individual needs of each OT.

Education is, constitutionally, the responsibility of the locally elected Territory Governments, but the UK Government is committed to supporting the Territories to handle the impact of the pandemic, including maintaining access to education. On Montserrat, all schools have been closed until 9th June and DFID has assisted the Government of Montserrat to ensure children from vulnerable backgrounds, particularly those undertaking examinations, are able to access remote learning services

■ **Nicaragua: Human Rights**

Catherine West:

[\[52307\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Nicaragua on the alleged abuse of human rights in that country.

Wendy Morton:

The UK remains deeply concerned by the situation in Nicaragua. The climate of repression, shrinking space for freedom of expression, restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, and reports of harassment and arbitrary detentions, represent an unacceptable degradation of human rights and democracy.

The UK has repeatedly called on the Nicaraguan Government, including at the UN Security Council and in its comments on the May 2019 Universal Periodic Review of Nicaragua, to take responsibility for ending the repression against its citizens and to cease the use of excessive force against protestors.

We strongly support the announcement of EU sanctions against six high level officials in the Ortega administration and are applying these sanctions domestically.

■ **Rami Kamil**

Sir George Howarth:

[\[51598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Egyptian counterpart on releasing prisoner of conscience Rami Kamil due to the risk of covid-19 to detainees in overcrowded prisons.

James Cleverly:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials have raised the case of Ramy Kamil with the Egyptian authorities. We also regularly raise the broad issue of prison conditions in Egypt: improving them was one of the specific recommendations we made in our intervention at Egypt's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva last year. Encouragingly, the Egyptian Government has accepted our recommendation, which we are following up. In addition, we are speaking to partners about supporting practical projects to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in prisons.

■ Saudi Arabia: Coronavirus**Sir George Howarth:** [\[51594\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the Saudi Arabian Government on releasing prisoners of conscience Raif Badawi, Ashraf Fayadh and Ahmad Al Shamri due to the risk of covid-19 posed to detainees in overcrowded prisons.

James Cleverly:

We remain concerned over the continued detention of a number of individuals in Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Secretary raised our concerns on a number of cases during his visit to Saudi Arabia on 4 and 5 March, including Raif Badawi. In response to COVID-19, Saudi Arabia temporarily released a small number of prisoners with debt-related convictions. Embassy staff visited a number of high security prisons in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam in February and March, where the facilities and prison wings appeared to be in good and clean condition. Prison services and administration appeared professional. We will continue to raise concerns about individual cases regularly.

■ Turkey: Politics and Government**Chris Stephens:** [\[53487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with reference to recent reports by the Human Rights Association of Turkey, what steps he is taking to help support democracy and the rule of law in Turkey.

Wendy Morton:

Ministers and our Ambassador to Turkey regularly emphasise to the Turkish Government the need to respect the human rights of all its citizens, and to support the rule of law. At the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of Turkey earlier this year, the UK raised our concerns about the situation in Turkey. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister responsible for human rights, has also raised our concerns with the Turkish Ambassador to the UK. We will continue to engage the Turkish Government on these important issues, as well as with civil society, and be clear in our expectation that Turkey live up to its human rights obligations, which are essential to the long-term health of Turkish democracy.

■ Ukraine: Foreign Relations**Mark Pritchard:** [\[51769\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, on what date the Political, Free Trade and Partnership Agreement between the UK and Ukraine will be signed.

Wendy Morton:

The text of the Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement between the UK and Ukraine is close to being finalised. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will then discuss with the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs arrangements to

initial and sign the agreement, taking into account the restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

■ USA: Civil Disorder

Mr David Jones: [\[53326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations his Department has made to the US Administration on the civil unrest following the death of George Floyd.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have been clear that the death of George Floyd was appalling, inexcusable and deeply distressing. We are aware that a suspect has been charged and there is a federal review underway. We would hope and expect justice to be done.

The violence we have seen is clearly very alarming. People must be allowed to protest peacefully - peaceful protest remains a vital part of a democratic society and we understand the strength of feeling around this issue.

■ USA: Demonstrations

Nadia Whittome: [\[54292\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he (a) has made and (b) plans to make representations to his US counterpart on the implications for the human rights of protestors of the deployment of military personnel in that country on policing operations of protests.

Wendy Morton:

The violence we have seen is clearly very alarming. People must be allowed to protest peacefully - peaceful protest remains a vital part of a democratic society and we understand the strength of feeling around this issue.

■ USA: Police

Rachael Maskell: [\[53490\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on (a) the murder of George Floyd and (b) the policing of citizens in the US.

Rachael Maskell: [\[53491\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his US counterpart on discriminatory policing practices against BAME people in the US; and what the outcome was of those discussions.

Wendy Morton:

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have been clear that the death of George Floyd was appalling, inexcusable and deeply distressing. We are aware that a

suspect has been charged and there is a federal review underway. We would hope and expect justice to be done.

The violence we have seen is clearly very alarming. People must be allowed to protest peacefully - peaceful protest remains a vital part of a democratic society and we understand the strength of feeling around this issue.

Nadia Whittome: [\[53675\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether he has made representations to his US counterpart on potential human rights violations by police in that country during operations to limit demonstrations; and if he will make a statement.

Wendy Morton:

The violence we have seen is clearly very alarming. Peaceful protest remains a vital part of a democratic society and people must be allowed to protest peacefully.

■ USA: Riot Control Weapons

Patrick Grady: [\[54130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the US Administration on the use of (a) tear gas, (b) riot shields and (c) rubber bullets against peaceful civilian protesters by US law enforcement agencies that were (i) produced in the UK and (ii) sold from the UK.

Wendy Morton:

Domestic security policy is a matter for the US. We are monitoring the situation in the US. The UK takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust and transparent export control regimes in the world. We examine export licences on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ Abortion

Scott Benton: [\[52568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that doctors providing medical abortion consultations via (a) video link, (b) telephone conference and (c) other electronic means will be able to certify that a woman has not passed nine weeks and six days gestation; and how that information will be recorded.

Helen Whately:

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) has issued clinical guidelines for healthcare professionals on 'Coronavirus infection and abortion care'. The guidance sets out the circumstances where women should be asked to attend a clinic for an ultra-sound scan. However, it states that "most women can determine the gestational age of their pregnancy with reasonable accuracy by last menstrual period

(LMP) alone". The RCOG guidance has recently been updated and now includes a decision aid for clinicians to use to help determine if an ultra-sound scan is required. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends in its guidance 'Abortion Care' that services should consider providing abortion assessments by phone or video call, as evidence shows that community services and telemedicine appointments improve access to abortion services.

The Schedule to the Abortion Regulations 1991 set out the forms for the purpose of certifying the opinion of a registered medical practitioner under the Act. The regulations also set out the form for notification of abortions to the Chief Medical Officer.

■ Cancer: Research

Sir John Hayes:

[\[48270\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that funding for cancer research is maintained after the transition period.

Helen Whately:

The Government is committed to ensuring the United Kingdom becomes a global science superpower and continues to collaborate with Europe on scientific research, including cancer research.

The Prime Minister has made clear that the UK is ready to consider a relationship in line with non-European Union Member State participation in Horizon Europe, provided this represents value for money and is in the UK's interest. Any agreements relating to Union programmes should contain fair terms for UK participation. This should include fair treatment of participants, a fair and appropriate financial contribution, provisions allowing for sound financial management by both parties, and appropriate governance and consultation.

As a responsible Government, we are also developing alternative schemes to support international research and innovation collaboration. This includes options to address immediate needs and work through to any future funding scenario.

■ Care Homes: Coronavirus

Derek Twigg:

[\[51591\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many care homes run by private providers have been put under advanced surveillance for Infection Protection Control since 1 April 2020 (a) by region and (b) in England.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The Department does not currently hold data on the total number of care homes run by private providers which are being monitored for infection protection control since 1 April 2020 by region and in England.

On 15 May 2020, the Government published a support package for care homes backed by a £600 million Infection Control Fund. The package sets out the steps that

are being taken to keep people in care homes safe, and support that will be brought together across national and local government to help care providers put this into practice.

As part of the care home support package, the Government has asked local authorities to carry out a daily review of the local care market and take actions immediately where necessary to support them.

This is an unprecedented global pandemic, and we will continue to work closely with the sector to keep our policies and data under review as the pandemic goes on.

Nadia Whittome:

[52640]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his press briefing on 15 May 2020 in which he referred to placing a protective ring around care homes from the start of the covid-19 outbreak, which measures implemented by the Government prior to the publication of the covid-19 social care action plan published on 16 April 2020 were part of that protective ring.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: Since the start of this outbreak we have been working closely with the sector and public health experts to put in place guidance and support for adult social care to respond to the pandemic.

On 12 March 2020 the Government announced that we were moving our COVID-19 response from the 'contain' to 'delay' phase. The following day, Public Health England published new guidance for care homes. This included action to be taken in the event of a staff member or resident displaying COVID-19 symptoms, and guidance on infection control within the home.

This guidance was updated on 2 April with the Government's 'Admissions to Care Homes guidance'. This set out further advice on infection control procedures, as well as isolation, decontamination, cleaning and protective measures for staff.

The Adult Social Care Action Plan published on 15 April set out further measures to support care homes in reducing transmission of the virus. On 15 May, we published our care home support package which recommended further measures care homes could take to minimise the risks of the virus and was backed by a £600 million Infection Control Fund.

We have made £1.3 billion funding available to the National Health Service to help patients who no longer need urgent treatment to get home from hospital safely and quickly. We have also made £3.2 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care.

■ Care Homes: Finance

Tulip Siddiq: [\[49141\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to provide financial assistance to the care sector as a result of under occupancy in care homes following the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

The Government has taken significant steps to provide financial support for public services during COVID-19, including making £3.2 billion available to local authorities so they can address pressures on local services caused by the pandemic, including in adult social care.

Furthermore, on 15 May we published details of an additional £600 million Infection Control Fund for Adult Social Care to support adult social care providers in England reduce the rate of transmission in and between care homes and to support workforce resilience. The government will continue to monitor pressures in the National Health Service and local government and will keep future funding under review.

■ Care Homes: Newcastle upon Tyne

Chi Onwurah: [\[49688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, who is responsible for providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to care homes in Newcastle as at 20 May 2020; and who was responsible for providing PPE to care homes at the beginning the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

In business as usual (BAU) circumstances, care providers are responsible for sourcing their own supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE). However, as an initial step to address the spike in demand for PPE, in mid-March, social care providers across England received an emergency drop of over 7 million PPE items. Every Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered care home, home care and hospice provider received at least 300 face masks to meet immediate needs.

We encourage all care providers to continue to use their BAU supply chains. Where this is not possible, we are supporting the existing supplier network by providing stock of PPE to 11 wholesalers for adult social care.

If a provider has been unsuccessful in obtaining PPE through these routes, they can approach their Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to set out their PPE needs. If they are unable to access PPE through their LRF, a provider can raise a request for an emergency pack of PPE through the National Supply Disruption Response system.

We are working with e-commerce experts to launch a Parallel Supply Chain, a new web-based system for procuring PPE which will be managed in line with the published guidance from Public Health England, integrated with NHS Supply Chain's central PPE logistic operations and shipped directly to providers via Royal Mail. Over

1 million items have been delivered via the portal, which is now rolling out nationally to small residential and domiciliary care providers.

■ Care Homes: Rother Valley

Alexander Stafford:

[52631]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to support care homes and the care sector in Rother Valley constituency.

Helen Whately:

Since the start of this outbreak we have been working closely with the sector and public health experts to put in place guidance and support for adult social care.

This includes guidance on maintaining the delivery of care; keeping care workers and residents safe; use and distribution of personal protective equipment; shielding extremely vulnerable people; supporting adults with learning difficulties and autistic adults; and providing unpaid care.

In February, the first guidance for the sector was published; in March, we announced £1.6 billion funding for local government and £1.3 billion to go to the National Health Service and social care for discharge support; in April we announced a further £1.6 billion for local government and our detailed Adult Social Care Action Plan; and in May we announced an additional £600 million to support care home providers through a new Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund.

■ Carers: Protective Clothing

Theresa Villiers:

[51689]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to provide personal protective equipment to people caring for elderly relatives at home.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The Government recognises the crucial role family carers play, especially during this difficult period.

On 8 April the Government published guidance for unpaid carers which provides general advice, including advice on infection control, links to other information and support, and advice on caring where someone has symptoms. This can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-providing-unpaid-care>

The Government will continue to work closely with carer organisations and others to support family carers during this period and beyond. This includes working with Carers UK to provide carers with practical advice which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Charities: Government Assistance

Robert Halfon:

[51872]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what financial support is available for health and social care charities during the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: On 8 April, the Chancellor announced £750 million to support the charity sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This fund comprises three elements:

- £360 million has been allocated by central Government to charities in England based on evidence of service need, including £22 million for health and social care charities and £200 million for hospices;
- £370 million to support charities working with vulnerable people. In England, £200 million of this support will be provided through the National Lottery Community Fund's "Coronavirus Community Support Fund", which charities can apply directly for. This will provide support for thousands of charities on the frontline of helping vulnerable people affected by COVID-19; and
- The Government will match whatever the public decides to donate to the BBC Big Night In fundraising event that took place on 23 April, starting with a contribution of at least £20 million to the National Emergencies Trust appeal.

Charities can also access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and they are able to benefit from the three-month VAT deferral scheme. Charity shop premises will benefit from the new enhanced retail rate relief at 100%.

■ Coronavirus: Catering

Dr Dan Poulter:

[53385]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he plans to take to ensure that stringent food hygiene standards are in place in cafes and takeaways during the easing of the covid-19 restrictions.

Jo Churchill:

The Food Standards Agency (FSA), is the Government department with responsibility for food safety. The FSA provides guidance and direction to local authorities on undertaking inspections and other interventions of food businesses to ensure that they are meeting food hygiene requirements and on taking action where they do not.

During COVID-19, the FSA's direction to local authorities has been, and will continue to be, to take a risk-based approach. The focus is on urgent reactive work and undertaking remote or onsite intervention at poorly compliant and other high-risk

businesses. This will ensure that food safety risks are identified and addressed, and public health is protected.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme continues to operate providing the incentive for businesses to achieve high standards and enabling informed consumer choice.

■ **Coronavirus: Death**

Neil Coyle: [\[52042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) people bereaved by covid-19 and (b) people who have turned to harmful alcohol use as a result of that bereavement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

A number of charities and voluntary organisations provide a range of valued services for people experiencing bereavement. The Government is taking a cross-Government approach to address bereavement support, and what is needed to ensure that families and friends of those deceased get the support they need - particularly during this very difficult time. On 22 May, the Government announced £22 million funding to life-saving health charities, £4.2 million of which will be used to support mental health charities and charities providing bereavement support. This funding is part of an overall £750 million package for the voluntary sector announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in April.

Local alcohol services and virtual support groups continue to operate during the pandemic, to ensure people receive the support they need. Public Health England 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 FRANK website can be accessed at the following link:

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

■ **Coronavirus: Disability**

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[52242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will conduct a review into the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on disabled people's health outcomes.

Vicky Foxcroft: [\[52252\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure people with disabilities and long-term health conditions can have independent lives and are not marginalised by the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

We are committed to supporting disabled people and those with long-term conditions through every stage of the COVID-19 pandemic and are working across Government to ensure that disabled people are able to get the support they need. The steps we are taking include:

- Provision of guidance and advice for health and social care providers and disabled people, with disabled people who are deemed to be extremely clinically vulnerable advised to shield;
- Ensuring that there are now dedicated shopping hours for disabled people;
- Making available the NHS Volunteer Responders programme to help support people who are vulnerable but not shielding, including disabled people;
- Local authorities have set up dedicated helplines to help connect people with local level support or signpost people to local support programmes;
- Working across Government on the accessibility of COVID-19 public health information guidance and other reasonable adjustments that may be needed for disabled people during the pandemic. This includes exploring the safety and use of transparent personal protective equipment face masks in health and social settings; and
- The Department has announced £22 million of Government funding will be awarded to mental health, ambulance, social care, learning disabilities, autism and dementia charities to help support their work during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

We are urgently working to better understand the effect of COVID-19 on disabled people's health outcomes by identifying the current data available, any gaps and how these could be addressed, including exploring research opportunities.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Jonathan Ashworth:

[49007]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps are being taken in (a) primary and (b) community care settings throughout England to proactively monitor the health of people who have received a positive covid-19 test result in order to (i) identify and (ii) support those people who may be at risk of hospitalisation.

Helen Whately:

For patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, the monitoring and identification of 'silent hypoxia' and rapid patient deterioration at home, including care homes, is important.

Oxygen levels are the best means of identifying patients most at risk of poor outcomes. Oximetry is an important tool to monitor oxygen levels in patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. Frontline professionals (in hospitals, community services and general practice) already use oximeters to help diagnose and monitor the health of patients.

When in contact with an individual to conduct a test for COVID-19, we encourage individuals to contact 111 or 999 if their symptoms worsen. A page on NHS.UK is also available at the following link to help those receiving test results understand them:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-for-coronavirus/what-your-coronavirus-test-result-means/>

Hilary Benn:

[51587]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether people contacted by the track and trace system will be told the identity of the covid-19 positive person it is said they have come in contact with (a) as a matter of routine or (b) if they ask for that information.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government launched its new NHS Test and Trace service on 28 May 2020. This includes enhanced contact tracing.

The NHS Test and Trace service will not share the name or details of a COVID-19 positive person, as this is confidential. This includes where someone who has been named as a contact asks for the identity of the person who is COVID-19 positive.

Mr David Jones:

[51714]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Welsh Government on co-operation between England and Wales for the NHS Test and Trace service.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The importance of developing a consistent and joined-up approach to contact tracing and testing across the whole of the United Kingdom is regularly discussed between the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and his counterparts in each of the devolved administrations, most recently on 28 May 2020 at the weekly Four Nations ministerial call.

To support this, officials within the Department, NHSX and Public Health England are working closely with counterparts in the Welsh Government – as in each of the devolved administrations – to explore opportunities for aligning and integrating contact tracing and testing systems.

Steve Reed:

[52020]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional resources his Department plans to provide to local authorities to support the test, track and trace programme during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: We have agreed £300 million worth of new dedicated funding to support local authorities with implementing Test and Trace and local outbreak plans.

This money will be allocated shortly following standard procedures.

Alongside financial contributions, the NHS Test and Trace service is developing comprehensive guidance to assist local authorities in developing their own COVID-19 outbreak plans.

Kate Green: [53424]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the latest estimate of the covid-19 R number is for the North-West.

Kate Green: [53425]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will regularly publish the R value for covid-19 infections on a regional basis.

Wera Hobhouse: [53558]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to publish the covid-19 reproduction (R) number (R) for each local authority area.

Layla Moran: [53580]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which (a) regions and (b) local authority areas have a covid-19 R rate of above one.

Jo Churchill:

The Government Office for Science currently publishes the latest estimate of the United Kingdom-wide range for R on a weekly basis. At the time of writing the current range is estimated to be 0.7-0.9 and is based on latest data available to determine infection and transmission rates. We do not calculate the R rate in different regions or local authority areas.

R is an average number and so can be highly uncertain if based on small quantities of data, for example, the R value for Northern Ireland will be more uncertain than England as the population is smaller and there have been fewer COVID-19 cases to date from which R can be calculated. R is not usually a useful measure on its own and needs to be considered alongside the number of new cases. Because of this uncertainty, The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies' view is that it is unhelpful to use estimates of R rates to monitor the epidemic in different regions.

■ Coronavirus: Ethnic Groups

Gavin Robinson: [53448]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for the publication of the report on BAME covid-19 deaths.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England led a rapid review to better understand how different factors can impact on how people are affected by COVID-19. This includes analysis of ethnicity, deprivation, age, sex (male and female) and obesity, where data was available. The review's findings have now been published and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

Alison Thewliss: [53466]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the timeframe is for the publication of the Public Health England report on the impact of covid-19 on the BAME community.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England led a rapid review to better understand how different factors can impact on how people are affected by COVID-19. This includes analysis of ethnicity, deprivation, age, sex (male and female) and obesity, where data was available. The review's findings have now been published and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

■ **Coronavirus: Probiotics**

Julie Elliott: [45193]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the research undertaken by Professor Glenn Gibson of the University of Reading and others entitled Using Probiotics to flatten the curve of covid-19 pandemics, published in Frontiers in Public Health.

Julie Elliott: [45194]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the guidance issued by the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics entitled the Use of probiotics and prebiotics in the time of covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The use of probiotics and prebiotics to treat COVID-19 are not currently our priority in trials. The Government is investing across the board in both basic genetic research and clinical studies to find a sustainable treatment or vaccine against COVID-19. More information can be found at the following link:

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

■ **Coronavirus: Screening**

Justin Madders: [42090]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many covid-19 tests (a) were undertaken in total and (b) resulted in a (i) positive and (ii) negative finding on each day in April 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 6 May 2020]: The overall number of tests for COVID-19 is published daily and is available at the following link:

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

However, the information is not broken down to the level of detail being requested.

In April a total of 758,719 tests were completed across the United Kingdom, 146,103 of these results in a lab confirmed positive result.

More information on the Government's testing strategy as well as updated testing figures can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports>

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Caroline Lucas:****[51838]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to implement the decision of the International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities not to require the use of animal disease models to test the effectiveness of potential vaccines for the SARS-CoV-2 virus before they proceed to human clinical trials.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Assessors from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) took a lead part in the meeting of the International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities, held on 18 March 2020, where participants acknowledged that the extent of non-clinical data to support proceeding to First Time in Human (FTIH) clinical trials for a candidate COVID-19 vaccine depends on the vaccine construct, the supportive data available for the construct, and data from closely related products. It was generally agreed that if a platform technology utilised to manufacture a licensed vaccine or other investigational vaccines is well characterised, it is possible to use toxicology data and clinical data accrued with other products using the same platform to support FTIH clinical trials for a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine candidate. However, it was also agreed that data from animal disease models would be required to support Phase II clinical trials. This is the policy that the MHRA had already implemented for other candidate vaccines for various diseases.

■ Eating Disorders**Zarah Sultana:****[52551]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his will make it his policy to work with the eating disorders charity Beat to (a) access the most recent data on issues facing people with eating disorders, (b) support people with eating disorders and (c) allocate additional funding (i) to tackle the causes and (b) for the treatment of those conditions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: Departmental Ministers and officials engage a wide range of expert organisations to inform its policies and this includes Beat. We recently announced over £9 million of funding support for charities supporting vulnerable people through the COVID-19 pandemic. We were delighted to announce that Beat has been awarded grant funding through this process to continue the valuable work it does in supporting people with eating disorders.

The Government is also funding a new eating disorder study jointly led with King's College London and eating disorder charity, Beat, via the National Institute for Health Research. The study aims to better understand what may lead to an eating disorder as well as how best we provide more effective treatment.

We are aware that NHS England has consulted Beat on work to improve adult eating disorder pathways in the community to build our understanding of how best to introduce ambitious but achievable improvements to access, quality of care and outcomes.

Health Professions: Coronavirus**Ben Lake:**[\[39737\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether covid-19 is recognised as an industrial disease when contracted by health care professionals.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 29 April 2020]: The classification of COVID-19 in relation to occupational exposure is determined by the circumstances of each individual case. All such dangerous occurrences, cases of disease and work-related fatalities, must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013).

Guidance on how such events are to be reported and classifications determined, has been made publicly available on the HSE website.

Health Professions: Ethnic Groups**Clive Lewis:**[\[48552\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) protect and (b) support BAME medical staff working in the NHS during the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

NHS Employers, working in partnership with key stakeholders, published guidance for employers on 30 April. The guidance detailed how to carry out risk assessments particularly for vulnerable groups, to understand the specific risks staff members face from exposure to COVID-19 and actions which employers can take to keep staff safe.

NHS England and NHS Improvement issued directions to the service on 29 April recommending all trusts to undertake appropriate risk assessments for their Black,

Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff and to put in place any measures to protect and support their BAME staff. They have since developed a five-point programme to address the concerns of BAME staff, covering protection of staff, engagement with staff and staff networks, representation in decision making, rehabilitation and recovery, communications and media.

The Department has commissioned Public Health England to complete a rapid review to understand disparities in COVID-19 infection across the population. This will include looking at the impact on different ethnic groups.

■ Health Professions: Recruitment

Alex Norris:

[\[49813\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the recruitment of (a) podiatrists and (b) other allied health professionals; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 2 June 2020]: It is too early to measure what impact the COVID-19 outbreak has had on the recruitment of podiatrists and other allied health professionals.

The Government is addressing the immediate and long-term recruitment of podiatrists and other allied health professionals. In December 2019 we announced additional maintenance grant funding, which will be available from September 2020 for new and continuing students of £5,000. There will be up to £3,000 additional funding for some students, who choose to study in regions or specialisms struggling to recruit, or to help with childcare costs. In addition, new students studying a specialist subject including podiatry will be able to access a further £1,000. These grants are on top of student loan allowances and do not need to be re-paid.

■ Health Services: Prisons and Young Offender Institutions

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[46587\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of whether a (a) men's prison, (b) women's prison, or (c) young offender's institution in England and Wales has failed to provide the level of healthcare staffing set out in the relevant local healthcare delivery plan since the covid-19 Operational Guidance – Exceptional Regime & Service Delivery was promulgated.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Healthcare services for prisons in England are commissioned by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

As of 18 May 2020, no sites were reporting staffing issues that would impact on their ability to manage their patients' care.

■ Joint Biosecurity Centre

Caroline Lucas: [\[49644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the annual budget for the new Joint Biosecurity Centre will be; from which departmental budget or budgets the resources will be provided from; what principles of transparency that centre will operate under; what (a) information and (b) analysis that centre will publish; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

As the Prime Minister said in his statement on Sunday 10 May, we are currently establishing a new COVID-19 Alert System run by a new Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), which will be established swiftly over the coming days. The details of the system and the JBC are still being finalised and we will have further details on this in due course.

■ Joint Biosecurity Centre: Staff

Caroline Lucas: [\[49643\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when a permanent director to the new Joint Biosecurity Centre will be appointed; whether that organisation will be (a) staffed by civil servants and (b) informed by a standing team of experts; how many staff have been appointed to date; and when wider membership and staffing will be announced.

Helen Whately:

As the Prime Minister said in his statement on Sunday 10 May, we are currently establishing a new COVID-19 Alert System run by a new Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), which will be established swiftly over the coming days. The details of the system and the JBC are still being finalised and we will have further details on this in due course.

■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus

Jonathan Ashworth: [\[52002\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what postnatal care is available to new parents during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Guidance from the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists sets out that postnatal care should be regarded as essential care and women should be encouraged to attend appointments. NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working with local government to modify and prioritise community health services. Maternity and health visiting services are continuing to deliver the healthy child programme predominantly via virtual methods, with health visitors encouraged to identify children that require a home visit.

Mental health providers are also looking at how they can maximise the use of digital and virtual channels to keep delivering support to existing and new service users.

■ **Naloxone: Prisoners**

Grahame Morris: [\[53402\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of prisoners with a history of opioid misuse were provided with Naloxone when released from prison in the latest 12 month period for which information is available; and from which prisons those prisoners were released.

Grahame Morris: [\[53404\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Public Health England report, Secure setting statistics from the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS), 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, page 44, whether there has been any increase from 12 per cent in the proportion of people with identified opiate problems who leave prison with Naloxone since the publication of that report; and if he will make a statement.

Jo Churchill:

Of the 23,230 adults who left treatment for opioid dependence that were released from a prison or other secure setting between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, 4,008 were given take-home naloxone, including training on its use as a way of counteracting the effects of opioid overdose.

This was an increase in the proportion of adults receiving take-home naloxone (17%), compared to the previous year (12%).

Information on which prisons or secure settings these people were released from is not held centrally.

Statistics on alcohol and drug misuse treatment in prisons and other secure settings is available from Public Health England's national drug treatment monitoring system. The latest report was published in January 2020 and is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/substance-misuse-treatment-in-secure-settings-2018-to-2019>

Grahame Morris: [\[53403\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward legislative proposals to make the supply of the opioid-overdose antidote Naloxone to all at-risk prisoners upon their release a mandatory requirement for prisons.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There are no plans to bring forward legislation to make the supply of the opioid-overdose antidote Naloxone to all at-risk prisoners upon their release a mandatory requirement for prisons.

The commissioning of substance misuse treatment for prisoners is the responsibility of NHS England and NHS Improvement. The Government expects commissioners

and providers of substance misuse services in prisons and in the community to work together closely in regard to prisoners being released from custody to ensure seamless transfers of care.

■ NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

Justin Madders:

[\[52108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether individual Trusts will be responsible for determining the (a) eligibility and (b) funding for the death in service benefit for NHS employees.

Helen Whately:

The Government launched the National Health Service and social care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme on 20 May 2020 and applications could be made from that date. The scheme is non-contributory and pays a £60,000 lump sum where frontline NHS and social staff who had been recently working where personal care is provided to individuals who have contracted COVID-19 die as a result of the virus.

Employers are asked to tell their employees about the scheme and distribute communication materials provided by the scheme administrator; the NHS Business Services Authority. If employers become aware of a death where there may be eligibility for a claim, they should contact the next of kin to explain the scheme to them and the process to be followed if a claim is appropriate.

It is for the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to decide if a claim satisfies the eligibility criteria. The employer provides information to inform the decision but has no role in the decision-making process.

Funding for the scheme is provided by HM Treasury.

■ NHS Injury Benefits Scheme

Stephen Timms:

[\[51542\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to reinstate the NHS Injuries Benefit Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The NHS Injury Benefits Scheme was removed after negotiations with the trade unions from April 2013. It was replaced by a contractual Temporary Injury Allowance that tops up sick pay for up to a year when the reason for the absence was a work-related injury.

National Health Service staff receive good quality risk benefits through the NHS Pension Scheme, including ill health pensions and survivor benefits where a member dies in service.

It is also open to NHS staff to seek compensation through the courts for work related injuries.

There are no plans to reinstate the Injury Benefits Scheme.

■ NHS: Conditions of Employment

Robert Largan:

[\[52617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to introduce changes to (a) pay and (b) benefits for (i) doctors and (ii) nurses employed by the NHS.

Helen Whately:

The independent NHS Pay Review Body and The Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration make annual recommendations on pay rises for National Health Service staff. The Pay Review Bodies are made up of experts and their recommendations are based on a comprehensive assessment of evidence from a range of key stakeholders, including the Government, NHS organisations and trade unions.

We have reached multi-year pay and contract reform agreements deals for Agenda for Change staff (2018/19 – 2020/21) and Junior Doctors (2019/20 – 2022/23) and negotiations are under way for a multi-year agreement with Specialty and Associate Specialist doctors.

The NHS reward package is about much more than basic pay and includes benefits that go well beyond the statutory minimum, for instance, generous holiday allowance and access to a much-valued pension scheme. We want to ensure that the NHS employment offer continues to attract and retain the compassionate and dedicated staff the NHS needs and this offer continues to be kept under review.

■ Nurses: Students

Emma Hardy:

[\[52390\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether Health Education England plans to cease funding in July 2020 for final year student nurses that have not completed their 12 week placements and 2300 hours of clinical practice required to graduate as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Helen Whately:

To aid the National Health Service's response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Health Education England (HEE) working with stakeholders introduced paid-placements for selected nursing, midwifery, allied health profession and healthcare science students.

NHS employers with students on paid-placement should consider 31 July as an appropriate end date where a student has completed their required placement hours or has completed their educational programme. Students still requiring hours to complete their education beyond the end of July and into August will continue to be funded to do so.

HEE is working locally with each Higher Education Institutions to ensure placements are available and is supporting these students so that as many as possible can graduate on time.

■ Prisoners: Death**Grahame Morris:**[\[53405\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of people who served prison sentences under 12 months have died of (a) drug overdose and (b) suicide within four weeks of release in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The data is not held in the format requested.

■ Social Services: Conditions of Employment**Jonathan Ashworth:**[\[51995\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether employees who currently work for social care providers who receive no public funding will be eligible to receive the Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme Death in Service payments.

Helen Whately:

The Government launched the NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance scheme on 20 May 2020. The scheme is non-contributory and pays a £60,000 lump sum where staff who had been recently working where personal care is provided to individuals who have contracted COVID-19 die as a result of the virus.

Care workers are eligible, providing that their work requires them to be present in frontline settings where COVID-19 is present. Employees of all care homes registered by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) are eligible, regardless of how they are funded.

Any social care staff working in non-CQC registered settings are also eligible, if their employer receives public funding.

■ Social Services: Reform**Alexander Stafford:**[\[52632\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to reform social care.

Helen Whately:

On 15 April, the COVID-19 adult social care action plan was published. The Government's number one priority for adult social care is for everyone who relies on care to get the care they need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are committed to bringing forward a plan for social care to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect and to find long-term solutions for one of the biggest challenges we face as a society. There are complex questions to address, which is why we have invited cross-party talks. These will take place at the earliest opportunity in light of the current circumstances.

■ Taitusi Ratucaucau**Dan Jarvis:** [\[51986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what representations he has received on waiving medical charges in respect of Commonwealth-born armed forces veteran Taitusi Ratucaucau.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: To date we have received three Parliamentary Questions and three items of correspondence concerning this individual, two of which are Private Office cases, and the other a Departmental email.

The Department remains in close contact with NHS England and NHS Improvement who are working with the provider concerned to ensure the veteran continues to receive the best possible treatment and care from the National Health Service.

HOME OFFICE**■ Amazon Web Services****Chi Onwurah:** [\[49691\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what conditions were attached to the four-year contract awarded to Amazon Web Services in December 2019; and if she will publish that contract.

James Brokenshire:

The four-year contract awarded to Amazon Web Services in December 2019 is based on the Crown Commercial Service G-Cloud 11 Framework Agreement (RM1557.11) call-off terms and conditions, together with the supplier's terms and conditions applicable to the ordered services.

The contract finder notice has been published and can be found at <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/d32efafa-392e-41bf-a9cf-0bfc218bbdf7?origin=SearchResults&p=1>

The department is working with the supplier to make a redacted version of the contract available on Contracts Finder.

Officials are unable to define what is meant by conditions in context. Please provide clarification.

■ Asylum**Tulip Siddiq:** [\[49790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum cases were pending in each of the last six months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on asylum applications awaiting a decision in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the number of people who are awaiting a decision on their asylum application are published in the asylum applications awaiting a decision data table in Asy_D03 of the asylum and resettlement detailed datasets.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to as at the end of March 2020.

Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar'.

■ Asylum: Housing**Afzal Khan:****[53586]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of support for people applying for asylum during the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps she has taken to investigate the recent death of a Syrian man in asylum accommodation provided by a Home Office subcontractor at McLay's Guest House in Glasgow.

Chris Philp:

Any asylum seeker, who would otherwise be destitute can apply for asylum support.

The circumstances around the death of an asylum seeker in his accommodation have not been fully established, and we feel it would be inappropriate to speculate on the cause of death at this time.

■ Asylum: Interviews**Mr Barry Sheerman:****[49587]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that the correct information is obtained from asylum interview to ensure that the process of making a decision on an application is expedited.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office takes the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously and has already put in place a range of measures to support asylum seekers affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. In line with the Home Office's commitment to protect the health and wellbeing of its staff and customers as a top priority, Asylum Operations made

the decision to cease face to face substantive asylum interviews with effect from Thursday 19th March 2020.

Asylum Operations have secured a mobile digital and video interviewing solution to support remote interviewing and are working with delivery partners, to enable the use of this technology. We remain committed to restarting substantive asylum interviews as soon we can establish a process that allows the participants - applicants, representatives, interpreters and interviewers - to do so safely.

Asylum Operations continue to make and serve decisions on cases where there is enough information to do so. We continue to review these on a case by case basis, ensuring those with significant safeguarding concerns or vulnerabilities are only served if appropriate to do so.

These are unprecedented times and we are adjusting processes and procedures where necessary and appropriately to adapt to these changes.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[49787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum interviews have been conducted (a) in person and (b) remotely in each of the last 12 weeks.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[49788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken to support asylum seekers whose interviews have been cancelled due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[49789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when his Department plans to resume asylum interviews or allow for the majority of those interviews to take place remotely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Tulip Siddiq: [\[49791\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum interviews have been cancelled due to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office takes the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously and has already put in place a range of measures to support asylum seekers affected by the covid-19 outbreak. In line with the Home Office's commitment to protect the health and wellbeing of its staff and customers as a top priority, Asylum Operations made the decision to cease face to face substantive asylum interviews with effect from Thursday 19th March 2020.

This meant that a small number of interviews were cancelled, and no interviews have been scheduled since this date. It is not possible to say how many interviews would have taken place had the pandemic not occurred.

Asylum Operations have secured a mobile digital and video interviewing solution to support remote interviewing and are working with delivery partners, to enable the use

of this technology. We remain committed to restarting substantive asylum interviews as soon we can establish a process that allows the participants - applicants, representatives, interpreters and interviewers - to do so safely.

■ Asylum: Scotland

Mhairi Black: [\[49720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to help ensure that asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation in Scotland are re-homed.

Mhairi Black: [\[49721\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department is taking to help ensure that asylum seekers living in Scotland are (a) aware of and (b) follow the Scottish Government's social distancing advice.

Chris Philp:

It is Home Office policy to move people into suitable Dispersed Accommodation (DA) once their claim for support has been assessed, however we have had to restrict movement during COVID on public health advice.

Glasgow is currently the only dispersal area in Scotland and therefore procurement of longer term accommodation is limited to the city. Mears are working to procure suitable longer term accommodation across Glasgow and it is our intention, once restrictions on movement are lifted, to move all individuals in contingency accommodation into suitable DA, in consultation with Glasgow City Council.

We are working closely with public health colleagues (Greater Glasgow PHU) and local health leads (Asylum Health Bridging Team) to ensure their guidance on social distancing and self-isolation is properly applied, while ensuring that people can continue to access essential services. Accommodation providers have taken appropriate steps to comply with public health guidelines by limiting access to communal areas, sequencing food service, serving food to rooms, applying controls for distancing (e.g. tape markings) and providing translated public health guidance and instructions.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[52111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office, whether people entering the UK on private jets will be required to quarantine for 14 days during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kevin Foster:

From 8 June, all passengers arriving in the UK without having travelled through another part of the Common Travel Area will be required to self-isolate for 14 days, apart from those on a short list of exemptions. This applies to arrivals by all modes of transport, including private jets. This measure will be kept under review.

■ **British National (Overseas)**

Lloyd Russell-Moyle:

[\[53567\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of extending the proposed support the Government is offering British national overseas (BNO) passport holders to all people who are eligible for BNO status but might not currently hold a valid passport.

Kevin Foster:

The practical details are still being worked out, but I can confirm amendments to the arrangements for BN(O)s will be applicable to all BN(O) status holders.

■ **British National (Overseas): Visas**

Lisa Nandy:

[\[53418\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to extend visa rights for (a) British National (Overseas) passport holders in Hong Kong and (b) the dependants of British National (Overseas) passport holders.

Kevin Foster:

The Foreign Secretary has announced that if China follows through with its proposed legislation, we will put in place new arrangements to allow BN(O)s to come to the UK without the current six-month limit, enabling them to live and apply to study and work for extendable periods of 12 months, thereby also providing a pathway to citizenship.

Further details will be announced in due course.

■ **Deportation: Poland**

Caroline Lucas:

[\[49638\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the deportation flight on 30 April 2020 from Stanstead Airport to Poland, what assessment she has made of its effect on (a) international efforts to contain the covid-19 pandemic and (b) the health and safety of (i) passengers and (ii) staff onboard that flight.

Chris Philp:

We routinely help people with no right to remain in the UK return to their country of origin and we make no apology for our commitment to removing foreign national offenders wherever possible.

The flight on 30 April was arranged for Polish nationals who had been required to leave the UK and who requested assistance to return to Poland.

We take the welfare of those in our care very seriously. A safer system of work was adapted in line with Public Health England guidance; this included social distancing in transit and on the flight and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment for both escorting staff and returnees.

■ Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences: Coronavirus

Jess Phillips:

[\[52047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what (a) risk assessment and (b) planning her Department has conducted on the potential increased risk to victims of (i) domestic abuse and (ii) sexual violence as covid-19 lockdown measures are lifted.

Victoria Atkins:

We are working closely with specialist charities, the Domestic Abuse and Victims' Commissioners and the police to understand the potential impacts on victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence as lockdown measures are lifted.

It remains a priority to ensure that victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence are able to access appropriate help or support both during and following the lockdown period. That is why the Government announced £76 million of funding for organisations supporting survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence, as well as vulnerable children and their families and victims of modern slavery.

Police forces continue to deal proactively with domestic abuse incidents and will aim to build on innovative approaches established over this period to further protect victims of abuse and to target perpetrators, as well as responding to any more general changes in crime and offending as lockdown measures are lifted.

The Prime Minister's Hidden Harms Summit in May, further underlined the Government's commitment to planning to ensure that vulnerable victims are not forgotten during the lockdown period or in the subsequent period.

■ Domestic Abuse and Stalking

Jim Shannon:

[\[49692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to bring forward legislative proposals to track, manage and supervise stalkers and domestic abusers routinely; and if she will make a statement.

Victoria Atkins:

This Government is committed to tackling stalking and domestic abuse and ensuring that the right tools are in place to protect victims of these deeply disturbing crimes. That is why we strengthened the law by making stalking an offence in its own right, introduced a new civil stalking protection order and are currently taking our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill through Parliament.

Serial stalking and domestic abuse perpetrators are already on existing systems such as ViSOR (the dangerous persons database) and can be managed through Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements. Our focus is on making better use of these already existing systems such as the Police National Computer or ViSOR, which already enables the police to manage risk and share perpetrators' details across criminal justice and other relevant agencies.

■ Domestic Abuse: Children

Mary Kelly Foy: [\[54249\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to strengthen the Domestic Abuse Bill so that children affected by domestic abuse have a statutory right to specialist support services.

Victoria Atkins:

The Domestic Abuse Bill, as introduced on 3 March, includes a new statutory duty on tier one local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse, and their children, within safe accommodation. Paragraph 207 of the Explanatory Notes which accompany the Bill provides examples of the support that may be provided, including children's support such as play therapy and child advocacy.

To enable us to better understand the complex landscape for community-based support for all victims, including children, 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 will then work with the Commissioner to understand the needs identified and develop options on how best to address them.

■ Domestic Abuse: Victim Support Schemes

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[49590\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on increasing funding for (a) specialist domestic abuse schemes and (b) public information campaigns to improve the protection of victims.

Victoria Atkins:

The Government has allocated £28m to support domestic abuse charities. The Home Office has worked closely with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government and the Ministry of Justice to ensure that respective funding streams are aligned so as to provide all specialist domestic abuse services with the opportunity to access funds appropriately.

From April 2020 to date, £488k has been allocated to Domestic Abuse communications to raise awareness that police response and support services remain available, and to signpost help and support. We have worked closely with other Government Departments on domestic abuse communications to amplify messaging through retailers, employers, banks, local authorities, public health services and police forces.

■ Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Carol Monaghan: [\[53481\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what plans she has to extend the graduate work visa to students who currently hold a Tier 4 Visa.

Kevin Foster:

The Graduate route will be launched in the Summer of 2021.

To be eligible for the route, students must successfully complete a degree at undergraduate level or above at a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance and hold valid leave as a student when the route is introduced. Students who complete their courses prior to the introduction of the route will not be eligible.

Current Tier 4 students can benefit from the route, if their leave expires after the route is introduced, regardless of when their courses commenced.

Health Services: Immigrants

Neil O'Brien: [\[48627\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the amount of revenue that will accrue to the public purse from the Immigration Health Surcharge in each of the years to the end of the current forecast period.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not routinely publish data relating to financial forecasts. Income data for the Immigration Health Surcharge is published annually in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts.

Please see page 137 of the Home Office 2018-19 Annual Report and Accounts for the most recent disclosure of Immigration Health Surcharge income

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807126/6.5571_HO_Annual_Report_201920_WEB.PDF

Home Office: Coronavirus

Marion Fellows: [\[903021\]](#)

What recent assessment she has made of the implications of the covid-19 outbreak for her Department's priorities.

Priti Patel:

My Department continues to deliver on our core priorities of;

- o protecting the public,
- o securing our borders,
- o and reforming our immigration system.

Current rates of staff absence due to Covid-19 do not present immediate risks to delivery of these.

The Home Office is also an integral part of the cross-Government Covid-19 response. To ensure the department is equipped to respond effectively some staff have been deployed to specific covid related activities.

We have also provided additional support for victims of domestic abuse who may feel particularly vulnerable at this time and implemented public health measures at the border to prevent a second wave of Coronavirus from imported cases.

■ Home Office: Correspondence

Marion Fellows:

[\[49729\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the average length of time was for Ministers of her Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

James Brokenshire:

The Home Office does not measure the average time for responding to correspondence from hon. Members.

However, in line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Home Office has a target of responding within 20 working days where a response is required.

As you will understand, the Home Office is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. The Home Office ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

■ Hong Kong: Veterans

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[53989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the oral statement of 2 June 2020 by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Official Report, column 682 on Hong Kong National Security Legislation: UK Response, and his response at column 691 that the Home Office is considering representations on behalf of former Hong Kong Military Service Corps personnel who were not awarded UK passports between 1990 and 1997, if she will make it her policy that the estimated remaining 250 to 300 military and naval veterans and their families will now be permitted to apply for UK passports.

Kevin Foster:

As the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said on Tuesday 2 June 2020, as a Government and as a country we are extremely grateful to those who served in the Hong Kong Military Service Corps. This situation is being kept under review in light of recent events.

■ Immigrants: Finance

Hilary Benn:

[\[53310\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what proportion of applications to lift the no recourse to public funds condition from people with leave to remain have been successful since the start of March 2020.

Chris Philp:

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

Drew Hendry:[\[53489\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing No Recourse to Public Funds visa stipulations for people applying to courses in the health and social care sectors during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

The Government does not believe it is necessary to suspend the No Recourse to Public Funds condition. We have acted decisively to ensure we support people through this crisis and are confident we have measures in place to support those who have no recourse to public funds at this difficult time.

Many of the wide-ranging Covid-19 measures the government has put in place are not public funds and therefore are available to migrants with no re-course to public funds (NRPF). The Coronavirus job retention scheme, self-employment income support and statutory sick pay are not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Contribution-based benefits are also not classed as public funds for immigration purposes. Similarly, the support the Government is providing to the rented sector and in respect of mortgages is available to all regardless of their immigration status.

The Government has temporarily lifted restrictions in the hours that Tier 4 students or Tier 2 workers in the NHS can work or volunteer. It has also extended the deadline for pre-registration nurses to sit the Occupational Structured Clinical Examination to 31 December 2020. Tier 4, Tier 2 and Tier 5 visa holders are also being allowed to start courses or employment before their visa applications have been determined.

The Government has published guidance on the support available for migrants living in the UK, including those with NRPF on Gov.uk.

Stephen Timms:[\[903023\]](#)

If she will suspend the no recourse to public funds condition for families with children that have leave to remain in the UK for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

This Government has made it our priority to protect the vulnerable through this national emergency. We have put in place a range of measures for everyone to stay safe as we fight Coronavirus, including those with NRPF.

May I thank the Rt Hon member for his continued engagement on this important issue.

Families with leave under family and human rights routes can apply, free of charge, to have no recourse to public funds conditions lifted. We encourage anyone eligible to submit an application and these will be considered compassionately.

Practical support such as rent protections and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme apply to those with NRPF conditions, and we have allocated more than £3.2billion to local authorities and £750million to charities to support the most vulnerable.

■ Immigration

Stuart C McDonald: [\[52069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of the number of people whose leave to remain in the UK was due to expire between 24 January and 31 May 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not publish the information requested.

Published information relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-covid-19-and-the-immigration-system-may-2020>.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[52070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people whose leave to remain in the UK was due to expire between 24 January and 31 May 2020 applied to extend their leave to remain in the UK until 31 May 2020.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not publish the information requested.

Published information relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-covid-19-and-the-immigration-system-may-2020>.

Stuart C McDonald: [\[52071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of people whose leave to remain the UK was due to expire between 24 January and 31 May 2020 have left the UK.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not publish the information requested.

Published information relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-relating-to-covid-19-and-the-immigration-system-may-2020>.

■ Immigration Controls

Mark Logan: [\[903017\]](#)

What progress her Department has made on introducing a points-based immigration system.

Chris Philp:

The Government has set out our plans for a new points-based system to control immigration, that will deliver for the UK for years to come.

We have been clear that there will be no extension to the Transition period with the EU, and the introduction of the Immigration (and Social Security Co-ordination) Bill was a key part of delivering on that commitment.

From 1 January, our new system will provide simple, effective and flexible arrangements and lay the foundations for a firmer, fairer, skills-led immigration system

It will support our economic recovery by prioritising and investing in people in the UK while continuing to attract the talent and expertise we need from abroad.

■ Immigration: Applications**Caroline Lucas:**[\[49637\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what support her Department is providing to (a) asylum seekers and (b) migrants who are (i) vulnerable and (ii) digitally excluded, to complete their immigration applications during the covid-19 pandemic.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office has temporarily introduced additional locations to register asylum claims which began taking appointments on 19 April 2020. The Asylum Intake Unit in Croydon continues to provide an appointment service to those looking to claim asylum in London and the South East, with available appointments being increased week on week. This is supported by limited operations in Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool, Leeds, Solihull and Cardiff. These are temporary arrangements which will be kept under review to align with HMG guidance. These changes do not represent a new operating model - they are contingency measures put in place during the COVID-19 epidemic in order to ensure that asylum seekers are able to safely register their claims. Asylum Operations have secured a mobile digital and video interviewing solution to support remote interviewing and are working with delivery partners, to enable the use of this technology. We remain committed to restarting substantive asylum interviews as soon we can establish a process that allows the participants - applicants, representatives, interpreters and interviewers - to do so safely. Asylum Operations continue to make and serve decisions on cases where there is enough information to do so. We continue to review these on a case by case basis, ensuring those with significant safeguarding concerns or vulnerabilities are only served with decisions if appropriate to do so. These are unprecedented times and we are adjusting processes and procedures where necessary and appropriately to adapt to these changes.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, We-Are-Digital, the Home Office's assisted digital provider has maintained its telephone service providing support for digitally excluded visa and European Settlement scheme applicants. This service assists applicants who do not feel confident in using a computer or mobile phone or do not have internet

access. Currently, the face to face services that they offer are not available due to Covid-19 restrictions. We-Are-Digital are working closely with the Home Office around safely resuming all services.

Additionally, UK Visas & Immigration Service and Support Centres are operating a limited service for customers with compelling and compassionate circumstances. At this time, customers can send supporting information via email or through the post.

■ Immigration: Fees and Charges

Dan Jarvis:

[\[53438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the value of immigration fees was that her Department collected from Commonwealth-born armed forces (a) service personnel, (b) veterans and (c) dependants in each of the last five years.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office does not hold the information in the format requested.

Amounts received in immigration fees are not differentiated between the various categories in which they are received. We do not have a separate code or field for fees collected from Commonwealth-born armed forces, whether service personnel, veterans or dependents. Our ledger will therefore not allow us to provide this level of detail.

Visa and immigration income data is published annually in the Home Office Annual Report and Accounts. See page 137 of the Home Office 2018-19 Annual Report and Accounts for the most recent disclosure of visa and immigration income.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807126/6.5571_HO_Annual_Report_201920_WEB.PDF

■ Migrant Camps: Calais

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[\[49849\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterpart on the strength of force used by police forces on migrants in Calais.

Chris Philp:

As noted in previous responses, the issue of policing and law enforcement on French territory remains a matter of domestic responsibility for the French government. During the Covid-19 pandemic, French law enforcement have offered all individuals residing in camps the option of transfer into reception centres to aid with social distancing measures. Within these centres, individuals are provided with medical and administrative support, and given the opportunity to lodge an asylum claim. To date, over 600 migrants have accepted this option.

■ Migrant Workers: Health Professions**Alexander Stafford:** [\[49882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will extend the visa extensions given to foreign NHS staff to include private healthcare staff who also provide part time services to the NHS.

Kevin Foster:

The Government has already announced we will extend the visas for a range of healthcare professionals working for the NHS and independent health and care providers, where their current visa expires between 31 March and 1 October. This offer also applies to their families.

The 12-month extension is automatic and free of charge and those benefitting will not have to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge.

■ Missing Persons: Databases**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:** [\[52026\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what progress she has made on the establishment of the national missing persons database; and what the timeframe is for that database to be operational.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[52027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what the timeframe is for her Department to undertake a review of the 2011 Missing Children and Adults strategy.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck: [\[52028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children were reported missing in (a) 2017-18, (b) 2018-19 and (c) 2019-20; and when he plans to publish missing persons data for those periods.

Victoria Atkins:

People that go missing include some of the most vulnerable in our society. The Government is determined that missing people and their families receive the best possible protection and support; from Government, statutory agencies and the voluntary sector.

The Government's 2011 Missing Children and Adults Strategy highlighted the importance of this issue and provided a core framework for local areas to consider what more can be done to protect children and vulnerable adults who go missing. These measures are kept under constant review. Protecting and supporting vulnerable missing children is also a key element of our action to tackle exploitation and abuse, including sexual abuse and county lines exploitation, given the clear links between children who go missing and these broader harms.

The existing Police National Computer (PNC) already allows police forces to report a person as missing and for that missing report to be visible to all UK police forces. The PNC is being decommissioned as part of the Home Office led National Law

Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP). As part of this process the Programme, working with the national policing lead for Missing Persons and the NCA's UK Missing Persons Unit will deliver a National Register for Missing Persons (NRMP) which will provide additional functionality around the reporting of missing and associated found incidents across force boundaries.

The NLEDP will be delivered in phases to mitigate the risks of a 'big bang' deployment, beginning at the end of 2020, with the early phases focused on the highest priority functions, including replacing the current PNC capabilities. The anticipated delivery date for the phase including the NRMP is early 2022.

The Home Office does not hold data centrally on the number of people reported missing. Individual police forces hold information about current missing persons incidents. Annual missing persons statistics, including how many children are reported missing, are published by the National Crime Agency's Missing Person's Unit:

<http://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/resources/downloads/missing-persons-statistical-bulletins>

The NCA intends to publish missing persons data for 2017-18 and 2018-19 later this month (June), with publication of data for 19/20 expected at the end of 2020.

■ Offences against Children: Coronavirus

Mary Kelly Foy:

[54250]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to protect children and young people from child sexual abuse at home and online during the covid-19 outbreak.

Victoria Atkins:

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

We have responded swiftly to the risks posed by COVID-19, working closely with Law Enforcement, the UK Intelligence Community, safeguarding partners and the third sector to assess the threat and ensure they have the resources they need to tackle offending and provide the greatest protection for vulnerable children.

We are further working across government and agencies to ensure that teachers, parents and carers have access to the support they need to help keep children safe online. As part of this the National Crime Agency have launched the #OnlineSafetyAtHome campaign, the Department for Education has published interim safeguarding guidance for schools and colleges encouraging them to disseminate advice on online safety and we have published guidance for parents and carers on gov.uk.

As part of this the Government made £1.6 million available immediately for the NSPCC to expand and promote its national helpline for adults. We also worked across government, with the NCA and industry to ensure that teachers, parents and carers have access to the support they need to help keep children safe online.

On 21st May, the Prime Minister hosted a virtual summit focused on 'hidden harms', including child sexual abuse. The virtual summit brought key decision makers together to share insight, best practice and agree an approach for tackling these crimes as we move towards easing lockdown measures.

Ahead of the summit, the Home Secretary announced that £9.86 million is being allocated to the National Crime Agency to improve its ability to tackle perpetrators seeking to offend against children via the Dark Web. An additional £3.36 million is being committed to further improve our understanding and tackle all aspects of the child sexual abuse threat. We will also launch a £2.8 million transformation fund to promote and embed best practice in Child Sexual Abuse victim support.

Following the Summit, we have sought to engage stakeholders within communities who could support in identifying vulnerable children, by delivering communications that highlight how to spot the signs of abuse and neglect, as well as where to report concerns. The aim is to improve our collective ability to detect and respond to a range harms, including at home.

The Home Office will distribute £7.8 million in emergency support for charities helping vulnerable children who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. We are working closely with other government departments to identify an approach for disbursing the proportion of the £360 million charities funding allocated directly from government departments to vulnerable children's charities, with the aim to implement the approach as soon as possible.

■ Police: Finance

Sara Britcliffe:

[\[903024\]](#)

What steps her Department is taking to increase police funding.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is delivering on the people's priorities by giving policing the biggest funding increase in a decade.

In total we're increasing the funding available to the policing system by over £1bn this year.

In order to help recruit we are giving PCCs an additional £700 million this year to help deliver the recruitment of 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021; we have already recruited 3000 new officers.

We are giving the police the resources they need to fight crime and keep the public safe.

■ Police: Recruitment

Wes Streeting: [\[903015\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the adequacy of Government funding allocated to the recruitment of 6,000 police officers by March 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is delivering on the people's priorities by giving policing the biggest funding increase in a decade.

In total we're increasing the funding available to the policing system by over £1bn this year.

In order to help recruit we are giving PCCs an additional £700 million this year to help deliver the recruitment of 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021; we have already recruited 3000 new officers.

We are giving the police the resources they need to fight crime and keep the public safe.

Jessica Morden: [\[903020\]](#)

What assessment she has made of the adequacy of Government funding allocated to the recruitment of 6,000 police officers by March 2021.

Kit Malthouse:

This Government is delivering on the people's priorities by giving policing the biggest funding increase in a decade.

In total we're increasing the funding available to the policing system by over £1bn this year.

In order to help recruit we are giving PCCs an additional £700 million this year to help deliver the recruitment of 6,000 additional officers by the end of March 2021; we have already recruited 3000 new officers.

We are giving the police the resources they need to fight crime and keep the public safe.

■ Refugees

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[49890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what comparative estimate she has made of the number of people granted refugees status in the last 3 years, and those granted by (a) France, (b) Germany, (c) Spain, (d) Italy and (e) Greece over that period.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office publishes data on the number of people granted refugee status in the UK in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release'.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>

Data on the numbers of people granted asylum at initial decision, as well as the number of people granted refugee status through resettlement schemes are

published in table Asy_D02 of the 'Asylum and resettlement detailed datasets'.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>

Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data are up to end of March 2020

Eurostat publish comparative numbers for EU member states, as well as the EEA and Switzerland. The latest data relate to the year ending December 2019.

Additionally, the Home Office publishes a high-level overview of the data in the 'Asylum and resettlement summary tables'. The 'contents' sheet contains an overview of all available data on Asylum and resettlement.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the '[Research and statistics calendar](https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance)'. https://www.gov.uk/search/research-and-statistics?keywords=immigration&content_store_document_type=upcoming_statistics&organisations%5B%5D=home-office&order=relevance

■ Refugees: Children

Rachael Maskell:

[49750]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many children from refugee camps she has facilitated to be relocated to the UK in each of the last 12 months.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not publish a breakdown of individuals who were resettled from refugee camps. We work closely with UNHCR to identify those who would benefit most from resettlement to the UK, whether they are living in formal refugee camps, informal settlements or host communities. We also do not hold detailed information on the location of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children within European Member States.

In the year to March 2020, 4,968 people received sanctuary in the UK through our resettlement schemes, almost half of whom were children (2,380).

The Home Office is committed to publishing data in an orderly way as part of the regular quarterly Immigration Statistics, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The latest resettlement statistics, which include arrivals under our schemes up to the end of March 2020, can be found at

www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-statistics

Outside of our resettlement schemes, children have also been transferred to the UK under both the Dublin III ('Dublin') Regulation and section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 ('s67').

Dublin data are published on an annual basis (each February) in the Immigration Statistics. This includes the number of acceptances and transfers broken down by article and Member State. The latest data, covering up to 2019, can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#dublin-regulation>

In 2016, the Government committed to transfer 480 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children displaced in Europe under s67. On 21 May 2020, we published the data for the current number of children who have been transferred under the scheme. These data can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-march-2020/how-many-people-do-we-grant-asylum-or-protection-to> “

■ Refugees: Greece

Rachael Maskell: [49751]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to measure the effect on the human rights of asylum seekers in Greece of the implementation of the UK-Greece Migration Action Plan.

Rachael Maskell: [49752]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of the recommendation of the #CitiesMustAct campaign to relocate asylum seekers and refugees from the Aegean hotspot camps to areas where local leaders have pledged to provide asylum.

Chris Philp:

The UK-Greece Action Plan aims to improve overall management of irregular migration in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is focused on tackling organised immigration crime, improving asylum and returns processes in line with international law and ensuring ongoing cooperation on search and rescue in the Aegean through continued deployment of a UK vessel to save lives.

Stemming from the Action Plan the UK and Greece will establish a strategic migration dialogue to monitor the effectiveness of our joint initiatives. Additionally, in the light of our strong bilateral relationship with the Greek

Government, where necessary and appropriate, the UK will raise the issue of conditions for migrants in Greece

Under normal circumstances the Greek Government transfer the most vulnerable migrants to the mainland where necessary; this has ceased due to COVID-19. Instead, Greece is transferring nearly 2,000 high-risk persons (elderly, serious medical cases and their families) to more suitable accommodation within the islands. The Greek response to COVID-19 has been effective and so far there are no reported cases within the migrant camps on the Greek islands.

■ Registration of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships: Coronavirus

Chris Elmore: [49800]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the covid-19 lockdown, what assessment she has made of when people will be able to register births, marriages and civil partnerships.

Kevin Foster:

The local registration service in England has been advised that birth registrations can recommence where these can be safely delivered in line with Public Health and local authority guidelines. The restrictions in Wales have not yet been lifted. The Government is further considering the options for how marriages and civil partnerships can be registered while respecting prevailing public health guidance and regulations to slow the spread of Covid-19.

■ **Undocumented Migrants****Paul Girvan:**[\[52374\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many illegal immigrants have been apprehended by enforcement officers since 1 January 2020.

Chris Philp:

To maintain the highest standards of accuracy, the Home Office prefers to refer to published data, as this has been subject to rigorous quality assurance under National Statistics protocols prior to publication.

Information about enforcement visits is not available in our published data.

Our published data is available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-enforcement-data-august-2019>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2019/summary-of-latest-statistics>

■ **Undocumented Migrants: English Channel****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[49874\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to prevent migrants from illegally crossing the English Channel.

Chris Philp:

Keeping our border secure is the Government's highest priority and it is committed to doing everything it can to stop these dangerous Channel crossings which are putting vulnerable lives at risk.

Through joint-working with France, the UK has funded the continued deployment of gendarme reservists along the coast of northern France, who are patrolling constantly in order to detect attempted crossings by migrants. Funding has been allocated, among other projects, for further improvements at ports in northern France and on the ground, this now includes drones, specialist vehicles and detection equipment to stop small boats leaving European shores.

Intelligence flows are also key to dismantling the organised crime groups behind crossings. We have restructured and repurposed our approach to support the

growing intelligence feeds which is used to inform and direct how and where resource is deployed.

Alexander Stafford:

[\[49881\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she is taking steps to increase the presence of Border Security forces in the English channel to stop immigrants reaching Britain illegally.

Chris Philp:

Border Force and Immigration Enforcement will always have the resources needed to tackle these illegal and dangerous crossings.

We are using all the skills of Border Force BF, the national Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and French law enforcement to dismantle and arrest the criminal gangs who trade in people smuggling.

Assets on the ground in France have been enhanced and now provide 24/7 cover of the northern beaches.

And we're also continuing efforts to crack down on the criminal gangs who facilitate the crossings. The NCA and the Home Office introduced a permanent presence France, with operational leads now based in Paris and Calais, to aid intelligence sharing between the two countries and target the criminal networks involved.

Bill Wiggin:

[\[51644\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with her French counterpart on tackling the illegal movement of immigrants from France to the UK across the English Channel.

Chris Philp:

The UK and France maintain a strong relationship on the issue of migration and those attempting to access the UK illegally, ensuring that the necessary support is delivered to vulnerable migrants whilst upholding security at our shared border. Officials from both governments maintain a regular pattern of engagement on tackling the issue.

The Home Secretary and French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner spoke most recently on the 6th May and discussed cooperation on tackling Covid-19 as well as our bilateral response to migrants crossing the English Channel using small boats. They are due to hold a follow-up call within the coming week.

■ **Undocumented Migrants: South East Region**

Alexander Stafford:

[\[49879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many boats suspected to have been used for the transport of illegal immigrants to the UK have been recovered on the south coast of England in the most recent period for which such information is available.

Chris Philp:

People crossing the Channel to enter the UK have come from a safe country – usually France – and so there is no reason why they need to make this trip in order to claim asylum. Those fleeing persecution should stay in the first safe country they enter.

The Home Office does not have published figures on the number of boats recovered as a result of clandestine attempts to enter the UK

Any equipment, relating to a clandestine crossing attempt by small boat, discovered is recovered for forensic analysis and investigation.

■ Visas**Mr Virendra Sharma:****[51793]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of expanding in-country switching for visa applicants unable to return to their home country due to lock-down constraints.

Kevin Foster:

The Home Office has put in place a range of measures to support those affected by measures connected to Covid-19 (Coronavirus). Those measures include a provision for switching in-country by visa applicants. Full details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.

These are unprecedented times and we may make further adjustments to requirements where necessary and appropriate, to ensure people are not unduly affected by circumstances beyond their control.

Ian Murray:**[51863]**

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to introduce a further extension of visas for people that are unable to travel home after 31 May 2020.

Kevin Foster:

Individuals who are in the UK legally and whose visa expires between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020 can have their visa extended to 31 July 2020, if they cannot leave the UK because of travel restrictions or self-isolation related to coronavirus.

The latest information can be found on GOV.UK at: www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents.

This is being kept under regular review in case further extensions are needed

■ Visas: Repayments**Claire Hanna:** [\[53660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the changes to the Immigration Rules announced on 14 May 2020, if her Department will refund people who have had to apply to extend their visas in the UK as a family member of a British citizen who has dual nationality.

Kevin Foster:

The statement of changes to the Immigration Rules laid before Parliament on 14 May will amend the EU Settlement Scheme so that family members of the People of Northern Ireland can apply for immigration status on broadly the same terms as family members of Irish citizens. This delivers the commitment made in the 'New Decade, New Approach' agreement which restored the Northern Ireland Executive in January 2020.

Family members of the people of Northern Ireland will be able to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme from 24 August.

Family members of the people of Northern Ireland who have paid a fee to secure immigration status under another route, such as the UK's family Immigration Rules, or who do so in order to come to the UK or to extend their stay before 24 August, will not be refunded.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION**■ Divisions: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:** [\[53500\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the evidential basis was for the safety of the Division system introduced on 2 June 2020; and if the Commission will publish that evidence.

Pete Wishart:

Public Health England has provided public health advice to assist the Commission in reducing the risk of coronavirus transmission within the Parliamentary estate, with the specific challenges posed by the building layout and operation taken into account.

This included the use of the existing Division system. Proposals for the Division system were developed by the House authorities and commented on by Public Health England.

Martyn Day: [\[53534\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what assessment the Commission made of the risk of covid-19 spreading from hon. Members touching the despatch boxes and table during the physical voting on 2 June 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Martyn Day:[\[53535\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what assessment the Commission has made of the level of risk of spreading covid-19 as a result of hon. Members touching the despatch boxes and table during physical voting on 2 June 2020; and if he would make a statement.

Pete Wishart:

The House authorities on behalf of the Commission has carried out all risk assessments as required under the *Working safely during coronavirus (Covid-19)* guidance. This identifies the key risks and control measures which have been introduced to allow people to work safely on the parliamentary estate during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Through the development of cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures the risk from touching any surface should be minimised and measures have been put in place to ensure hand washing facilities and / or hand sanitiser is available across the estate. These have also been placed at both entry points to the chamber.

Enhanced cleaning of the despatch box has continued at all times the House sits to further minimise any potential risk.

■ House of Commons: Parliamentary Proceedings

Ian Murray:[\[54089\]](#)

To ask the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the cost was, including staff time, equipment and processes, to set up the virtual parliament.

Pete Wishart:

The House of Commons Commission is responsible for the hybrid proceedings in the Commons. The costs set out below therefore relate only to work associated with the Commons, not Parliament as a whole. The figures show combined implementation/other one-off costs and running costs as at 31 May 2020, and cover committed spend up to that date, not just actual expenditure.

VIRTUAL CHAMBER REVENUE COSTS:

Chamber set up – £31,200

Broadcasting hub set up – £12,734

Specialist operating team – £176,000

Technical infrastructure hire – £334,000

Remote broadcasting provision for Ministers and other key Members – £70,000

Additional internet bandwidth – £6,000

Sub-total excluding VAT = £629,934

(all supplier costs concerned, excluding any capital costs, are VAT recoverable)

VIRTUAL CHAMBER CAPITAL COSTS:

Broadcasting equipment – £123,994

Hansard recording equipment – £58,306

Sub-total excluding VAT = £182,300

Sub-total including VAT = £218,760

REMOTE VOTING, BALLOTING AND ANNUNCIATOR COSTS

Remote voting (development, hosting) – £40,000 approx.

Commons Balloting – £12,500

Remote annunciator (“UKParliamentNow”) – £33,464 (*Commons share only*)

Sub-total including VAT = £85,964

VIRTUAL COMMITTEES REVENUE COSTS:

Implementation = £24,327 ex VAT (£29,192 including VAT)

VIRTUAL COMMITTEES CAPITAL COSTS:

Implementation = £330,824 ex VAT (£396,988 including VAT)

ONLINE BY-ELECTION FOR SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRS

£3,780 including VAT.

TOTAL REVENUE INCLUDING NON-RECOVERABLE VAT = £745,090

TOTAL CAPITAL INCLUDING VAT = £615,748

GRAND TOTAL = £1,360,838

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT**■ Buildings: Safety**

Shabana Mahmood:

[54075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of widening the scope of the Building Safety Fund to include leaseholders who committed to undertake remedial works prior to 11 March 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

It is the responsibility of building owners to ensure their buildings are safe for residents. The Government also expects those building owners that have already committed to fund remediation to continue to pay and not pass on remediation costs to leaseholders.

The new fund is designed to remove financial barriers where building owners do not have the means to fund remediation quickly. Where work was completed or underway before 11 March 2020, resident safety is already being prioritised. In such

circumstances leaseholders facing charges for remediation costs should confirm that their building owner sought to recover costs from those originally responsible for the defects or through warranty and insurance claims, where possible.

■ Council Tax Reduction Schemes: Coronavirus

Jon Cruddas:

[\[49601\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of additional households that may claim council tax support in 2020-21 as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Simon Clarke:

My Department is working with local authorities to collate data on the impacts of Covid-19 through a financial monitoring survey. The survey includes questions on changes in the number of households claiming council tax support in 2020-21 and about support provided through the £500 million Council Tax Hardship Fund which was announced at the Budget.

■ Evictions: Coronavirus

Florence Eshalomi:

[\[54293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to extend the eviction suspension measures introduced in response to the covid-19 outbreak after 25 June 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

On Friday June 5 2020 the Government announced that the current suspension of evictions from social or private rented accommodation will be extended by 2 months until 23 August 2020. This means that no action to evict a tenant will proceed before 24 August 2020. The emergency measures in the Coronavirus Act, which require landlords to give at least 3 months' notice to evict tenants, are unaffected by this and remain in place until 30 September 2020.

We will also continue to work with the judiciary, legal representatives and the advice sector on arrangements, including new rules, to ensure that when the moratorium on evictions ends, the courts are better able to address the need for appropriate protection of all parties, including those shielding from coronavirus. This is to ensure that judges have all the information necessary to make just decisions and that the most vulnerable tenants can get the help they need.

■ Food Supply: Coronavirus

Christian Wakeford:

[\[49138\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that food parcels being distributed among Jewish and Muslim communities during the covid-19 outbreak are culturally appropriate and in line with the dietary requirements of those communities.

Christopher Pincher:

The offer has been developed at pace in response to the Covid emergency. The shielding cohort is diverse and we recognise some of the boxes contain products that may not be permitted culturally or for faith reasons by some groups.

In the standardised box which is delivered to individuals there is a note which explains that, should the individual have any allergies, or any religious or cultural dietary requirements, and are not able to eat some of the food and feel that the remaining contents of the package are not enough supplies for one week, they should contact their local authority.

The packages include tinned meat and tinned tuna, but as the product is packaged there is no risk of individuals having to touch foodstuffs that are unsuitable.

Leasehold: Reform**Theresa Villiers:**[\[54038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recommendations on the cost of leasehold enfranchisement contained in the Law Commission's report, entitled *Leasehold home ownership: buying your freehold or extending your lease: Report on options to reduce the price payable*, published on 9 January 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government is carefully considering the proposals outlined in the Law Commission's report *Leasehold home ownership: buying your freehold or extending your lease, Report on options to reduce the price payable* and will set out its preferred way forward in due course.

Local government finance: Coronavirus**Karin Smyth:**[\[49038\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on financial support for local authorities (a) that have lost income due to covid-19 and (b) for extra costs incurred as part of the covid-19 recovery.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Secretary of State and I both speak to our counterparts at the Treasury regularly and discuss a range of issues affecting local government.

Government has now made an unprecedented £3.2 billion available to local authorities through an un-ringfenced grant so they can address pressures they are facing in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The package recognises the additional costs and pressures on finances councils are facing as a result of the current crisis. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to making sure councils have the resources they need to support their communities through this challenging time.

Local Government: Coronavirus**Steve Reed:** [\[53441\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department plans to provide local authorities with additional powers to respond to and control localised covid-19 outbreaks.

Mr Simon Clarke:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has been working with the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to develop the framework for the local management of further outbreaks, and all Upper Tier Local Authorities have been asked to develop local outbreak control plans based on the existing statutory responsibilities of their Directors of Public Health. MHCLG, alongside other relevant departments, are considering whether further powers are required for local authorities to manage future outbreaks in line with these plans.

Property Development: Isle of Dogs**Mike Amesbury:** [\[52433\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what discussions he had with (a) his Department's Permanent Secretary and (b) the Government Legal Service on the the compliance of his decision to determine the planning application for the former Westferry Printworks site (235 Westferry Road, London E14 3QS) (PA/18/01877/A1) with the (i) Ministerial Code and (ii) Nolan Principles for standards in public life.

Mike Amesbury: [\[52438\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the advice he received from officials relating to his decision to grant planning permission for the former Westferry Printworks site (235 Westferry Road, London E14 3QS) (PA/18/01877/A1).

Steve Reed: [\[53442\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the evidential basis for his decision to overturn the decision of the planning inspector in relation to the Westferry Printworks development, PA/18/01877/A1 on 14 January 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Christopher Pincher:

The full reasons for the Secretary of State's decision are set out in his Decision Letter of 14 January, which is published here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/857952/20-01-14_DL+IR_Westferry.pdf.

Steve Reed:

[\[54117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, which Minister will make a decision on the Westferry Printworks development planning decision, PA/18/01877/A; and when that decision will be made.

Christopher Pincher:

My officials will be writing to the parties shortly about the process for redetermination.

■ **Sizewell C Power Station: Coronavirus**

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[54080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that appropriate community consultation may take place in respect of the proposed EDF development of the Sizewell C nuclear power station during the covid-19 outbreak.

Dr Dan Poulter:

[\[54081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the ability for due diligence to take place in respect of (a) the proposed development by EDF of the Sizewell C nuclear power station and (b) other significant planning applications.

Christopher Pincher:

The planning system has a vital role to play in supporting the United Kingdom's economic recovery and it should continue to operate effectively during the Covid-19 emergency while adhering to the Government's guidance on social distancing. A written ministerial statement (*Virtual working and planning – Responding to Covid-19 Restrictions*, 13 May 2020 (HCWS235)) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government made clear that moving to digital events and processes will be critical and that these can be put in place in the vast majority of cases to allow for the participation of all parties.

The Government fully supports the Planning Inspectorate's programme for moving to digital events and it expects such events to be taking place virtually by mid-June, other than in exceptional circumstances. The method by which hearings and events are conducted is a matter for the Inspectorate, operating in accordance with their legal obligations.

The application for development of the Sizewell C nuclear power station was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 27 May 2020. After receipt of the application, the Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to review the application and decide whether or not to accept it. If the application is accepted, it will be examined in public. The public will be able to register with the Planning Inspectorate to become an Interested Party. Any interested party can make representations to the examining authority on any aspect of the project.

The Government expects everyone involved in the planning process to engage proactively and the Inspectorate published guidance on 28 May 2020 on how

interested parties and members of the public can participate in the examination process, including accessing documents online and attending virtual hearings. This guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-inspectorate-guidance>.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Asia and Caribbean: Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support the plans of governments of Caribbean and Asian for the forthcoming monsoon and hurricane seasons.

Wendy Morton:

In the Caribbean, DFID works with Governments of the Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth Caribbean as well as regional organisations to strengthen hurricane preparedness. This includes: provision for rapid funding to finance regional disaster surge response through the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency, and the establishing of the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF), an insurance mechanism which makes pay-outs to Caribbean national Governments when they are impacted by a disaster. In addition, humanitarian relief items have been pre-positioned in the region.

In Asia, DFID works with partner Governments - including countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar – to support existing preparedness operations, including for cyclone and monsoon seasons. For example, DFID funds the START Fund, which is set up to respond quickly to emerging crises like severe weather events and aims to preposition stocks and bolster existing crises mechanisms. In response to the recent cyclone Amphan, £800,000 was rapidly released to NGOs from START Fund Bangladesh to provide water, health, food, non-food items and shelter, as well as UN-led humanitarian Coordination.

■ Bangladesh and India: Storms

Carla Lockhart:

[\[52624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what support the Government is providing to people affected by super cyclone Amphan in Bangladesh and India.

Nigel Adams:

The UK has provided £800,000 of rapid release funding to international and local NGOs through the START Fund Bangladesh. This funding will provide water, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare, food, non-food items and shelter for more than 83,300 people for 45-days. The UK is also supporting BRAC Bangladesh, which has provided support to another 6,000 badly affected households, as well as the UN's humanitarian coordination.

DFID has supported the Government of Bangladesh in disaster preparedness for many years. This has helped the Government to put in place an early warning, evacuation, and response system and build community resilience to repeated shocks.

DFID had previously funded technical assistance to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation to help build the first comprehensive city level flood forecasting and early warning system in India. This was launched in 2019 and helped ensure the government and people received timely warnings of Cyclone Amphan. Since 2004, the Indian Government has stated publicly it neither seeks nor accepts official international assistance from foreign governments for disaster relief.

■ Bank Services: Fees and Charges

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52331\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to her Department's press release, UK calls for global action to protect vital money transfers, published on 22 May 2020, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that remittance service providers reduce fees for people making payments during the covid-19 pandemic.

James Duddridge:

The UK has launched, along with Switzerland and with support from the World Bank and UN agencies, a global Call to Action on remittances, which calls on policymakers, regulators and remittance service providers round the world to take action to ensure that diaspora communities can continue to transfer money to their relatives during the crisis.

This Call to Action specifically calls on remittance service providers to explore measures such as reducing remittance transaction costs. We are committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals target of reducing the global average costs of remittances to 3% by 2030, from the current level of around 6.8%.

The World Bank is conducting regular surveys of remittance costs in a number of corridors during the crisis. These surveys show that for most of the corridors surveyed that start in the UK, remittance costs are lower now than before the crisis.

■ Developing Countries: Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52321\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether she plans to introduce a stabilisation fund for international non-governmental organisations to continue to deliver aid to people living in extreme poverty in the global south.

Wendy Morton:

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are key partners for DFID in our response to COVID-19 and we have pledged new funding specifically for CSOs to support our work to tackle the virus. This includes funding allocated through the Rapid Response Facility and significant funding through the DFID Unilever COVID-19 Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition. A new UK Aid Direct funding round has also been launched, some of which has been set aside for rapid access by existing UK Aid

Direct grant holders who are able to respond immediately to COVID-19. In addition, International Non-Government Organisations will receive funding through multilateral organisations as downstream partners as part of the UK's response. As DFID's country network adapts programming to respond to COVID-19, country teams are considering how they can do this through partners, including through CSOs.

We are working flexibly with existing civil society partners to respond to the pandemic, maintain delivery of essential programmes and manage the impacts on organisations and staff. DFID is also offering support to all suppliers, including civil society, in line with the provisions of the Cabinet Office Procurement Policy Note and associated guidance for grants. This allows for relief on services and goods provided in the UK, to DFID aid programmes as a last resort and on a case-by-case basis for DFID contracts and grants. UK-based CSOs are also eligible for the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

NGOs are fundamental parts of DFID's work. Given DFID's support for them runs so deeply through everything we do, there is no plan to create a specific fund.

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[54218\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department has paused funding decisions for new projects and programmes in the Global South not directly related to tackling the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruption across the world from direct health impacts caused by the virus itself, and indirect effects caused by the response, including on economies, livelihoods and education. We have so far pledged up to £764 million of UK aid, tackling the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating both its primary and secondary impacts.

Funding decisions are taken on an ongoing basis. We are reviewing our programming to ensure UK aid is spent as effectively as possible to help the world's poorest. DFID will continue to deliver projects directly related to tackling the coronavirus pandemic but also many projects related to other development issues.

■ Environment Protection

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[51674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to (a) support biodiversity and (b) help prevent the extinction of endangered species.

James Duddridge:

Tackling climate change and biodiversity loss remain high priorities for this Government. It is critical to poverty reduction, protecting the planet for future generations and achieving the sustainable development goals.

DFID has a number of programmes that support biodiversity and help prevent the extinction of endangered species, for example in our significant support for sustainable forestry and land use. The UK is also a strong supporter of the Global

Environment Facility. At UNCAS last September, the PM announced a new £220 million International Biodiversity Fund, which includes the £100 million Biodiverse Landscapes Fund under design, as well as an uplift of £90 million to the Darwin Initiative and £30 million to the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

The UK's objective for CBD COP 15 is to agree a framework that spurs action and the transformative changes needed for halting and reversing global biodiversity loss. We will support ambitious and practical targets, strengthened by coherent implementation mechanisms that are commensurate with the scale of the challenge. The UK is also a Party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which implements strict controls to ensure that international trade in listed species is sustainable, legal and traceable.

■ **Female Genital Mutilation: Coronavirus**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[52007\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment she has made of the accuracy of the estimate by the UN Population Fund that the covid-19 pandemic could result in an additional 2 million girls worldwide being subject to FGM.

Wendy Morton:

Evidence shows that women and girls' sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR) are under pressure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; this includes progress towards ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by 2030.

We are tracking UNFPA's estimates and other assessments as they emerge, and are in frequent touch with our partners in countries to monitor the constraints and the barriers women, girls and marginalised groups may be facing as a direct or indirect impact of COVID-19.

UKaid is continuing to support efforts to tackle FGM during the pandemic, including through increased remote working and using media platforms. For example, our £15 million programme in Sudan continues to support advocacy and last month we saw a significant step towards the outlawing of FGM in Sudan.

■ **Females: Coronavirus**

Seema Malhotra:

[\[52008\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she plans to take to tackle the rise in (a) gender-based violence, (b) child, early and forced marriages, (c) FGM and (d) other harmful practices faced by adolescent girls globally as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

I am deeply concerned about the surge in gender-based violence (GBV), FGM and other harmful practices as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are urgently adapting existing programmes to ensure women and girls continue to access support during the lockdown. For example, in Nepal, DFID is financing safe spaces for women in nine shelters and 42 COVID-19 quarantine sites. In Uganda, DFID is

supporting the Government's response to the spikes in GBV by funding 13 shelters across the country and working to ensure safety of frontline staff and survivors.

The UK leads the world in our support to the Africa-led movement to end FGM. In 2018 we announced a £50 million UK aid package – the biggest single donor investment worldwide to date – to tackle this issue across the most-affected countries in Africa. In February up to £3.5 million of this was allocated to the WHO and UN for vital work with governments and health systems to tackle the harmful practice.

Significant gains have been made in the last 10 years to reduce child marriage, but COVID-19 is putting this progress at risk. DFID's flagship global programme to end child marriage supported just under 3 million adolescent girls to attend school and skills training in 2018 alone. The UN Global Programme is developing innovative ways to continue to reach and support vulnerable girls during the COVID-19 crisis, including moving services online.

■ **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[52503\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what estimate her Department has made of the number of humanitarian personnel prevented by Israel from entering or exiting Gaza in 2019; what assessment she has made of the effect of such barriers on the effectiveness of humanitarian programmes inside Gaza.

Bell Ribeiro-Addy: [\[52504\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assessment her Department has made of the effect of denials of permits to exit Gaza on the ability of Palestinian health workers to access training and professional development.

James Cleverly:

The UK remains deeply concerned about the restrictions on movement and access that affect Gaza. The inability to enter or exit the strip impacts the delivery of vital humanitarian services and limits the professional development of health and humanitarian workers.

DFID is providing £1.3 million (2018-21) to support the UN's Access Coordination Unit (ACU), which works to ensure humanitarian access to Gaza for UN and NGO workers by intervening when travel permits issued by Israel are delayed. The ACU has been instrumental in facilitating access, with more than 3,200 humanitarian personnel receiving assistance between October 2019 and March 2020. We continue to monitor the situation and regularly raise our concerns with the Israeli government.

■ **Global Partnership for Education: Overseas Aid**

Kate Green: [\[54099\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 2 June 2020 to Question 49674, whether her Department plans to provide additional

funding to the Global Partnership for Education to sustain education systems in the global south during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

We are at an unprecedented moment when almost the entire school-going population is out of school, affecting more than 1.5 billion children, half of them girls. Girls' education is a top UK development priority and my officials are assessing how multilateral and other investments can mitigate short-term risks while schools are closed and protect education systems and finance for the medium to long-term.

The UK is the largest donor to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). We have supported GPE to urgently repurpose resources to support distance learning and help countries prepare plans to re-open schools through a dedicated \$500 million COVID-19 accelerated funding window.

■ **Non-governmental Organisations: Finance**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52325\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department plans to increase the levels of funding for (a) large and (b) small and medium non governmental organisations.

Wendy Morton:

NGOs of all sizes are key policy and delivery partners for DFID and we are committed to working with the sector to meet the challenges posed by COVID-19. In country we estimate that around a quarter of existing DFID programmes are implemented directly through NGOs partners. Many NGOs will also receive funding as part of DFID's significant investment in the multilateral response to COVID-19.

The Chancellor has set out the risk that the UK economy will face a significant recession this year. All government departments are working through how their plans will need to change in the light of this. DFID is no exception. The Government's 0.7% GNI target is directly linked to the performance of the UK economy and we need to prepare for this by prioritising our lifesaving aid. No decision has been taken yet, but we are considering the full range of our work.

However, we expect NGOs will in many cases receive additional funding through new centrally-managed programmes and funding mechanisms: including through the Rapid Response Facility, a COVID-19 themed UK Aid Direct round, DFID's new partnership with Unilever, the START Fund, and a possible contribution to a Disasters and Emergency Committee appeal.

■ **Overseas Aid: Coronavirus**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52324\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps the Government is taking to help support communities manage social tensions caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

James Cleverly:

In many countries with weak governance or ongoing conflict, COVID-19 risks raising social tensions, reducing respect for human rights and, in some contexts, may pose challenges to peace processes. Higher levels of instability create obstacles to an effective response, for example limiting humanitarian access, and may pose risks to UK national security.

DFID is committed to ensuring that, through all channels of support, our assistance reaches the most marginalized and vulnerable. We are taking steps to ensure that both our immediate responses to COVID-19 and long-term recovery efforts do not exacerbate conflict and instead help to build peace and improve governance. We are encouraging our implementing partners to demonstrate accountability, strengthen local owner- and leadership and adopt inclusive, conflict sensitive approaches. We are also working with partners, governments, media providers, civil society and local community and faith leaders to counter misinformation.

As pledged in our manifesto, this Government will continue to support international initiatives to achieve reconciliation, stability and justice across the world.

Layla Moran:[\[54242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to ensure existing programmes funded by her Department can be adapted to respond to covid-19 so that development progress is not lost.

Wendy Morton:

We are maximising the UK's efforts to tackle COVID-19 by adapting and scaling up existing programmes where they can respond to the crisis. In country, we are working quickly to pivot our programming to support the COVID-19 response, reinforcing health, humanitarian, social protection or economic support programmes.

Overseas Aid: Gender**Wendy Chamberlain:**[\[53628\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, how much and what proportion of Official Development Assistance has been spent on projects tackling gender inequality in each financial year since 2009-10.

Wendy Morton:

All of DFID's aid activities reported to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are screened against the gender equality policy marker. This is a measurement of the proportion of aid that supports gender equality and women's empowerment. An activity can be marked as 'principal' if gender equality is the main objective of the programme, or as 'significant' if gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the programme.

DFID's spend on bilateral allocable activities targeting gender equality is made publicly available through the [OECD statistics portal](#). For example, in 2018 £4.2 billion of DFID's total bilateral spend was marked principal or significant (66%).

These world-leading investments are delivering results at scale. Between 2015 and 2019, DFID reached 50.6 million women of childbearing age, children under 5 and adolescent girls through our nutrition-relevant programmes and supported 5.8 million girls gain access to a decent education. Last year, UK aid helped 23.5 million of the world's poorest women and girls access to vital, voluntary family planning.

■ Overseas Development Institute: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52332\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support Overseas Development Institute fellows who have been evacuated due to covid-19 to complete their contracts when it is safe to do so.

James Duddridge:

The ODI Fellowship Scheme recruits and posts early career economists and statisticians of different nationalities to work as civil servants in developing country institutions for two-year placements. Approximately 80% of Overseas Development Institute fellows have been evacuated to their home countries. Seventeen remain at post, most of whom are engaged in supporting their host governments' COVID-19 response. We are liaising closely with ODI on their plans to return fellows to post when it is safe to do so and to ensure the continuing safety of those remaining. Most fellows are working remotely and are continuing to support their host governments. We are working with ODI to ensure that fellows are able to operate effectively in these circumstances.

■ Remittances: Africa

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[51797\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what discussions she has had with UK banks on encouraging support for remittance companies operating in Africa to help tackle humanitarian disasters in (a) Somalia and (b) other African countries.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[51798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if she will take steps to encourage UK banks to provide further support to remittance companies working to provide humanitarian support from the UK to Africa.

Mr Virendra Sharma:

[\[51799\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of restarting the Safer Corridor Initiative in light of the recent reduction in remittances from the UK as a result of the covid-19 pandemic and reluctance from banks to support remittance companies.

James Duddridge:

The Government recognises the vital role remittances play in supporting the incomes of millions of people around the world – including in Africa, where remittances can represent a significant proportion of GDP. In Somalia remittances represented more than one quarter of its GDP in 2019, and on average made up a third of total income for households that received them.

We are deeply concerned about the impact of COVID-19 in Somalia and other African countries, where millions of people already face food insecurity caused by humanitarian disasters and conflict. This situation will be compounded by a reduction in remittances. Recent projections by the World Bank's indicate that remittances to sub-Saharan Africa will fall by around 23% – USD 11 billion – in 2020.

We are therefore working closely with our international partners to monitor and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on remittance flows. The UK-Somalia Safer Corridor Initiative brought together stakeholders including banks, remittance service providers, regulators and community representatives to tackle barriers in the UK-Somalia remittance corridor. The Government continues to engage regularly with these stakeholders to address the impact of COVID-19 on remittance flows.

The Government understands that UK banks play an important role in maintaining the flow of remittances from the UK to Africa. The Government and the UK's regulatory authorities have regular engagement with the banking sector in the UK on a wide range of issues, including on the provision of banking services to remittance service providers. The decision to offer banking services is ultimately a commercial decision for banks, which are required by legislation to make these decisions in a proportionate and non-discriminatory way.

On Friday 22 May, the UK and Swiss Governments, with the support of the World Bank and other partners, launched a global Call to Action on remittances. This called on policymakers, regulators and remittance service providers to take action to keep remittances flowing during the crisis

The Government has already taken steps to support remittance service providers in the UK, including by enabling them to remain open through lockdown by including them on the list of essential businesses.

■ Schools: Females**Layla Moran:**[\[54241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what plans her Department has to help ensure that as schools reopen internationally, girls are not prevented from returning to education.

Wendy Morton:

Ensuring 12 years of quality education for all children, especially girls, is a UK priority, particularly in responding to the COVID 19 pandemic. We are helping to mitigate the short-term risks to children by focussing on their safety, nutrition, wellbeing and learning whilst schools are closed. The UK has announced £20 million for UNICEF's

crisis appeal, which includes education, and a further £5 million to the Education Cannot Wait fund to support emergency education in fragile contexts.

Getting girls and the most marginalised back to school is one of the most important challenges the international education community has ever faced. As the Ebola crisis in West Africa showed, girls in particular are highly vulnerable to the socio-economic impacts of the crisis. We are re-orienting our programmes in 18 countries to help education ministries plan for school re-opening. At global level we will support UNICEF's Re-Opening Better campaign, with particular focus on the needs of girls and the most marginalised children.

■ UNICEF: Coronavirus

Wendy Chamberlain:

[\[53624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what the purpose is of the £20 million of UK aid that has been allocated to tackle the covid-19 pandemic through UNICEF; when that funding will be spent; how that funding will be spent; and what guidance she has (a) issued and (b) received on the proportion of that funding which will be allocated to NGOs and civil society organisations.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government's funding to UNICEF is in support of its global COVID-19 appeal. Through the appeal, UNICEF will contribute to both outbreak control and mitigation of the collateral impacts of the pandemic, including interruptions to water and sanitation, health, nutrition, education, protection and essential social services for children, women and vulnerable populations.

It is anticipated that all funding received from both the UK Government and other donors will be fully utilised by 31 December 2020, in line with the current appeal. In providing these funds to UNICEF, DFID did not require that a specific amount be channelled to NGOs. However, DFID welcomes the vital role that NGOs will continue to play in service delivery through multilaterals, and we are pleased that some UN agencies, such as UNICEF, are seeking to simplify their processes for NGO partners to help ensure funding reaches them more swiftly. We will be working with the UN and DFID's country offices to increasingly better understand and track eventual flows to NGOs in-country.

■ World Health Organisation: Overseas Aid

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[52322\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she has had with representatives of the World Health Organisation on future core voluntary contributions from the UK.

Wendy Morton:

The UK's funding for WHO is based on our assessment of the organisation's needs. The scale and timing of future core voluntary contributions will be considered as part of this assessment.

■ Yemen: Humanitarian Aid

Anna McMorrin:

[\[52364\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what recent discussions she had with international counterparts on the urgent need for increased pledged funding for humanitarian aid programmes in Yemen.

James Cleverly:

Over the last month the International Development Secretary and I have held several calls with our counterparts, including from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait, to stress the importance of donors providing funds to the humanitarian response in Yemen.

UK officials have also held similar discussions with their counterparts around the world.

The UK announced our new pledge of £160 million in humanitarian funding for Yemen in the 2020/21 financial year at the Yemen Pledging Conference on 2 June, taking our total commitment since the conflict began to £970 million.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Board of Trade: Membership

Simon Hoare:

[\[49069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the membership of the Board of Trade is; and on what dates that Board met in (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Graham Stuart:

The Board is chaired by the Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board - its only standing member. The Board is also served by a Deputy President (currently Marcus Fysh MP) supported by a selection of advisers invited to offer views on trade and investment. Advisers represent businesses from across the UK and are crucial links into UK business sharing their specific expertise, sectoral and local knowledge.

a) 2018: Met four times: 29 March; 17 May; 6 September; and 15 November.

b) 2019: Met twice: 28 February and 16 May.

c) 2020: No meetings thus far.

■ Dishwashers: Imports

Hilary Benn:

[\[49597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate he has made of the number of dishwashers that were imported into the UK from outside the EU in each of the last five years.

Graham Stuart:

Details of UK imports of dishwashers from outside the EU is attached.

Attachments:

1. UK Imports of Dishwashers [UK Imports of Dishwashers.docx]

■ Import Duties**Sammy Wilson:**[\[48960\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what estimate the Government has made of the total annual savings to businesses and consumers from the elimination of and reductions in tariffs proposed in the UK Global Tariff.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The United Kingdom's Global Tariff (UKGT) liberalises £62 billion worth of trade, benefitting businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland and across the country.

It is tailored for our economy and includes £30 billion from liberalising key goods of inputs into our supply chains and £15 billion from removing nuisance tariffs, compared to the current tariff set centrally by the EU in Brussels.

The UKGT will expand consumer choice, driving competitive prices for families, while lowering cost pressures for businesses too and making sure they are able to compete globally from a strong foundation at home.

■ Import Duties: Northern Ireland**Sammy Wilson:**[\[48961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that the imposition of EU tariffs on goods entering the Northern Irish market from Great Britain will not lead to Northern Irish businesses and consumers missing out on the benefits of the UK Global Tariff.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Northern Ireland is, and remains, part of the United Kingdom's customs territory.

Northern Irish businesses and consumers will benefit from the United Kingdom's Global Tariff – which is tailored for our economy and allows us to trade on our own terms – along with any preferential arrangements in place, such as free trade agreements.

The current intention is that EU tariffs should only be charged on 'at risk' goods that are destined for the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere in the EU, as the Protocol makes clear. The specific list of 'at risk' goods will be a matter for consideration in the Joint Committee.

■ Riot Control Weapons: USA**Hilary Benn:****[53311]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether she plans to review UK exports of (a) tear gas and (b) rubber bullets to the US.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

My Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade and I have been sorry to see the violence that has taken place in the United States of America.

All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria ('Consolidated Criteria'). In reaching a decision, the Department for International Trade receives advice from a number of Departments including the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Together, we draw on all available information, including reports from NGOs and our diplomatic missions. The Consolidated Criteria provides a thorough risk assessment framework and requires us to think hard about the impact of exporting any equipment. These are not decisions my Department takes lightly, and we will not license the export of items where to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

Any licence granted by my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade may be subject to conditions. In addition, in line with the Consolidated Criteria, my Department is able to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require. There are currently nine extant licences that may be linked to law enforcement agencies. Six are Open Individual Export Licences ('OIELs'), which have potential end users that include law enforcement agencies. Three are Standard Individual Export Licences ('SIELs'), which have numerous potential end users that include law enforcement agencies. There are also 15 Open General Licences ('OGLs') for which businesses can register that cover the export of anti-riot gear.

Much information is in the public domain already. We publish information on all export licences issued, refused and revoked on a quarterly and annual basis as official statistics on GOV.UK – at: [gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data) – and whilst data on actual exports is not required to be centrally held, the licences issued until the end of December 2019 are available.

Sir Charles Walker:**[54036]**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential future granting or withholding of export licences in relation to crowd and riot control equipment manufactured in the UK and destined for the US; and if she will make a statement.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

My Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade and I have been sorry to see the violence that has taken place in the United States of America.

All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria ('Consolidated Criteria'). In reaching a decision, the Department for International Trade receives advice from a number of Departments including the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Together, we draw on all available information, including reports from NGOs and our diplomatic missions. The Consolidated Criteria provides a thorough risk assessment framework and requires us to think hard about the impact of exporting any equipment. These are not decisions my Department takes lightly, and we will not license the export of items where to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

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■ Trade Agreements

Emily Thornberry:

[\[53344\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Government's command paper, Processes for making free trade agreements after the United Kingdom has left the European Union, CP 63, published in February 2019, whether the proposals in that paper remain Government policy.

Greg Hands:

This Government is committed to building a transparent trade policy, which is subject to robust and appropriate parliamentary scrutiny. We have made and fulfilled commitments to transparency, including publishing objectives and economic scoping assessments for our proposed Free Trade Agreements. These commitments are already being fulfilled as per the publication of our objectives for UK-US and UK-Japan negotiations on 2 March and 13 May respectively.

We have also committed to keeping Parliament and the public informed of progress on our negotiations via regular updates and to work closely with the appropriate scrutiny Committees in both Houses. At the end of negotiations, we will lay a final

impact assessment prior to ratification under the statutory framework provided for by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

■ Trade Agreements: USA

Stephen Farry: [\[52623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to ensure that a US-UK trade deal is compatible with the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement.

Greg Hands:

Our top priority remains protecting Northern Ireland's (NI) place in our United Kingdom and preserving the gains from the peace process and the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement. Economic growth is vital for preserving the peace in Northern Ireland. Hence, the UK Government will guarantee that NI businesses will benefit from the lower tariffs we deliver through a US-UK trade deal.

Mr David Jones: [\[53327\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps she is taking to help safeguard the interests of British agriculture in trade negotiations with the United States.

Greg Hands:

Any trade deal with the US must work for UK consumers, farmers, and companies. A deal with the US can help create opportunities for agricultural producers by opening up new markets for the UK's high-quality produce.

As set out in our manifesto, we will not compromise our standards as we negotiate new trade deals. At the end of the transition period, all existing EU food safety, animal welfare, and environmental standards will be retained and form part of our domestic law. This includes all existing import requirements.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[53387\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department will take to ensure that high standards of animal welfare are maintained in any prospective UK-USA trade deal.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[53388\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department will take to ensure that food production and food hygiene standards are maintained in any prospective UK-USA trade deal.

Dr Dan Poulter: [\[53389\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department will take to ensure there is a level playing field for UK farmers and food producers against US farmers and producers in any prospective UK-USA trade deal.

Greg Hands:

The UK is clear that it will not compromise on its high standards of food safety and animal welfare.

The UK's food regulators will continue to provide independent advice to ensure that all food imports into the UK comply with those high standards.

Our analysis shows that agricultural sectors are set to gain from a US deal. We have been clear that any future deal with the US must work for UK consumers, farmers and companies.

■ UK Trade With EU: Appeals

Gareth Thomas:

[\[48938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether the UK will join the multi-party interim appeal arbitration arrangement established by the EU; and if she will make a statement.

Greg Hands:

The United Kingdom is committed to a fully functioning WTO dispute settlement system, with an appeal function, to ensure that the rules we have negotiated are enforceable.

We believe that reform discussions must progress and should not prevent parties from reaching binding resolution to disputes in the meantime. We are continuing to follow developments on the interim appeal arrangement, recently notified by nineteen WTO members, very closely.

This does not replace the need for a system that is supported by all Members and we welcome the continued commitment of Members supporting this arrangement to 'resolving the impasse of the Appellate Body appointments as a matter of priority'.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: Coronavirus

Kevin Brennan:

[\[53319\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to use alternative buildings to create more court capacity to enable social distancing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

We are working hard to ensure that justice can continue to be done under these challenging circumstances. HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) officials are looking at how we make the best possible use of the existing estate, as well as creating more capacity. This means considering whether any recently closed courts which are still owned by HMCTS are suitable for reopening, and identifying alternative spaces to further extend provision.

■ Crime: Coronavirus**Dr Julian Lewis:**[\[53275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether it is a criminal offence to (a) threaten and (b) actually (i) spit, (ii) cough and (iii) sneeze upon another person; whether any such offence is aggravated by a claim by the assailant to be infected with the covid-19 virus; whether it is in the public interest to prosecute such cases during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will review any recent decision to take no action against such an assailant on grounds that the subsequent death of the victim could not be directly attributed to the assault.

Alex Chalk:

Whether such behaviour amounts to a criminal offence will depend on the circumstances. Threatening to infect someone with covid-19, for example, can be charged as an assault and if a direct causal link can be established between one person's unlawful act and another person contracting the virus then other more serious offences could be charged. Each case is considered on its own specific facts.

Provided there is sufficient evidence, whether it is in the public interest to prosecute such cases is a matter for the CPS. The Director of Public Prosecutions has made clear that the CPS will not hesitate to prosecute those using covid-19 to threaten people in this way and CPS data shows that more than 300 such prosecutions were brought in the first month of lockdown alone.

The Sentencing Council has published interim guidance clarifying that, when sentencing common assault offences involving threats or activity relating to the transmission of covid-19, courts should treat this as an aggravating feature of the offence and take this into account when sentencing.

The Government has no remit for reviewing operational decisions of the police or the CPS in individual cases.

■ Crime: Victims**Simon Baynes:**[\[49867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to ensure victims of crime can continue to access support during the covid-19 outbreak.

Alex Chalk:

We are committed to ensuring victims and witnesses receive the support they need during this challenging time.

We have been working across government, with the sector and local bodies through our Covid-19 Victims and Witnesses Silver Group, which has helped to identify needs to ensure support is available for victims and witnesses.

We have secured £25million as part of the £76million government package for charities supporting vulnerable people including victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse, made almost £600k of funding available to assist helpline services

and committed £3million per annum to Independent Sexual Violence advisers until 2022.

■ **Legal Aid Scheme: Asylum**

Mr Barry Sheerman: [\[49588\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps he is taking to ensure that legal aid for refugees and asylum seekers is effective in providing fair and high quality representation and advice.

Alex Chalk:

Every practitioner who provides immigration and asylum advice in the UK is required to be regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority or by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. These bodies ensure that practitioners are competent and act in the best interest of the client.

To hold a legal aid contract, an individual must also be accredited under the Law Society's Immigration and Asylum Accreditation scheme, ensuring a high standard and competency for practitioners advising on immigration and asylum law.

Legal aid contracts explicitly set out quality standards, including additional requirements for those advising child clients or where their client is in immigration detention.

Providers are monitored by the Legal Aid Agency in meeting these requirements on a regular basis, including through an independent peer review of case files.

■ **Marriage: Coronavirus**

Darren Henry: [\[53651\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether legislative proposals are required to amend the law to enable weddings, including death-bed weddings, to take place during the covid-19 outbreak.

Darren Henry: [\[53652\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans the Government has to allow witnesses to marriages and civil partnerships to attend remotely as the covid-19 lockdown is eased.

Alex Chalk:

We understand the frustration couples planning a wedding must be feeling, and as with all coronavirus restrictions we will look to ease them as soon as it is safe to do so.

Statute law provides that marriages must be solemnized, and civil partnerships formed, in certain types of location and in the presence of certain people, including witnesses. We continue to explore what potential changes to the requirements for marriage and civil partnership might assist couples – where restrictions remain in

place or where infection control means that the requirements cannot be met – without undermining the safeguards in the system.

■ Nitrous Oxide: Prosecutions

Gavin Robinson: [53449]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions for use of nitrous oxide have been brought since the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 came into force.

Gavin Robinson: [53450]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many prosecutions have been brought under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016; and how many of those prosecutions were successful.

Chris Philp:

The Ministry of Justice has published data on the number of prosecutions and convictions in England & Wales up to December 2019. This data is available in the Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data tool available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888344/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx

Select the pull down for 'Detailed Offence', and in the field search bar type 'psychoactive substance' and select all the options that appear.

The total number of prosecutions and convictions under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 in each year since 2016 can be found in row 31 and row 32 of the pivot table, respectively.

To identify the number of prosecutions and convictions specifically for use of nitrous oxide under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 would require a manual search of court records as this level of detail (specific substance) is not held within the courts proceedings database; which would be of disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Abortion: Gender Selection

Fiona Bruce: [54088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 21 January 2020 to Question 6069, what steps he will take to prevent sex selective abortion under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No 2) Regulations 2020.

Mr Robin Walker:

An abortion on the grounds of sex-selection is not one of the lawful grounds for a termination of pregnancy under the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Regulations 2020.

The UK Government takes any suggestion of sex-selective abortion seriously and has conducted a careful study of the data in GB which shows no evidence that it has been taking place.

Data collection and publication on abortion related issues in Northern Ireland is a matter for the Department of Health in Northern Ireland to take forward.

■ Anniversaries: Northern Ireland

Paul Girvan:

[\[52368\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans the Government has to celebrate the centenary of the establishment of Northern Ireland in 2021.

Mr Robin Walker:

As outlined in *New Decade, New Approach*, the UK Government is committed to working alongside the restored Executive to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland in 2021 in a spirit of mutual respect, inclusiveness and reconciliation, in line with the principles for remembering.

We are committed to facilitating national recognition and international awareness of this significant anniversary, with opportunities for people to celebrate Northern Ireland and its integral place within the United Kingdom. We will mark the centenary in NI, across the UK, across the island of Ireland and internationally.

We intend to use a cross-Whitehall, collaborative approach to support and deliver projects to mark the centenary. Further details on these projects will be available shortly.

■ Borders: Northern Ireland

Louise Haigh:

[\[52190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who will sit on the Joint Consultative Working Group.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Joint Consultative Working Group, like the Specialised Committee, will be co-chaired by the UK and EU and will be made up of officials from both sides.

Louise Haigh:

[\[52191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, whether representatives from the business engagement forum will be entitled to attend the Specialised Committee on the Northern Ireland Protocol discussions.

Mr Robin Walker:

In line with the Rules of Procedure at Annex VIII of the Withdrawal Agreement, where appropriate and by decision of the co-chairs, experts or other persons who are not members of delegations may be invited to attend meetings of the Specialised Committee in order to provide information on a particular subject.

SCOTLAND**■ Offshore Industry: Scotland****Andrew Bowie:**[\[54210\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps his Department has taken with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to progress the Oil and Gas Sector Deal.

Mr Alister Jack:

My Department works closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a range of issues in support of the oil and gas sector in Scotland.

The oil and gas industry is important to our economy, energy security and jobs. That is reflected in the Conservative Manifesto commitment of 2019 to work with the sector on a transformational sector deal.

Discussions around an offshore oil and gas industry Sector Deal are ongoing and will build on Government's existing extensive engagement with the sector.

While there is no formal timescale for concluding a sector deal we recognise the challenges facing the sector from the collapse of the oil price and the operational challenges posed by COVID-19. The sector deal has the potential to play an important role in the recovery of the sector.

This is a whole of Government approach and my Department will be appropriately involved in the process.

Andrew Bowie:[\[54211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps his Department has taken with the (a) Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and (b) the oil and gas sector on supporting that sector to recover from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr Alister Jack:

My Department works closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on a range of issues in support of the oil and gas sector in Scotland.

Government continue to engage extensively with business across all sectors including oil and gas and are aware of the significant challenges faced by the oil and gas industry and many other sectors during this pandemic. In recognition of those challenges, Government has announced an unprecedented package of support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency.

My Department and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have regular contact with OGUK and the oil and gas industry to understand current challenges and continue to work with them to consider what further support UK Government can provide.

■ Scotland Office: Correspondence**Marion Fellows:** [\[49743\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Mr Alister Jack:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has a target of responding within 20 working days where a response is required. As you will understand, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. The Department ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised, and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT**■ Airlines: Repayments****Pete Wishart:** [\[48954\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to ensure (a) Air France, (b) KLM and (c) other airlines refund customers for flights cancelled as a result of covid-19.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department for Transport is in regular conversation with UK airlines and wider membership bodies. We are working closely with the sector, the regulator and consumer groups to help ensure airlines deliver on their commitments.

The Government recognises the challenges businesses are experiencing regarding refunds for cancelled holidays and flights. Airlines are working hard to answer the high call volumes and to process large volumes of refunds.

The Government appreciates the frustration consumers may be experiencing. We have been clear that where a consumer has asked for a refund, that refund must be paid.

■ Aviation: Coronavirus**Paul Maynard:** [\[48964\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with the International Civil Aviation Organization on the implementation of Government plans for quarantine for inbound air passengers.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Department for Transport (DfT) officials have been attending weekly International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Council Aviation Recovery Task-Force (CART) which was set up specifically to address the aviation industry's recovery from the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This brings together states, multilateral organisations and industry bodies. Potential health measures for aviation, such as the planned mandatory self-isolation for inbound passengers, were discussed in both of these forums.

Paul Maynard:[\[48965\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the governments of (a) Greece, (b) Spain, (c) France and (d) Italy on the practical operation of the proposed quarantine system for inbound travellers as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Secretary of State for Transport has had no such discussions with the Governments of those specific states about the operation of UK measures.

Paul Maynard:[\[48967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with Manchester Airports Group on the introduction of a quarantine period for inbound UK passengers as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Kelly Tolhurst:

My right hon. Friend, the Member for Welwyn Hatfield and I hold regular meetings with the aviation sector including Manchester Airports Group where self-isolation has been discussed.

The Department for Transport has engaged with the aviation sector on this issue and will continue to do so in the coming weeks. This includes working with senior representatives from the aviation industry as part of the Aviation Restart and Recovery Expert Steering Group to which Manchester Airports Group has representation. This group serves as the working group for the International Aviation Taskforce – one of five sectoral taskforces announced by the Government on 13 May to support the development of guidelines for safely reopening businesses.

Gerald Jones:[\[54189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with trades unions representing employees in the aviation industry on safeguarding employment in that sector.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department for Transport has regular calls with trade unions at both ministerial and official level. These calls cover a wide range of issues, including the safeguarding of employment for employees in the aviation industry.

Gerald Jones:

[\[54190\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he plans to prevent (a) share buybacks, (b) the payment of dividends and (c) capital contributions from the date of Government loans to UK aviation companies until 12 months after those loans have been repaid in full; and if he will make a statement.

Kelly Tolhurst:

Bespoke financial support will only be considered as a last resort, once all other options have been exhausted.

Terms for any bespoke financial support would be structured to protect taxpayers' interest, and the Government would expect to have regard to factors including but not limited to whether the business makes a material contribution to the economic activity of the UK, and the equitable and fair treatment across businesses in the sector.

Any bespoke support would need to represent value for money. Any Government support would also need to comply with current State aid rules.

Gerald Jones:

[\[54191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the 14-day at-home quarantine for passengers arriving at UK airports compared with testing passengers for covid-19 upon arrival at those airports.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The scientific advice shows that when domestic transmission is high, imported cases represent a small amount of the overall total and they make no significant difference to the epidemic. However, this can change when the domestic transmission/rate of infection is low, and people are arriving from countries with a higher rate of infection.

Now that domestic transmission within the UK is coming under control, and other countries begin to lift lockdown measures, it is the right time to prepare new measures at the border, including self-isolation.

The Government and SAGE do not currently advise virus testing for asymptomatic people, either domestically or at the border, apart from in certain settings, such as hospitals, care homes, and prisons.

Gerald Jones:

[\[54192\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policy on restarting passenger flights of research by the International Air Transport Association that 48 per cent of people in the UK would be willing to travel within a month or two once covid-19 is under control.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department for Transport has, and will continue, to strive to develop policy based on the best possible evidence.

■ Bicycles: Repairs and Maintenance**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[54031\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to his Department's News story of 9 May 2020, £2 billion package to create new era for cycling and walking, what plans he has for the implementation of the cycle repair voucher scheme; and what the timetable is for the implementation of that scheme.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On 23rd May the Secretary of State announced £25 million of funding to help people get their cycles repaired so that they can get back to cycling. This funding will provide up to £50 to members of the public to get their old cycles back in working order and will be delivered alongside plans to increase the provision of cycle fixing facilities across the country.

To claim the contribution towards the cost of their transaction, applicants will need to register online after arranging a repair with a participating business, once the scheme has launched. We are aiming for applications to the scheme to open by the end of June. We will be engaging with cycle shops and mechanics in advance of this so that they can register to participate in the scheme.

■ British Airways: Coronavirus**Mr Stephen Morgan:**[\[54236\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of British Airways on the pay and conditions for British Airways staff after the covid-19 outbreak.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise that the recent BA announcement will be distressing news for BA employees and their families and stand ready to support them. However, we do not comment on discussions held with individual companies, as this information is commercially sensitive.

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with airlines, airports and unions to understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on the sector and its workers.

Mr Stephen Morgan:[\[54238\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure that British Airways engages with (a) trade unions and (b) its staff on potential redundancies.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise that the recent BA announcement will be distressing news for BA employees and their families and we stand ready to support them.

Employers should always treat employees fairly and in a spirit of partnership. Terms and conditions of employment are for negotiation and agreement between employers and employees (or their representatives).

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with airlines, airports and unions to understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on the sector and its workers.

■ **British Airways: Redundancy**

Mr Stephen Morgan:

[\[54237\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with representatives of British Airways on Section 188 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 relating to redundancy.

Kelly Tolhurst:

We recognise that the recent BA announcement will be distressing news for BA employees and their families and stand ready to support them. However, we do not comment on discussions held with individual companies, as this information is commercially sensitive.

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with airlines, airports and unions to understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on the sector and its workers.

■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Dr Rupa Huq:

[\[49074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what guidance his Department has issued to (a) public transport operators and (b) private bus companies on providing support to passengers with (i) sight loss, (ii) sight impairment and (iii) other disabilities to enable social distancing during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

Whilst the Government is encouraging people to avoid public transport whenever possible, we understand that many disabled people continue to rely on transport services and maintaining their accessibility is therefore important.

On the 12th May the Department published guidance to help transport operators provide safe environments for their passengers and staff across all forms of public and private transport, including measures to assess and address the risks posed by COVID-19 in the transport sector.

Buses continue to play an important role in enabling disabled people to make essential journeys and we have reminded operators that laws supporting their access remain in force. Operators should ensure that staff are trained and equipped to provide passengers with assistance safely and should consider the impact on disabled passengers of any measures to support social distancing.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) issued its own advice to the station staff of Train Operating Companies. This included specific advice on how staff could continue to provide assistance to disabled passengers whilst maintaining safe social distancing and good hygiene regimes, including advice on assisting visually impaired customers.

■ Buses: Hydrogen**Wera Hobhouse:** [\[49803\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to increase the use of hydrogen buses.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government has supported the use of a range of low carbon bus technologies, including hydrogen, through funds including the Low Emission and Ultra Low Emission Bus Schemes. These schemes have provided funding for the purchase of 62 hydrogen buses.

The Prime Minister announced £5 billion of new funding to boost bus and cycling links on 10 February, including at least 4,000 new zero emission buses to make greener travel the convenient option, driving forward the UK's progress on its net zero ambitions. The details of these programmes will be announced in due course.

■ Crewe-Holyhead Railway Line**Dr James Davies:** [\[52203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with local stakeholders on the future of the North Wales Coast Main Line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

My officials maintain active and constructive engagement with stakeholders including the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales. Development work undertaken by my department has been openly shared with stakeholders and the GrowthTrack360 Alliance. I have encouraged Network Rail to examine ways to facilitate capacity, performance, and journey time improvements across the region, building on recent major signalling and track renewals, and remain happy to engage with stakeholders on their own proposals, and to provide advice on how these might be funded in the future.

Dr James Davies: [\[52204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he will take to increase (a) line speed and (b) capacity on the North Wales Coast Main Line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I am pleased to say that I have recently approved the progression of a relevant railway enhancement scheme to the next stage of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline. My department is willing to fund the development of an Outline Business case for interventions aimed at increasing line speed and capacity on the North Wales Coast Main Line. We have engaged with stakeholders in Wales on the specification of this work, and will maintain such engagement as it proceeds over the next twelve to eighteen months.

■ Cycleways

Alberto Costa:

[\[52150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing for the provision of new local cycling routes.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the 9th May the Government announced a £2 billion package of funding for cycling and walking over the next five years. £225 million will be available to local authorities this financial year for immediate measures including new cycle lanes, wider pavements and safer junctions. Indicative funding allocations from the £225 million have been published and funding will be provided in two tranches, subject to local authorities satisfying the Department that they have sufficiently ambitious and credible plans in place. Leicestershire has been indicatively allocated £300,000 for tranche one and £1,200,000 for tranche two.

■ Cycling and Walking: Finance

Ruth Cadbury:

[\[49717\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the Answer of 7 February 2020 to Question 10391 on Cycling and Walking, when he plans to publish the Cycling Insights part of the research commissioned by his Department to assess what funding is required to meet its targets for increased cycling and walking by 2025.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On the 7th February the Department published the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Active Travel Investment Model structure and evidence base research paper and accompanying appendices. Publication of the cycling and walking insights part of the research has been delayed by other pressures, but the Department intends to publish it shortly.

Olivia Blake:

[\[53666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to publish the Government's cycling and walking investment strategy.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Government remains committed to delivering the aims and ambitions set out in the existing Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, which was published in April 2017. On the 9th May the Government announced a £2bn package of funding for cycling and walking over the next five years. The Government will say more later this year about plans to update the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy to build on the new opportunities that this funding provides.

■ Cycling and Walking: Staffordshire**Kate Griffiths:**[\[52521\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £2 billion in funding announced on 9 May 2020 for walking and cycling will be allocated to Staffordshire local authority.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The first part of the £2 billion to be released will be a £225 million Emergency Active Travel Fund in the current financial year. The first tranche of this will be released as soon as possible provided local authorities submit suitably ambitious plans to the Department, and the second tranche will be released later in the summer. Indicative allocations to local authorities have been published on gov.uk. Staffordshire has been indicatively allocated £366,000 for tranche one and £1,466,000 for tranche two: its final allocations will depend on the quality of the plans it submits to the Department. Decisions on the remainder of the £2 billion will be a matter for the next Spending Review.

■ Cycling: South Yorkshire**Olivia Blake:**[\[53667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much of the £2 billion in funding announced for cycling will be allocated to (a) South Yorkshire and (b) Sheffield.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The first part of the £2 billion to be released will be a £225 million Emergency Active Travel Fund in the current financial year. The first tranche of this will be released as soon as possible provided local authorities submit suitably ambitious plans to the Department, and the second tranche will be released later in the summer. Indicative allocations to local authorities have been published on gov.uk. Sheffield City Region Combined Authority has been indicatively allocated £1,437,000 for tranche one and £5,749,000 for tranche two: its final allocations will depend on the quality of the plans it submits to the Department. Decisions on the remainder of the £2 billion will be a matter for the next Spending Review.

■ Department for Transport: Correspondence**Marion Fellows:**[\[49741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what the average length of time was for Ministers of his Department to respond to correspondence from hon. Members in each month in the last two years.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Department for Transport has a target of responding within 20 working days where a response is required. In September 2019 the Department adopted its own internal target of 7 Working days.

As you will understand, the Department for Transport is currently dealing with unprecedented volumes of correspondence due to COVID-19. The Department ensures that urgent cases raised by hon. Members are prioritised, and is taking steps to provide substantive responses in as short a time as possible.

All correspondence received from hon. Members is being reviewed and will be responded to as soon as possible.

A table showing the average number of days taken to respond to correspondence from Hon. Members is below. Please note, in some cases Ministers had not been appointed to the Department at the time the correspondence was received, however they signed the final reply, leading to some delay due to the handover from previous ministers.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS TO RESPOND - ALL MINISTERS BY MONTH

Jan-18	17.32	Jan-19	32.06	Jan-20	10.33
Feb-18	17.50	Feb-19	14.66	Feb-20	8.77
Mar-18	15.66	Mar-19	31.23	Mar-20	13.15
Apr-18	18.99	Apr-19	31.70	Apr-20	8.42
May-18	20.31	May-19	30.27	May-20	4.20
Jun-18	20.48	Jun-19	24.80		
Jul-18	21.55	Jul-19	15.22		
Aug-18	30.81	Aug-19	13.07		
Sep-18	52.62	Sep-19	7.27		
Oct-18	49.76	Oct-19	6.63		
Nov-18	38.60	Nov-19	6.53		
Dec-18	36.34	Dec-19	10.10		

■ **Driving Instruction: Coronavirus**

Dan Jarvis:

[54115]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, at what stage of the covid-19 recovery strategy will in-vehicle driving lessons be permitted to resume.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) recommends that, currently, approved driving instructors (ADI) should only provide lessons to candidates who have an essential need.

When providing driving lessons, all ADIs should put in place appropriate measures, in line with the latest Public Health England and Cabinet Office guidance, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. It is the responsibility of the ADI and the pupil to consider the risks to their health and to decide if the driving lesson is essential.

Using the latest Government guidance, the DVSA is working closely with the Approved Driving Instructors National Association Strategic Partnership (NASP) to develop appropriate plans and control measures that will enable the resumption of non-essential driving lessons.

The DVSA will provide further updates on providing driving lessons and driving tests as soon as it can.

■ Driving Tests: Coronavirus**Christian Wakeford:****[49137]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if the Government will extend the expiration date of driving theory tests for people who are not able to take driving lessons or driving tests as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

The two-year validity period of the theory test certificate is set in legislation. This is so the candidate's theoretical knowledge remains current. To extend the validity period would require legislative change. To do this, the relevant parliamentary process would need to take place. This situation is being given urgent attention.

■ Driving: Licensing**Sir Christopher Chope:****[53289]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reasons people are currently not able to apply for a new provisional driving licence; when he plans to reinstate that service; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

Applications for provisional driving licences can be made online at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-first-provisional-driving-licence>.

Customers can also make postal applications for a provisional driving licence. However, paper applications are likely to take significantly longer to process in the current circumstances.

Rosie Duffield: [\[53568\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will instruct the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to enable drivers who do not hold passports to apply for renewal of their driving licences online for the duration of the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

Drivers who do not have a valid passport are unable to complete their application using the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online service. This is because the DVLA requires the passport number to obtain confirmation of identity and a photograph from the applicant's passport. If the applicant does not have a valid passport they will need to send the relevant identity documents to the DVLA separately.

Drivers can also choose to apply either at a post office branch or by submitting a full paper application with the relevant identity documents and photograph, if required. However, paper applications will take longer to process in the current circumstances.

■ **Electric Scooters: Portsmouth**

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[49105\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of (a) topography and (b) air pollution in Portsmouth on the potential merits of trialling an e-scooter scheme in that city.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[49106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the safety of cyclists during e-scooter trials.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[49107\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions his Department has had with Portsmouth City Council on the trials of e-scooters in Portsmouth.

Mr Stephen Morgan: [\[49108\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he made of the potential effect on air pollution in Portsmouth of trialling e-scooters in that city.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department is expediting and expanding trials of rental e-scooters. We have been working with Solent Transport as part of Future Transport Zone project and we are working with a range of local authorities to design e-scooter trials. The trials will gather evidence about the safety and wider impacts of e-scooters, including their effects on air quality and emissions, and their safety impacts for their users and other road users. This will inform whether e-scooters should be legalised in the future. We have recently consulted on regulatory changes for e-scooter trials, including proposals to allow e-scooters to use cycle lanes and tracks, and engaged with a wide number of stakeholder groups.

■ Ferries: Coronavirus**Gavin Robinson:** [\[53451\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of permitting ferry passengers to remain in their cars in line with social distancing measures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Gavin Robinson: [\[53452\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether there is a (a) legislative, (b) health and safety or (c) regulatory requirement for ferry passengers to remain in their vehicles during travel.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The carriage of passengers on vehicle decks of ferries was considered early in the Department's mitigations to the COVID-19 outbreak weighing risk against the need to maintain life-line services.

Limited exemptions were provided on the basis of risk assessments developed by operators for domestic operators with open-decked passenger vessels on short voyages to facilitate safe transport with passengers remaining in their cars on vehicle decks.

For larger vessels on international voyages no exemptions have been requested, though a framework of considerations was developed with our European partners to guide industry on areas for consideration should an exemption be requested specifically to the carriage of a limited number of freight drivers in the cabs of their vehicles.

There are no (a) legislative, (b) health and safety or (c) regulatory requirements for ferry passengers to remain in vehicles during travel.

Alison Thewliss: [\[53469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to reduce the transmission of covid-19 on ferries.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Department continues to engage at all levels across the sector to understand the operational issues facing maritime businesses. As part of this, we continue to work closely with Public Health England and DHSC to ensure ferry operators have access to guidance. This guidance contains pragmatic advice and additional clarity for operators on steps to reduce the risk for staff whilst ensuring services keep running <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-shipping-and-sea-ports-guidance>

■ Freight: Imports

Andrew Griffith:

[\[49139\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proportion of freight by value was imported via (a) sea ports, (b) in the bellyhold of passenger flights, (c) freighter aircraft and (d) road hauliers travelling via France in 2019.

Rachel Maclean:

The Department does not collect data on the value of freight by mode of transport.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line

Dame Cheryl Gillan:

[\[48933\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, (a) how many times, (b) on which dates and (c) with what attendance has the monthly Ministerial Task Force on HS2 met in each of the last six months.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Ministerial Task Force has met for its inaugural following the Government's recent decision to proceed with Phase 1. The first meeting was held on 30 April. Membership of The Task Force includes Ministers from the Department for Transport, HM Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Office. The Chair, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer from HS2 Ltd also attend, alongside officials and advisors from the represented Government Departments and the Prime Minister's Office.

■ High Speed 2 Railway Line: Scotland

Stephen Flynn:

[\[49832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to publish an updated economic impact assessment on the effect of HS2 on Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland.

Andrew Stephenson:

Passengers from Aberdeen will be able to connect onto HS2 services from Edinburgh and Glasgow, benefitting from improved connectivity and journey times to the rest of the network. Better connectivity promotes growth through agglomeration which induces investment and supports the levelling up of the UK economy.

The full business case for HS2 'High-Speed 2: Phase One 'moving Britain Ahead' was revised and published in April 2020 '. HS2 Ltd's 'Economic case advice for the DfT' publication in 2017 provides an illustrative estimate that 5% of the overall transport user benefits will be distributed to passengers from Scotland with the full HS2 network in place. As part of the Integrated Rail Plan we will consider the benefits and the best way to serve Scotland.

■ High Speed Two**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** [\[48934\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if she will publish the minutes of High Speed Two Ltd board meetings since February 2020.

Andrew Stephenson:

HS2 Ltd is required to publish its board minutes within three months of the board meeting being held.

■ Level Crossings**John Redwood:** [\[51510\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to replace railway level crossings with bridges.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail, in its role as national rail infrastructure manager, is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of approximately 5,670 public level crossings on the rail network in Great Britain and for taking decisions on where crossings need to be closed and replaced with bridges or underpasses. Since 2009, it has closed 1,170 of the highest risk crossings on the network and has invested over £200 million to improve safety at other crossings, including deploying automatic barriers, miniature stop lights, CCTV and obstacle detection systems. During the period 2019-24, Network Rail will continue to target high risk level crossings and make improvements wherever possible. In addition to planned closures of high risk level crossings on the network, Network Rail intends to invest in new technologies, improving training for level crossing managers, and promoting public awareness campaigns for pedestrians and motorists.

■ Merchant Shipping: Coronavirus**Margaret Ferrier:** [\[49714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency on the (a) welfare of merchant mariners and (b) measures to repatriate them safely during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kelly Tolhurst:

I have regular dialogue with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency regarding a range of topics. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency have been supporting Departmental officials who have been working with other government agencies to support industry in the global repatriation of UK and non-UK national seafarers

The UK has not placed restrictions on the transit and transfer of seafarers and continues to meet its international obligations related to the transit and transfer of seafarers.

The Government has ensured quarantine requirements for those travelling into UK, announced on 22 May, do not apply to seamen, masters or marine pilots travelling in the operation of their duties.

Margaret Ferrier:

[\[49715\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the International Maritime Organisation on the (a) welfare of merchant mariners and (b) measures to repatriate them safely during the covid-19 pandemic.

Kelly Tolhurst:

I wrote to the International Maritime Organization on 23 March setting out the UK position in regard seafarer welfare and to reassure the IMO that the UK continues to recognise our international obligations in regard the transit and transfer of seafarers.

The UK is currently considering IMO protocols to facilitate crew changes to ascertain what other measures the UK could implement. We also continue to work with and share best practice with other administrations.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Registration**

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[54144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the DVLA will resume accepting (a) online and (b) postal applications and documentation from people wishing to register car purchases.

Rachel Maclean:

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)'s online services are operating as normal, including those for registering new vehicles and notifying the DVLA that the keeper of a vehicle has changed. Customers may also submit paper applications and notifications, but these will take longer to process.

■ **Northern Rail: Cleaning Services**

Grahame Morris:

[\[49666\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how frequently Northern Rail (a) trains and (b) stations were deep cleaned (i) before and (ii) during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Before the Covid-19 outbreak, Northern Trains Limited had a comprehensive daily cleaning regime which included a deep clean of its trains every 72 days. Since the outbreak began, this regime has continued but increased with the use of anti-viral sanitiser and the additional cleaning of panels, carpets and toilet areas to ensure a safe environment for its staff and passengers.

NTL has followed Rail Delivery Group guidelines on the cleaning of stations and has carried out a robust cleaning schedule since the outbreak which, alongside its usual regime, includes regularly sanitising 'touch' points. The station cleaning visits varies between one and five visits per week where they are covered by mobile cleaning

teams and between five to seven days a week attendance on those covered by station based cleaners.

Grahame Morris:

[\[49668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the cleaning of Northern Rail's trains and stations, what hygiene and health targets are used; and on which occasions sub-contractors have failed to meet those targets since the Operator of Last Resort took over the franchise.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Department monitors customer perception of cleanliness through the National Rail Passenger surveys. Whilst Northern's train cleaning is done in house, cleaning for stations is sub-contracted and so any cleaning targets for stations are set and managed directly through the contracts between Northern Trains Ltd and the contractor.

■ Northern Rail: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris:

[\[49667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to help ensure adequate provision of cleaning staff to provide a safe environment on Northern Rail (a) trains and (b) stations during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

To help tackle the spread of coronavirus, rail operators and Network Rail are doing more to ensure our trains and stations are clean. The kinds of steps being taken include a greater focus on cleaning high-touch areas in trains and at stations (such as hand rails and ticket machine screens), more intensive cleaning and ensuring toilets are well stocked with soap.

■ Parking: Coronavirus

Theresa Villiers:

[\[51709\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with local authorities on the provision of additional parking spaces in response to the advice for people to avoid using public transport where possible during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

On Wednesday 3 June, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport and the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, co-chaired a roundtable with the Local Government Association, London Councils, parking operators and other associations and organisations with an interest in parking and active travel. This was to encourage the parking sector to develop schemes that would enable commuters to park their cars and then cycle or walk the last part of their journey into town centres, easing the pressure on public transport. Department officials have worked closely with the LGA, London Councils and the British Parking Association throughout the Covid-19 emergency.

■ Public Transport: Coronavirus

Suzanne Webb:

[\[49869\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans are in place to ensure customer confidence in the (a) accessibility, (b) adequacy of access for blind and partially sighted people and (c) cleanliness of the public transport system once covid-19 lockdown measures have been relaxed.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On 12 May 2020, in response to Covid-19, the Department for Transport published safer travel guidance for passengers and operators. These documents are clear that all equality and discrimination laws and obligations continue to apply and that operators should ensure everyone who needs to can continue to access the transport network.

Operators should consider their messaging, and continue to support those with protected characteristics, as they normally would. The documents also remind passengers of the potentially different experience of those with disabilities, including hidden disabilities. The Department is working closely with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee to identify how to improve the experience of disabled passengers during lockdown and into the future.

The guidance advises the public to avoid public transport where possible and, if they need to use it, how to stay safe – for example by wearing a face covering if possible and washing their hands before, during and after travel. We have advised operators that they could consider additional cleaning measures and protocols to limit coronavirus transmission. These steps should help boost confidence for all passengers.

■ Railway Stations: Birmingham

Liam Byrne:

[\[53317\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he plans to approve the Department for Transport component of the funding package for three new railway stations on the Camp Hill line; what financial contributions the project's partners will make; and what the timetable is for each partner signing off their final contributions.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

I have previously written to the Mayor of the West Midlands confirming that the government is willing to support a contribution to the development of the three new stations mentioned in the question. This is subject to West Midlands Rail Executive providing a robust, value for money business case and agreeing a reliable timetable for operating the services with Network Rail. This work is currently underway, and an update from WMRE is expected this summer. The proposal will then need to be considered by myself and my colleagues at HM Treasury.

■ Railways: Cleaning Services

Ian Mearns: [R] [\[51875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how frequently Network Rail trains and stations were deep cleaned (a) before and (b) during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, Network Rail conducted deep cleans at different frequencies depending on each station's requirements. Since the outbreak, Network Rail have cleaned stations in line with Public Health England guidance. Accordingly, all high touch points are being cleaned every three hours whilst each Network Rail station is in use, and all public areas are being treated with an anti-viral product that lasts 30 days at least once every three weeks. Network Rail are not responsible for trains.

Ian Mearns: [R] [\[51876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will publish the (a) headcount and (b) Full Time Equivalent of cleaners employed by (i) Mitie and (ii) Interserve to clean Network Rail's stations and estates in each year since 2017.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

On average, 597 cleaners were working at Network Rail managed stations in the February 2017 - January 2018 period. In 2018, this number averaged 599. As Network Rail took over cleaning responsibilities for Clapham Junction, in the February 2019 - January 2020 period, the number of cleaners increased to 651.

Ian Mearns: [R] [\[51877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether the number of cleaners employed by (a) Mitie and (b) Interserve to clean Network Rail's stations and estates has increased as part of the response to tackle the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the total number of cleaners, including Mitie and Interserve staff working across the Network Rail station estate totalled 653. To cope with an increase in demand, this number has increased to 674.

Ian Mearns: [R] [\[51878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he has taken to ensure that there are a sufficient number of cleaners working enough hours on Network Rail's trains and stations to ensure a safe environment for passengers and staff during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The cleanliness of Network Rail stations is closely monitored on a daily basis by the Network Rail station management team. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the total number of cleaners, including Mitie and Interserve staff working across the Network Rail station estate totalled 653. To cope with an increase in demand, this number has

increased to 674. Options exist to increase the number of cleaners provided by contractors further if required.

Ian Mearns:

[R] [\[51879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what payments, in addition to agreed contracts, have been made by Network Rail to (a) Mitie and (b) Interserve as a result of the need to increase the cleaning regime on Network Rail stations and estates in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Network Rail has made additional payments to cleaning providers to cover the provision of an anti-viral product used in public areas of stations, incidents where emergency cleans have been required and to enable an implementation of a sick pay uplift to ensure that cleaning staff are able to self-isolate if necessary.

■ Road Traffic: Greater Manchester

Christian Wakeford:

[\[52645\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps the Government is taking with local government to tackle road congestion to aid the regeneration of town centres in Greater Manchester.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government works closely with Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester to support local transport measures which are specifically designed to address congestion, promote alternative modes of transport to the car and regenerate town centres.

The Government is committed to ensuring that local highway infrastructure is well maintained to facilitate smoother and safer journeys, with better connections. The Secretary of State has recently announced a £1.7 billion Transport Infrastructure Investment Fund to improve roads, repair bridges and fill in millions of potholes. Greater Manchester's share of this is £64.2 million.

In addition, Greater Manchester was awarded £312.5 million from the Transforming Cities Fund which is being used to fund schemes aimed at better connecting communities, in a sustainable way, and promoting cycling and walking as an alternative to using cars. In addition, over £660 million of Local Growth funding has been awarded to Greater Manchester in the three rounds of Growth deals to invest in transport schemes across the region and fund town centre improvements.

Most recently, Government has provided significant financial support to essential bus and Metrolink services throughout the Covid19 pandemic to increase public transport services for key workers and to help restart the economy. On 27 May, it was announced that Greater Manchester had also been given an indicative allocation of £3.2 million from the Emergency Active Travel Fund, to ensure that active travel is a viable alternative to using the car, as well as providing a safe space to do so in the town and district centres.

■ Rolling Stock: Coronavirus

Grahame Morris: [\[49664\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of rolling stock companies on the suspension of the payment of dividends during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

There has been no discussion with rolling stock companies on suspension of dividends. Rolling stock companies are owned by private sector shareholders and suspension of payment of dividends will be a matter for them. I have met with the main rolling stock companies to discuss how they can support industry and the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grahame Morris: [\[49665\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of (a) Northern Rail and (b) other train operating companies providing in-house cleaning services for trains during the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Northern do not use sub-contractors for train cleaning. Other Train Operating Companies decide on an individual basis as to what approach they take to meeting their cleaning requirements, and so no assessment of the type referred to in the question has been made.

■ Transport: NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme 2020

John McDonnell: [\[53283\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what Government support is available for the families of transport workers who die from covid-19 in the course of their employment.

John McDonnell: [\[53284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the potential extension of the covid-19 life assurance scheme to include the families of transport workers who die from covid-19 in the course of their employment, (a) what assessment he has made of the costs of extending that scheme and (b) by what date the decision on that extension will be made.

John McDonnell: [\[53285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, with reference to the potential extension of the covid-19 life assurance scheme to include the families of transport workers who die from covid-19 in the course of their employment, what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Health and Social Care on that matter; and which Minister has responsibility for taking that decision.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced on 27th April a life assurance scheme where families of eligible NHS and care workers, who die from coronavirus in the course of their frontline work, will receive a £60,000 payment.

Payments in respect of transport workers who die from Covid-19, or for any other reason, vary depending on the terms of death in service benefits of each person, with specific arrangements varying across modes and employers. For example, many members of the Railways Pension Scheme may have a death in service benefit of four times their final average pay.

Support provided in respect of key workers on the frontline will continue to be reviewed across government.

Transport: Schools**Mr Virendra Sharma:**[\[53357\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an estimate of the cost to local authorities of providing free home to school transport in (a) Ealing, (b) west London, (c) inner London boroughs, (d) outer London boroughs and (e) all of London; and if he will make a statement.

Rachel Maclean:

The £1.6bn provided to TfL to maintain services included conditions which were agreed to by TfL. These conditions included temporarily suspending free bus travel for under-18s as part of wider travel demand management measures. Any child eligible for free home to school travel under the Education Act 1996 will still be given free travel to and from school. It is for local education authorities to liaise with local transport providers on how they can fulfil their obligations for eligible children. The cost of providing travel for eligible children on TfL services will not fall on London boroughs.

TREASURY**Atos and National Savings and Investments: Pensions****Chris Stephens:**[\[R\] \[53486\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions his Department has had with ATOS and NS&I on (a) the future valuation of and (b) proposed changes to staff pensions; and if he will meet staff representatives to discuss the proposed reforms.

John Glen:

National Savings and Investments outsources its operations to Atos. Atos is currently engaged in discussions with employees who previously provided services for NS&I - but are no longer working (or not working predominantly) on NS&I activity - and their trade unions on their pension arrangements. This is a matter for Atos and its employees.

■ Atos: Pensions**Chris Stephens:** [\[53485\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with (a) representatives from ATOS and (b) the Chief Executive of National Savings and Investment on the potential for staff employed by ATOS on Government accounts joining the Civil Service Pension Scheme; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

Pensions issues as part of the compulsory transfer of staff from the public sector to independent providers delivering public services are covered in the non-statutory New Fair Deal policy. The guidance also covers the transfer of staff back into public service pension schemes, including responsibility for any liabilities accrued under the previous scheme. Applications for this are a matter for Atos, the departments for which it works and the Cabinet Office.

■ Bank Services**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[52577\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the number of households in the UK without a bank account.

Charlotte Nichols: [\[52578\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the financial challenges faced by households without a bank account during the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Treasury does not make assessments of the number of people who do not have a bank account. However, in 2017, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published the results of the Financial Lives Survey which found that 1.3 million UK adults were unbanked, i.e. have no current account or alternative e-money account.

The Financial Lives Survey report contains further information on the characteristics of the unbanked. The report analyses survey results across the four nations of the UK, the nine regions of England, and by rural and urban areas. The FCA intend to repeat the Financial Lives Survey on a regular basis in future. The report can be found here:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publication/research/financial-lives-consumers-across-uk.pdf>

The Government believes that individuals, regardless of their background or income, should have access to useful and affordable financial products and services, including a bank account.

Basic bank accounts are a key financial inclusion policy. They provide people with a way of receiving income, whether that be salary, pension, benefits or tax credits and enable people to manage their money on a day-to-day basis effectively, securely and confidently.

A basic bank account is fee-free for all everyday banking services and has no overdraft facility. The 9 largest personal current account providers in the UK are legally required to offer fee-free basic bank accounts to customers who do not have a bank account in the UK or who are ineligible for a bank's standard current account.

The Treasury publishes data on basic bank accounts annually. The December 2019 publication shows that in total there are nearly 7.5 million basic bank accounts open in the UK.

In the current context of COVID-19, banks, building societies, the Post Office and credit unions are working closely with the Treasury, the FCA and the Prudential Regulation Authority to maintain branch access for essential services, including opening a bank account if an individual is unbanked, while balancing the needs of their customers with the safety and welfare of staff. The Government and the FCA urge customers to use alternatives to branches where possible and only visit branches where absolutely necessary.

■ Banks: Competition

Mark Pritchard:

[\[51765\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Government has plans to liberalise the UK banking sector and increase competition from non-UK banks.

John Glen:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK financial services sector delivers choice and value for customers and to that end has taken significant action to ensure effective competition in UK banking markets. This includes: providing the financial services regulators with competition objectives, and a new Payments Systems Regulator to ensure fair and equal access to payments systems; reducing barriers to entry for new market entrants; initiatives to make it easier for customers to switch between bank account providers; and continued support for non-traditional providers, including the UK's fintech sector.

It is also important that the UK maintains a prudential regulation regime that supports financial stability and economic growth as well as competition amongst firms. The Government will continue to prioritise the implementation of global regulatory standards, such as the Basel III standards, to maintain the UK's position as a world-leading financial services centre.

■ Barristers: Coronavirus

Fleur Anderson:

[\[53648\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of (a) extending business rates exemption relief to barristers' chambers and (b) provide tailored support for publicly-funded Bar employees that are ineligible for the self-employed scheme.

Jesse Norman:

While office space such as barristers' chambers is not eligible for the retail, hospitality and leisure relief, a range of further measures to support all businesses, including those not eligible for the business rates holiday has been made available. For example, the Government has launched the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help firms keep people in employment, and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

Those ineligible for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) may still benefit from other support. Individuals may have access to a range of grants and loans depending on their circumstances, including the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, Bounce Back Loans, and the deferral of tax payments. There will be no further changes and no further extensions to the SEISS, which continues to be one of the most generous self-employed support schemes in the world.

■ Carers: Incentives**Ben Lake:**[\[54226\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of a time-limited exemption for bonuses awarded to care workers from income tax.

Jesse Norman:

The UK Government greatly values the contribution of care workers, particularly during the current crisis.

Under the longstanding rules of tax treatment, any payments made in connection with an employment are chargeable to income tax and national insurance contributions.

The Government will work with the Welsh Government to understand the nature of any new payments and determine the tax treatment.

■ Child Benefit: Immigrants**Stephen Timms:**[\[51543\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether child benefit is payable in respect of a child who is a UK national but whose parents have leave to remain in the UK with no recourse to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Steve Barclay:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given on 21st October 2019. Access to Child Benefit follows the long-standing Government policy that those who have not established their right to remain permanently in the UK should not have welfare provision on the same basis as those whose citizenship or status here gives them an entitlement to benefits. All those admitted to the UK for a temporary purpose are required, under the immigration rules, to be able to maintain and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds.

For this reason, apart from specified exceptions – set out in the Social Security (Immigration and Asylum Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2000 – persons subject to immigration control are not eligible for Child Benefit.

However, individuals who have no recourse to public funds can access many services including the NHS, statutory sick pay and some other work-related benefits. Local Authorities also have a statutory duty to provide support to families subject to the NRPF condition where a child's wellbeing is in question.

In addition, they are able to access support measures put in place to respond to the Covid-19 global pandemic, including the Job Retention and Self-Employed Income Support schemes, free school meals, mortgage payment holidays and protection from eviction.

Eligible immigrants with a condition of NRPF can apply to the Home Office to have this lifted if their financial circumstances change.

Further information on the support that is available for migrants subject to NRPF can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>.

■ Children: Day Care

Nadia Whittome:

[\[52637\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he has plans to increase the level of funding available to key workers for childcare to meet the increased costs of that care as a result of social distancing measures during the covid-19 outbreak.

Steve Barclay:

Parents continue to have access to the Government's childcare offers during the Covid-19 crisis. This includes support through Universal Credit or Working Tax Credit worth up to 85% and 70% of childcare costs respectively, up to 30 hours of free childcare a week for 3 and 4-year-olds, and up to £2,000 per year of support through Tax Free Childcare.

Schools also continue to offer places to the children of key workers, as they have done since the end of March.

To ensure key workers working additional hours do not lose their entitlement to free hours or Tax Free Childcare, for this tax year we are temporarily relaxing the maximum income threshold for those parents.

■ Companies: Coronavirus

Carol Monaghan:

[\[54140\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether companies in breach of consumer contracts are eligible for covid-19 support.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) enforces rules on unfair contract terms. On 30th April the CMA published a statement on its views on consumer protection law including in relation to COVID-19. People and businesses who have seen or experienced businesses behaving unfairly during the coronavirus outbreak can report it to the CMA by using their dedicated webpage: <https://www.coronavirus-business-complaint.service.gov.uk/>.

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

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Damien Moore:****[52448]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with representatives of (a) banks and (b) other lenders on extending payment holidays for loans in line with the term of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

In April, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) announced a series of measures intended to provide temporary support to consumers that have been affected by the coronavirus outbreak, including a three-month payment holiday on personal loans. Ministers recognise the important role payment holidays play in supporting people through this period and have engaged with lenders throughout. The government will continue to work closely with the FCA and industry on the next steps for payment holidays.

Owen Thompson:**[53511]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will enable (a) veterinary and (b) other businesses under the covid-19 furlough scheme to retain sufficient staff on reduced hours to cover emergency provision while following Government advice on maintaining public health.

Jesse Norman:

The Chancellor has announced that from 1 July, employers can bring back to work employees that have been furloughed for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim CJRS grant for the hours not worked.

There will not be a minimum furlough period, but employers will need to agree any flexible furlough arrangements with employees, and when claiming the CJRS grant employers will need to report and claim for a minimum period of a week.

Claire Hanna:

[\[53659\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, what assessment he has made of the feasibility of requiring all business to pay a percentage of the cost of the salaries of their furloughed staff from August 2020 when those businesses will reopen at different times as a result of differences in covid-19 guidance published by the devolved Administrations; and whether he plans to take steps to mitigate the effect on businesses of the differences in that guidance by amending the scheme.

Jesse Norman:

An early assessment of CJRS claims suggests that about 40% of employers have not made a claim for employer NICs costs or employer pension contributions and so will be unaffected by the change in August if their employment patterns do not change.^[1]

The CJRS will close at the end of October, after eight months. It is the case that some firms will be affected by coronavirus for longer than others, and the Government will seek to support these firms appropriately. It would be challenging to target the CJRS to specific sectors in a fair and deliverable way, and that may not be the most effective or sensible way to provide longer term support for those sectors most affected by coronavirus.

The Government will continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations to support people across the UK, and monitor developments in the public health and wider economic situation, to ensure that the support being provided is appropriate for the whole UK.

[1] This estimate is based on HMRC analysis of CJRS administrative scheme level claims management information.

■ **Coronavirus: Disease Control**

Ben Lake:

[\[54227\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what economic support will be made available to (a) employees and (b) self-employed people who are asked to self-isolate in response to the track and trace system.

Jesse Norman:

The Government is committed to supporting individuals financially through this difficult time, and has taken unprecedented steps to support people's incomes. Many people are able to work from home, and those currently supported through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will not see their entitlement affected by needing to isolate.

For employees unable to work from home, DWP has laid new regulations to ensure that people asked to isolate by the Test and Trace service will be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). This is in addition to changes already made, which make SSP payable from day one rather than day four of an absence from work. Employees will still be entitled to claim SSP from their employers even if they are asked to self-

isolate several times. The SSP Rebate Scheme was announced at Budget to support SMEs which may face a financial strain due to staff absences caused by Covid-19.

Self-employed people are eligible for “new style” Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if they are incapable of work due to Covid-19, including those who are required to self-isolate according to Government guidance. The Government has made it easier for people to claim by removing the seven-day waiting period which means people can get support from day one. In addition, the self-employed whose businesses have been adversely affected due to shielding or self-isolating may be able to claim a grant under the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

■ Covid-19 Corporate Financing Facility: Airlines

Clive Lewis: [\[54183\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the provision of loans to airlines by the Government's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, what accountability measures (a) his Department and (b) the Bank of England have (i) in place and (ii) planned for to ensure that those loans are spent on (A) suitable and (B) approved business costs and liabilities.

Clive Lewis: [\[54184\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the provision of loans to businesses by the Government's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, whether information on the items of expenditure that businesses require those loans for will be (a) published (i) directly, (ii) in an anonymised and (iii) in a summarised form or (b) provided upon request in an anonymised form under Freedom of Information legislation.

Clive Lewis: [\[54186\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether suitable businesses purposes for which loans provided under the Covid Corporate Financing Facility may be utilised include payments (a) for kerosene futures, (b) for buying fuel, (c) to avoid buying fuel for which agreements or contracts have already been entered into and (d) to (i) Avalon and (ii) other aircraft leasing companies.

John Glen:

The Covid Corporate Financing Facility is designed to support companies who would ordinarily seek market-based finance to strengthen working capital, but find themselves struggling to access financial markets in this uncertain operating environment. It primarily provides bridging support to see through the temporary nature of Covid-19 related disruption, by catalyzing the market for short term corporate funding.

Since 19 May the Government has imposed restraints on capital distributions (including dividends and share buybacks), as well as senior pay, on companies accessing the CCFF. Firms must provide a letter of commitment to these constraints

to HMT, which HMT reserves the right to publish if it becomes aware the terms of the letter have not been complied with.

In order to ensure support can be provided quickly, and in a broad-based manner, those are the only conditions imposed on participating firms at this time. Firms must meet strict criteria to access the CCFF so that the Government is confident the funds will be repaid.

■ Electronic Publishing: VAT

Marion Fellows: [\[54133\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for what reasons audiobooks were not included in the zero-rating VAT on e-publications announced in the Budget 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Marion Fellows: [\[54134\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent estimate he has made of the potential cost to the Exchequer of removing VAT from audiobooks; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

The extension of the zero rate of VAT has been introduced to provide consistency in approach between certain physical and digital publications in order to support reading and literacy in all its forms. Audiobooks are already taxed consistently at the standard rate in both physical and digital format.

In UK law, a book is deemed to be something that is read or looked at, a definition that does not include audio content in both digital and physical form.

The Government keeps all taxes under review, including VAT.

■ EU Budget: Contributions

Mr Richard Holden: [\[54274\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the UK's (a) gross and (b) net contributions to the EU in the event that the transition period is extended for (i) 2021 and (ii) 2022.

John Glen:

The Government has been very clear that it will not accept an extension to the transition period. Indeed, Section 33 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 prohibits the Government from extending the transition period.

Both the EU and the UK have committed to agreeing a future partnership by the end of 2020 in the Political Declaration and that is clearly in the interests of both sides.

■ Hospitality Industry: Gratuities**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[53463\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much income has been declared by people that work in the hospitality sector in the form of tronc payments that attract income tax and national insurance deductions in each of the last three financial years.

Jesse Norman:

It is not possible to answer the question in the required timeline. This is due to the way in which the data held by HMRC is structured as it relates to payments made to tronc schemes in terms of liability for Income Tax or National Insurance Contributions.

■ House Insurance**Shabana Mahmood:** [\[54074\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing interim rules for the building insurance market to prevent leaseholders having to pay unaffordable premiums until remedial works funded by the Building Safety Fund are completed.

John Glen:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector to understand and influence its response to this situation, and is encouraging insurers to do all they can to support customers experiencing these issues.

We are exploring all options to ensure that leaseholders are able to insure the buildings in which they live until remedial works can be completed.

■ Insurance: Coronavirus**Mr Stephen Morgan:** [\[52398\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps is he taking to ensure that insurance companies pay out for covid-19 claims that covered by original agreements.

John Glen:

The Government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector to understand and influence its response to this unprecedented situation and is encouraging insurers to do all they can to support customers during this difficult period.

The Government is working closely with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to ensure that the rules are being upheld during this crisis and fully supports the regulator in its role. The FCA rules require insurers to handle claims fairly and promptly; provide reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim; not reject a claim unreasonably; and settle claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed. In addition, the FCA has said that, in light of COVID-19, insurers must consider very carefully the needs of their customers and show flexibility in their treatment of them.

On 1 May the FCA outlined its intention to seek a court declaration, on an agreed and urgent basis, and for a selected number of key issues, to resolve uncertainty for many customers making business interruption claims. Subsequently on 1 June, the FCA announced the policy wordings that would be tested in the court action and insurers it had invited to participate directly, along with an initial list of policy wordings and insurers that will potentially be impacted by the Court's decision on the representative sample. The FCA expects to publish a final list of all the relevant insurers and policies that may have impacted wordings in early July, and expects a court hearing to take place in late July.

Additionally, the FCA stated its expectation for insurers to assess the value of their insurance products to customers during this period and to consider appropriate action. This might include changing how benefits are delivered, refunding some premiums or suspending monthly payments for a certain period of time.

The Government encourages businesses to seek assistance through the wider support package if they are in financial difficulty. Businesses should explore the full package of support set out by the Chancellor in the Budget, on 17 March, and on 20 March, which includes measures such as business rates holidays, the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and wage support.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

Owen Thompson:

[\[53506\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he plans to respond to the letters to him of 4 May 2020 and 5 May 2020 from the hon Member for Midlothian.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Treasury has received unprecedented amounts of correspondence since the start of the coronavirus outbreak in the UK. All Member's correspondence is currently receiving attention and will be responded to as soon as possible.

I apologise for the delay. I would like to reassure the Member that his letters are receiving attention and will be responded to shortly. In 2019, the Treasury replied to 90% of MPs' correspondence within 15 working days.

■ **Money: Coronavirus**

Charlotte Nichols:

[\[52576\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the use of physical currency in the future; and if he will make a statement.

John Glen:

The Government recognises that widespread access to cash is extremely important to the daily lives of millions of people across the UK. The Government is engaging with the financial regulators to monitor the situation closely, including the impact of COVID-19, and remains committed to protecting access to cash for those who need it, while supporting digital payments.

The Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group – which brings together HM Treasury, the Payment Systems Regulator, Financial Conduct Authority and Bank of England – will be publishing an update document on their activities in relation to cash in due course.

At the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect access to cash. This will ensure that those who continue to rely on cash to transact can continue to do so in the long-term.

■ Mortgages

Emma Hardy: [\[52389\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans he has to support non-bank mortgage lenders in offering mortgage holidays.

John Glen:

On 17 March the Chancellor announced the availability of a three-month mortgage holiday as part of an unprecedented package of support for individuals, businesses and the economy affected by Covid-19. This help was further extended on 2 June through the publication of FCA guidance. 1.8 million mortgage payment holidays have been granted to help consumers get back on their feet at this challenging time.

We are closely monitoring the impact of the current environment on all firms, including non-bank mortgage lenders and the non-bank lending sector more widely.

■ Mortgages: Coronavirus

Scott Mann: [\[52259\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps his Department has taken to encourage commercial lenders provide temporary commercial mortgage repayment holidays to businesses in the tourism and hospitality industries.

John Glen:

The Government has worked proactively with lenders to ensure that flexible support is provided to commercial landlords, including those in the tourism and hospitality sectors, through this difficult time. We announced on 29 May that lenders are committed to showing flexibility to commercial landlord customers that need it. The full statement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-publish-code-of-practice-with-commercial-sector-in-boost-to-high-street>

A payment holiday is one of the options available for those that are facing financial difficulty and lenders are attempting to maximise the flexibility they can offer to borrowers at this time.

Ahead of the June payment day, all the main commercial lenders will be in contact with their major commercial landlord borrowers to identify concerns they have and provide support where appropriate.

It is right that where landlords receive support, they extend this to their tenants.

■ Mortgages: Interest Rates

Mark Pritchard:

[\[51777\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with mortgage lenders on passing on reductions in the Bank of England lending rate to their customers.

John Glen:

Treasury ministers and officials are in regular discussions with mortgage lenders about the ongoing support they are providing to their customers at this challenging time.

Due to COVID-19, the Bank of England lowered the base rate of interest to 0.1%. Though the interest rate charged on finance facilities are set at the discretion of each lender, the Government expects that these rates will be competitive, and fairly priced, taking into account the unprecedented situation individuals and businesses may currently face.

■ Motor Vehicles: Leasing

Scott Mann:

[\[52262\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if his Department will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing repayment holidays for vehicle leasing during the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

On 27 April, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published guidance that sets out what it expects firms to do for customers who are facing temporary payment difficulties due to the exceptional circumstances arising from COVID-19. This includes granting the customer a payment deferral for 3 months on motor finance and leasing payments.

The Government continues to work closely with the FCA and industry on this matter and stand ready to protect consumers wherever it is necessary.

■ Motor Vehicles: Taxation

Patricia Gibson:

[\[54132\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the tax liability for Benefit in Kind vehicles not registered before 6 April 2020 as a result of covid-19 restrictions which under the Worldwide Harmonized Light Duty Vehicles Test Procedure will be liable for an average increase in tax of £18 per month.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognizes the challenges faced by households as a result of COVID-19. This is why the Government has announced unprecedented support for public services, businesses and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency.

The Government has not delayed the introduction of WLTP. WLTP strengthens the link between the vehicle tax system and the true environmental impact of car purchasing decisions as well as allowing consumers to make more informed decisions between model variations. From 1 January 2021 only WLTP emissions figures will be shown on registration documents for new cars.

However, to ease the transition to WLTP, company car tax appropriate percentages for effected vehicles have been reduced for two years so company car drivers do not see a significant increase in their tax liabilities.

■ National Savings and Investments: Pensions

Chris Stephens:

[R] [\[53484\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what discussions he has had with ATOS and NS&I on proposed changes to staff pensions at National Savings and Investments; and what assessment he has made of the potential effectiveness of those proposals.

John Glen:

National Savings and Investments outsources its operations to Atos. Atos is currently engaged in discussions with employees who previously provided services for NS&I - but are no longer working (or not working predominantly) on NS&I activity - and their trade unions on their pension arrangements. This is a matter for Atos and its employees.

■ NHS: Finance

Mr Richard Holden:

[\[54275\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the net increase in £million per week of the budget for the NHS will be following the passing of the NHS funding bill for the years (a) 2020-1 (b) 2021-22, (c) 2022-3 and (d) 2023-4.

Steve Barclay:

The NHS funding bill placed into law the historic increases to the NHS resource budget which were agreed for the five years from 2019-20.

The NHS resource budget is set on an annual basis with the NHS determining the weekly profile of their spending, but the bill guarantees- as a minimum- the following annual cash increases as compared to the 2018-19 year:

(a) 2020-21: £12,404m

(b) 2021-22: £18,680m

(c) 2022-23: £25,387m

(d) 2023-24: £33,864m

■ Revenue and Customs: Staff

Dan Carden:

[\[53576\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his Answer of 18 May 2020 to Question 46137, on Revenue and Customs: Coronavirus, if he will publish the number of HMRC (a) employee redundancies and (b) employees there were in each of the last six months.

Dan Carden:

[\[53577\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his Answer of 18 May 2020 to Question 46137, on Revenue and Customs: Coronavirus, if he will publish the projected number of HMRC (a) employee redundancies and (b) employees in each of the next six months.

Jesse Norman:

Each year HMRC publish their Annual Report, which sets out a breakdown of their detailed workforce data from that year. This includes the number of employees and exits from that year, broken down in a meaningful manner. HMRC will continue to ensure that they have the workforce they need to deliver their critical public services.

■ Riot Control Weapons: USA

Hilary Benn:

[\[54002\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the value was of UK exports of (a) baton rounds, (b) tear gas and (c) small arms to the US in each of the last five years.

Jesse Norman:

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are responsible for the collection and publication of data on UK imports and exports of goods to and from the UK. HMRC release this information monthly, as a National Statistic: the Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics.

The value of exports of handguns and revolvers to the United States in the last five years is set out in the table below. This is based on declared trade, so is not an estimate.

UK EXPORTS OF HANDGUNS AND REVOLVERS (93020000) TO THE UNITED STATES BY VALUE

Calendar Year	Trade Value (£)
2015	7,256
2016	47,890
2017	27,144
2018	7,770
2019	38,829

Data source: HMRC Overseas Trade Statistics

The trade data collected does not enable HMRC to distinguish exports of baton rounds from other ammunition and projectiles. The trade data collected also does not enable HMRC to distinguish exports of tear gas from other spring, air or gas guns and pistols or truncheons.

However, there is aggregated trade data available for the goods and periods requested on the "uktradeinfo" website, under "Build your own data tables": <https://www.uktradeinfo.com/Pages/Home.aspx>. The site also contains a "Help" function for information on how to extract trade data.

Trade data relating to the value of all ammunition and projectiles can be searched for using commodity code 9306909000. Trade data relating to all spring, air and gas guns and pistols and truncheons exported to the US can be found using commodity code 9304000000.

■ Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Siobhain McDonagh: [\[53286\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the suitability of the £50,000 annual trading profit threshold for determining an applicant's eligibility for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Daisy Cooper: [\[53631\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of removing the £50,000 income cap on the Self-employment Income Support Scheme, while retaining the £2,190 limit on support for the second half of the scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) helps those adversely affected by COVID-19. Individuals can at present claim a taxable grant under the SEISS worth 80 per cent of their average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of profits, and capped at £7,500 in total.

The extension of the SEISS announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 May 2020 means that eligible individuals whose businesses are adversely affected by COVID-19 will be able to claim a second and final grant when the scheme reopens for applications in August. This will be a taxable grant worth 70 per cent of their average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering three months' worth of profits, and capped at £6,570 in total.

The SEISS, including the £50,000 threshold for average trading profits, is designed to target those who most need it, and who are most reliant on their self-employment income. The self-employed are very diverse and have a wide mix of turnover and profits, with monthly and annual variations even in normal times, and in some cases with substantial alternative forms of income too: for example, those who had more than £50,000 from trading profits in 2017-18 had an average total income of more

than £200,000. Some 95 per cent of those with more than half their income from self-employment in 2018-19 could be eligible for this scheme.

Those with average trading profits above £50,000 may still be eligible for other elements of the unprecedented financial support package made available by the Government. These measures include Bounce Back Loans, tax deferrals, rental support, increased levels of Universal Credit, mortgage holidays, and other business support grants.

Kirsten Oswald: [\[54126\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many and what proportion of (a) taxi drivers (b) people awarded funds for the first three months of the Self Employment Income Support Scheme received a payment of (i) £100 or less, (ii) £101 to £500, (iii) £501 to £1,000 and incrementally thereafter in £500 steps to the maximum of £7,500.

Jesse Norman:

Applications for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) opened on 13 May. By midnight 31 May 2020, HMRC had received 2.5m claims representing a total of £7.2bn claimed.

SEISS 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 update in due course on the types of data available and timescales for publication.

■ Students: Loans

Luke Pollard: [\[52466\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to the covid-19 outbreak and the Bank of England's reduction in interest rates, what plans he has to reduce the interest rates applied to Plan 2 Income Contingent Repayment student loans.

Steve Barclay:

The system for setting interest rates on student loans is set out in The Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009, as amended.

Student loans have much more favourable terms than commercial loans and the Government regularly monitors the interest rates set on student loans against the interest rates prevailing on the market. The most appropriate comparators for undergraduate student loans are the effective interest rates available on unsecured personal loans, as published by the Bank of England (data series CFMBJ77 and CFMBJ94).

We continue to monitor Covid-19 impacts on students and work to understand the issues they face.

■ Taxation: Company Cars**Sir Charles Walker:****[53323]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will review the tax charge on company cars in cases where the covid-19 outbreak has reduced their use or resulted in them being unused by the beneficiary.

Kemi Badenoch:

Where a car is made available to an employee which they can use for private purposes, this represents a taxable non-cash benefit, regardless of whether the employee uses the car.

Normally, HMRC would only consider a company car to be unavailable if it has been physically handed back. However, the Government recognises the challenges faced by households as a result of COVID-19, including restrictions on movement that may prevent a company car from being handed back or collected. Therefore, during this period HMRC will accept that a car is unavailable if its keys are returned and either the contract is terminated or thirty consecutive days pass.

HMRC's guidance on this can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-treat-certain-expenses-and-benefits-provided-to-employees-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Treasury: Mayor of the West Midlands**Liam Byrne:****[53318]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many times the Mayor of the West Midlands has written to him since 23 March 2020.

Kemi Badenoch:

Andy Street has written to the Chancellor four times since 23 March 2020.

■ Universities: Loans**Chi Onwurah:****[49678]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of universities ability to repay loans under the Covid Corporate Financing Facility within the one-year repayment window.

Kemi Badenoch:

Universities will be treated in the same way as any other issuer under the Covid Corporate Finance Facility (CCFF). This means that universities that are both investment grade and make a material contribution to the UK economy are able to participate in the facility. We expect all issuers to repay in full.

WALES

■ Business: Wales

Ben Lake:

[\[54225\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on support for those businesses in Wales that will remain under covid-19 lockdown restrictions for the longest time period.

Simon Hart:

The Chancellor has announced a host of measures to help businesses across the UK through the crisis, including £330bn worth of loans and the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) to help businesses retain their employees. The Government has been flexible and responsive to the needs of business, extending the JRS to October and modifying its structure to enable eligible employees to work part-time from August.

■ Vulnerable Adults: Wales

Simon Baynes:

[\[49868\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the support available to extremely vulnerable adults in Wales during the covid-19 outbreak.

Simon Hart:

For those who are at the highest risk in our society, we have ensured more is done to keep them safe. The shielding programme, which was initiated by the UK Government, is an unprecedented package of support for those most at risk from coronavirus. It has required collaboration between the food and drink industry, drivers, volunteers and councils. Consistency to support the vulnerable has been key. This is why the UK Government and the Welsh Government are working together to protect the most vulnerable in Wales and I discuss this support as part of my regular dialogue with the First Minister and his Ministerial team.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Written Questions

Neil Coyle:

[\[54119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when she plans to provide a substantive response to Question 41056 tabled on 28 April 2020 and Question 48473 tabled on 18 May 2020.

Will Quince:

An answer to Written Parliamentary Question UIN 41056 was provided on 4/06/2020.

I apologise for the lateness of this reply.

■ Employment and Support Allowance

Marion Fellows: [\[53477\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the rate of employment support allowance in line with universal credit.

Owen Thompson: [\[54163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans she has to extend the £20 weekly increase to universal credit to legacy benefits during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support were increased by 1.7% in April 2020 following the Government's announcement to end the benefit freeze. .

It has always been the case that claimants on legacy benefits can make a claim for UC if they believe that they will be better off. There are special arrangements for those in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium, who will be able to make a new claim to Universal Credit from January 2021.

Claimants should check their eligibility before applying to Universal Credit as legacy benefits will end when they submit their claim and they will not be able to return to them in the future. For this reason, prospective claimants are signposted to independent benefits calculators on GOV.UK. Neither DWP nor HMRC can advise individual claimants whether they would be better off moving to UC or remaining on legacy benefits.

From 22 July 2020, a two-week run on of Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (IR) and Jobseeker's Allowance (IB) will be available for all claimants whose claim to UC ends entitlement to these benefits to provide additional support for claimants moving to UC.

■ Housing Benefit: Shared Housing

Caroline Lucas: [\[53382\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to recommendation two of the letter of 1 June 2020 from the Social Security Advisory Committee, if she will make it her policy to suspend the Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35 year olds.

Will Quince:

There are no plans to suspend the shared accommodation rate for those under 35 years old.

There are already a number of exemptions from the shared accommodation rate for the most vulnerable, such as those in receipt of the Severe Disability Premium, care leavers up to the age of 22 and those aged 25-34 who have spent 3 months in homeless hostels.

For other individuals who may require more support and whose circumstances may make it difficult for them to share accommodation, Discretionary Housing Payments are available from local authorities.

■ Social Distancing: Coronavirus

Seema Malhotra:

[45228]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on guidance issued to employers in relation to the (a) relaxation of covid-19 lockdown measures and (b) duty of care to employees that are (i) shielding because they are vulnerable and (b) self-isolating because they care for or live with someone who is shielding.

Mims Davies:

[Holding answer 18 May 2020]: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) was involved in cross-government work, Safer Workplaces, coordinated by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which produced guidance on the safety measures businesses will need to adopt as they reopen. It contains practical steps to achieve social distancing and hygiene in the workplace. The guidance also covers who should be at work; including those who are at high risk (also referred to as extremely clinically vulnerable in recent guidance) or those who live with people at high risk.

The guidance "Working Safely During Coronavirus COVID-19" was published on 11 May 2020 and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

■ Social Security Benefits: Children

Alison Thewliss:

[53464]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 19 May 2020 to Question 46706, on Social Security Benefits: Children, if she will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the operation of the exception to the two-child limit for children born as a result of non-consensual conception.

Will Quince:

The Government has committed to annual statistics releases and the next of these will be published in the summer. These publications include details of the number of exceptions to the policy to provide support for a maximum of two children, including in cases of non-consensual conception. The latest available release can be found on GOV.UK.

The Department fully recognises that this is a difficult and sensitive issue, and has set up procedures that are mindful of the sensitivities involved following public consultation. We believe this strikes the right balance, making sure people get the support they need without the need for unnecessarily intrusive processes, whilst at the same time providing the right assurance that the additional support is going to those for whom it is intended.

■ Social Security Benefits: Coronavirus

Angela Crawley:

[\[48533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she has taken to provide additional (a) financial and (b) other support for people on legacy benefits during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

We have introduced a balanced package of support for people who are affected by the effects of Covid 19. This includes over £6.5 billion of extra support through the welfare system as part of the unprecedented series of measures, announced by the Chancellor, to support businesses and their employees to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

For Jobseeker's Allowance we have ensured that any periods of sickness experienced by a person who, is infected or contaminated with coronavirus, in self-isolation or caring for a child or qualifying young person in their household who is infected, will not count towards the maximum permitted number of sickness periods applicable to a claimant, whilst in receipt of that benefit. This means entitlement can continue if this causes them to exceed the maximum of 13 weeks in a 12-month period.

We have also introduced a range of additional measures to support legacy claimants deal with the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. We made the decision to temporarily suspend the requirement for face-to-face Jobcentre Plus appointments from 19 March for all claimants on Universal Credit, new styles Employment and Support Allowance and Jobseeker's Allowance, and legacy benefits. Claimants will continue to receive benefits as normal and they will not be sanctioned for not taking part in appointments with Jobcentres.

We also removed waiting days for ESA for claimants affected by Covid-19, so it will be payable from day one of the claim, subject to the claimant satisfying the normal conditions of entitlement.

We have increased the Local Housing Allowance rates for private renters claiming Housing Benefit to the 30th percentile of local rents. As a result, Housing Benefit claimants will gain on average an additional £600 this year in increased housing support. In addition, we have increased the additional earnings disregard in Housing Benefit from £17.10 to £37.10 per week to ensure that the increase of approximately £20 a week we have introduced to the basic element of Working Tax Credit is not clawed back.

■ Social Security Benefits: Disability

Marion Fellows:

[\[53478\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of removing conditionality and sanctioning for disabled claimants.

Justin Tomlinson:

We continually evaluate the evidence and the feedback from our claimants and make improvements to guidance and policy, no specific assessment has been made on the potential merits of removing conditionality and sanctioning for disabled claimants.

We engage at a personal and individual level with all of our claimants and are committed to tailoring support for specific individual needs, including agreeing realistic and structured steps to encourage claimants into or towards the labour market. These conditionality requirements are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain appropriate for the claimant.

When considering whether a sanction is appropriate, a Decision Maker will take all the claimant's individual circumstances, including any health conditions or disabilities and any evidence of good reason, into account before deciding whether a sanction is warranted, which is always a last resort.

■ Social Security Benefits: Email**Stephanie Peacock:**[\[54222\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if her Department will provide an email facility to allow support information for (a) children's disability living allowance, (b) mandatory reconsideration and (c) other benefits applications to be submitted electronically.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is looking into alternative methods for submitting evidence. E-mail is one of the considerations. However, a robust solution that properly safeguards customer information is yet to be identified.

■ Statutory Sick Pay**Marion Fellows:**[\[53479\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of permanently removing waiting days for statutory sick pay for all illnesses and impairments.

Justin Tomlinson:

As part of the Government's strategy to support people affected by coronavirus (COVID 19), my department has made a number of limited changes to the operation of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). In doing so, we have balanced the need to provide additional support for employees who are sick, self-isolating or shielding due to coronavirus and are unable to work as a result, with considerations about the burden on employers.

Temporarily suspending waiting days ensures SSP is payable from day one of a period of absence, rather than day four, to encourage people to follow government advice to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

We consulted last year on a range of measures, including reform of SSP, designed to reduce ill-health related job loss. We will bring forward proposals on next steps later this year.

SSP is just one part of the government's safety net. Where an employee's income is reduced while off sick and they require further financial support they may be able to claim Universal Credit and new style Employment and Support Allowance, depending on individual circumstances.

■ Universal Credit

Jonathan Reynolds: [\[48985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of excluding tax rebates from universal credit earnings assessments.

Will Quince:

Repayments of income tax normally occur through recalculations of tax paid during a previous tax year when a claimant was in any paid work, thus repayments of income tax are taken into account as earnings in the calculation of Universal credit for the month in which they are repaid.

Any repayments will be treated as capital and follow normal capital rules.

Mhairi Black: [\[49723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing universal credit entitlement for people that are (a) single and under 25 years of age and (b) in a couple and under 25 years of age.

Will Quince:

As a result of changes made in April, the Universal Credit standard allowance increased by £20 per week for the next 12 months – equivalent to up to £1,040 a year. This is in addition to the 1.7% inflation increase, announced Nov 2019, as part of the Government's decision to end the benefits freeze, and means more financial support for millions of people across the UK.

Liz Saville Roberts: [\[52290\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the effect on household incomes of the temporary change to the five-week wait for universal credit during the covid-19 outbreak; and if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of permanently removing the five-week wait for universal credit.

Will Quince:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: There has not been a temporary change to the length of the Initial Assessment Period during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Universal Credit assessment period and payment structure are fundamental parts of the design. The assessment period runs for a full calendar month from the date of entitlement and the Universal Credit pay date will be within seven calendar days after the end of the initial assessment period. Subsequent pay dates will be the

same each month. 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.

No claimant in need of support has to wait 5 weeks for payment under Universal Credit. New Claim Advances of up to 100% of a claimant's estimated award are available within a few days if claimants need support during their first assessment period.

Neil Coyle:

[\[54120\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many new universal credit claimants received their first payment on time from 16 March 2020 to 30 April 2020.

Will Quince:

Universal Credit's system are standing up to the challenge in this unprecedented time. The Digital Approach of UC has allowed us to get support to over 2.2 million people over the last 3 months, which would not have been possible under our legacy system. Latest statistics show 90% of new claimants are paid in full and on time and we expect to achieve this level in the future.

■ **Universal Credit: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[49761\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people have applied for universal credit due to being ineligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme because of their start date in employment; and how many of those claimants have received universal credit to date.

Will Quince:

Data is not available on the numbers of people who have applied to Universal Credit due to being ineligible for the Job Retention Scheme. The reasons why an individuals applied for Universal Credit is not centrally recorded and the DWP does not hold information regarding the job retention scheme.

■ **Universal Credit: Severe Disability Premium**

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[49766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the increase in the number of claimants who are in receipt of Severe Disability Premium making a claim for universal in error despite the existence of the Severe Disability Premium gateway.

Vicky Foxcroft:

[\[49767\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people with a Severe Disability Premium have made a claim for universal credit despite the existence of the Severe Disability Premium gateway in the each of the past three months.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department is not aware of any increase in claims to Universal Credit from those entitled to the Severe Disability Premium, nor do we hold information on the number of people who have made a claim to Universal Credit within the last 3 months despite the Severe Disability Premium gateway being in place. This information could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

■ **Universal Credit: York****Rachael Maskell:**[\[49063\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people claimed universal credit in York Central constituency in each week (a) since the beginning of March 2020 and (b) in (i) March, (ii) April and (iii) May 2019.

Will Quince:

The Department publishes monthly statistics on the number of people on Universal Credit, by Parliamentary Constituency. The latest available information is at April 2020, and is published here:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>.

Guidance on how to extract the information required can be found at:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Getting-Started.html>

■ **Young People: Coronavirus****Mhairi Black:**[\[49722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to provide support to young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who are disproportionately financially affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Mims Davies:

We acknowledge that it is important that Jobcentres continue to support young people through the economic recovery post-COVID-19. They have already started to re-engage with new and existing claimants and are signposting them to appropriate support.

Anyone over the age of 18 can claim New Style Employment and Support Allowance and Jobseeker's Allowance if they have sufficient paid National Insurance contributions. Neither of those benefits is means-tested. Those on low incomes and with limited capital can claim Universal Credit or legacy Jobseeker's Allowance.

For Universal Credit, New Claims Advances of up to 100% of potential entitlement are available within a few days if a claimant needs support during their first assessment period. Face-to-face checks for Universal Credit advances have been scrapped due to Covid-19, so people get the support they need despite COVID-19 restrictions. We have also increased the Standard Allowance for everyone by over £80 a month on top of the existing 1.7% (CPI) increase already announced. This additional increase means all claimants will be up to £1040 better off.

DWP is also engaging with a number of external stakeholders including the Youth Employment Group (set up by the Prince's Trust, Youth Employment UK, the Institute for Employment Studies, the Youth Futures Foundation and Impetus) as well as continuing to work across Whitehall to develop appropriate support aimed at young people.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Horticulture: Coronavirus

Sir John Hayes:

[\[49583\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the financial challenges facing ornamental horticulture commercial growers.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 June 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Victoria Prentis:

Coronavirus represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy, including the ornamental horticulture sector. A vibrant and successful ornamental horticulture sector brings significant benefits. The Government continues to work closely with representatives from the horticulture supply chain including the Horticultural Trades Association to understand the short-term and long-term impacts on the UK sector.

Defra has already been in close discussion with banks to ensure the ornamental horticulture sector has access to financial support. This will ease cashflow problems during this period, including through the Government-backed Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Bounce Back Loan scheme, which was announced on 27 April and is the latest step in a package of support measures announced by the Chancellor. The Government will provide lenders with a 100% guarantee on each loan, to give lenders the confidence they need to support small businesses. These loans will be from £2,000 up to £50,000, capped at 25% of firms' turnover, and the Government will cover the first 12 months of interest payments and fees charged to the business by the lender. Almost all UK businesses will be eligible to apply for a loan under the scheme.

On 13 May, the Government announced that all garden centres in England which are able to adhere to social distancing measures were legally able to reopen. This measure has been widely welcomed by growers, garden centre owners, and consumers.

While the Government has made a wide-ranging package of measures available to ornamental horticulture businesses to support them through this difficult period, we continue to keep the situation under review. Legal powers were included in the Coronavirus Act 2020 enabling us to offer further financial support if we believe it is necessary.

Sir John Hayes:

[\[49584\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Government plans to provide a specific stock grant aid fund for commercial ornamental horticulture growers.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 June 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Victoria Prentis:

Coronavirus represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy, including the ornamental horticulture sector. A vibrant and successful ornamental horticulture sector brings significant benefits. The Government continues to work closely with representatives from the horticulture supply chain including the Horticultural Trades Association to understand the short-term and long-term impacts on the UK sector.

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Sir John Hayes:

[\[49585\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of introducing a scheme similar to the ornamental horticulture grant aid scheme provided for growers in the Netherlands by the Dutch Government.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 June 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Victoria Prentis:

Coronavirus represents a very significant challenge, affecting daily life and every part of the economy, including the ornamental horticulture sector. A vibrant and successful ornamental horticulture sector brings significant benefits. The Government continues to work closely with representatives from the horticulture supply chain including the Horticultural Trades Association to understand the short-term and long-term impacts on the UK sector.

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WRITTEN STATEMENTS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ Business Update

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):
[\[HCWS274\]](#)

I hereby give notice of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's intention to seek an advance from the contingencies fund totalling £5,673,000 to enable expenditure on Covid-19 vaccines programme to be spent ahead of the passage of the Supply and Appropriation Act.

The funding is urgently required for HM Government to secure inventory which can be utilised for a number of vaccine, antibody and therapeutic candidates.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £5,673,000 for this new expenditure will be sought in a Main Estimate for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £5,673,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

The cash advances will be repaid upon receiving Royal Assent on the Supply and Appropriation Bill.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Negotiations on the UK's future relationship with the EU: update

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS271\]](#)

The Government has made a commitment to update Parliament on the progress of our future relationship negotiations with the EU. This statement provides an update on the fourth round of negotiations.

Negotiators from the UK and the EU held discussions through video conferencing on 2 – 5 June 2020 for the fourth round of negotiations on the UK-EU future relationship. This round was shorter than usual owing to a Belgian public holiday. There was no opening plenary, but there were substantive discussions on many issues, and the week closed with a plenary on 5 June chaired by the UK's Chief Negotiator, David Frost, and by the European Commission's Chief Negotiator, Michel Barnier.

Discussions covered all work streams including:

- Trade in Goods – Market access, trade remedies, customs and SPS.
- Trade in Services – International Maritime Transport Services, temporary entry for business purposes, professional qualifications, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Geographical Indications (GIs).

- Fisheries – Objectives of the agreement, consultation and cooperation procedures, access and scope, and quota sharing.
- Transport – Aviation governance.
- Energy – Civil nuclear, gas and electricity trading, climate change and carbon pricing.
- Mobility and Social Security Coordination – Social security coordination arrangements.
- Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice – Human rights, extradition, the exchange of passenger name records (PNR) information, and Europol.
- Thematic cooperation – A possible security of information agreement, asylum and illegal migration including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Participation in Union Programmes – Discussions on the potential terms for UK participation in the following programmes Horizon Europe, Euratom, R&D, Copernicus and Erasmus+, and discussions on potential cooperation on the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service and EU Space Surveillance and Tracking programmes.
- “Level Playing Field” – In particular, labour and environmental standards, and trade and sustainable development.
- Horizontal Issues - Governance arrangements, territorial scope.

Discussions were constructive and positive in tone, but there was no movement on the most difficult areas where differences of principle are at their most acute - notably fisheries, governance arrangements, and the so-called “level playing field”. Chief Negotiators are discussing the arrangements for the next rounds of negotiation and for the High Level Meeting required by the Political Declaration to take place in June.

■ **Second meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee**

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS270\]](#)

Due to the complexity of the accompanying table, the link below is to the web version of the answer:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-06-08/HCWS270/>

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ Government response to the DCMS Select Committee Immersive and Addictive Technologies Inquiry**

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Oliver Dowden):
[\[HCWS272\]](#)

DCMS is today publishing the government response to the DCMS Select Committee's report on Immersive and Addictive Technologies. I would like to commend the Committee for a wide-ranging and detailed examination of many important issues.

The report called for improved research on the impact of video games and included extensive commentary on loot boxes (in-game purchases of virtual containers that award players with items to use in the game, based on chance).

To address the issues raised, and to ensure government policy is based on sound evidence, the government will set a framework for a programme of research into video games' impacts on behaviour. This process will be led by DCMS' Chief Scientific Advisor and will include a series of workshops with relevant Research Councils, academia and industry. These will be used to help determine the full range and detail of the questions that need to be addressed on the impacts of video games and make recommendations for a further programme of research.

We are not minded at this point to impose a levy on the games industry to pay for new research as we believe it would be likely to disproportionately impact the SMEs and microbusinesses that comprise the vast majority of games businesses in the UK. However, a range of funding approaches, including mechanisms to allow for in-game data to be used to support research, will be considered as part of this work.

The government will also launch a call for evidence on loot boxes to assess concerns around links to gambling-like behaviour and excessive in-game spending. This will work alongside the framework for a programme of research into video games, and the wider review of the Gambling Act that includes a commitment to include a particular focus on loot boxes. In addition to a written call for evidence, we envisage holding a series of roundtables to discuss issues and solutions in detail, including the most effective approaches to protect users from any harms identified. The results from the call for evidence will be considered alongside the review of the Gambling Act. The government stands ready to take action should the outcomes of the call for evidence support taking a new approach to ensure users, and particularly young people, are protected.

The government recognises that immersive technologies and content offer great potential for economic, cultural and social benefits to the UK. Through increasingly compelling narratives and realistic visuals, immersive products can offer engaging experiences to audiences, not just with the aim of entertaining but with the scope to challenge, educate and inspire them.

Immersive technologies also allow the video games sector in the UK to build on already formidable strengths. Over half the UK population plays games, the vast majority engaging safely with content that allows them to enjoy fun, exciting play, find moments of

relaxation, socialise and learn new skills. The video games sector, a key part of the UK's world-leading creative industries, is also a cutting edge creator and adopter of innovative new technologies, and a provider of highly skilled creative jobs.

The government is committed to build on these strengths by promoting inward investment, enabling the growth of exciting new games companies and encouraging innovation. Targeted support includes the Video Games Tax Relief which has supported more than 1,000 video games productions since it was introduced in 2014. Earlier this year, we also announced the extension of the UK Games Fund to 2021. Set up in 2015, the UK Games Fund targets games development talent with access to finance and business support, supporting 152 companies and 73 graduate teams to date. We are also helping to drive innovation, supporting ground-breaking projects such as the InGAME centre in Dundee. We will continue to consider further actions we can take to underpin the sector's vital contribution to the future prosperity of the UK.

However, whilst digital technologies are overwhelmingly a force for good, undoubtedly they also present new responsibilities to ensure that users - particularly children and vulnerable people - are not exposed to harm.

I believe the actions the government is announcing today are important steps towards ensuring we can support the further growth of an innovative and important industry while protecting users in a fast-changing space. Further details on these, and the other recommendations made by the Committee will be set out in the government response.

I am placing copies of the response in the libraries of the House, and it will also be available on gov.uk.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

■ Global Health Security Update

Secretary of State for International Development (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):
[\[HCWS273\]](#)

The UK is leading the worldwide fightback against infectious diseases, including coronavirus.

That is why the Prime Minister hosted the Global Vaccine Summit last week to raise funding for vaccinations that will save millions of lives in the poorest countries and protect the world from future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Bringing together world leaders and representatives from 62 countries, private sector organisations and civil society, the Global Vaccine Summit raised an historic \$8.8 billion for Gavi - exceeding our fundraising target of \$7.4 billion.

Just as the UK is the single biggest donor to the international effort to find a coronavirus vaccine, I am incredibly proud that we are the biggest donor to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. The UK has pledged £1.65 billion over the next five years – which will vaccinate up to 75 million children from infectious diseases, saving almost 2 million lives.

The funding raised from 32 donors also included generous pledges from countries such as Germany, United States, Saudi Arabia, France, Netherlands and Sweden, \$1.6 billion from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and \$61 million from the private sector.

In a great demonstration of global collaboration, the world has sufficiently invested in Gavi for the next five years. The Global Vaccine Summit is an example of what we can accomplish when we come together.

This support for Gavi will immunise 300 million more children in the world's poorest countries against diseases like measles, polio and diphtheria by the end of 2025, will save up to 8 million lives and prevent needless child deaths.

People who are vaccinated protect themselves and the rest of the population by lowering the spread and risk of infection. Gavi's work on routine immunisation is the strongest shield against outbreaks of infectious killer diseases.

It will also help ensure our global recovery from coronavirus. By vaccinating millions of children against other deadly diseases, we are protecting fragile healthcare systems in the world's poorest countries so they can cope with rising coronavirus cases.

This will ultimately help prevent future waves of infectious diseases spreading around the world, including to the UK.

Vaccines work and this funding matters. Generous support from the British people to Gavi has already helped immunise more than 760 million children in the world's poorest countries, saving over 13 million lives.

Gavi's market shaping efforts to make life-saving vaccines more accessible and affordable have seen a 21% price reduction for fully immunising a child with pentavalent, pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccines – from \$20.01 in 2015 to \$15.90 in 2018. The UK can be proud of the part we've played in this price reduction.

The UK has also been a founding donor of the successful Advance Market Commitment which has so far protected the lives of over 700,000 children from deadly pneumonia infections. We welcome Gavi's leadership and offered our full support to their new coronavirus fund with a \$60 million commitment from the UK to help speed up access to a vaccine when it's ready.

But the Global Vaccine Summit was just the beginning - we can do so much more.

The World Health Organization estimates that 80 million children under one have had routine immunisation disrupted by the pandemic. The UK's support to Gavi will make sure that routine immunisation is not interrupted as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and that everyone has access to lifesaving vaccinations.

Gavi, with UK support, is also addressing the immediate needs triggered by coronavirus, including by providing essential medical supplies and helping to increase testing and surveillance of the disease.

To defeat coronavirus, we must focus our collective ingenuity on the search for a vaccine. And in the future, Gavi will have a crucial role in the delivery of a coronavirus vaccine. It is

already working hard with partners to make sure a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine would be affordable and delivered around the world.

No one is safe from coronavirus until we are all safe.

The UK has already committed up to £764 million for the global coronavirus response. Some of the most promising research into vaccines is happening here, supported by our Vaccine Taskforce. And we are pioneering the innovative collaborations that will be needed to manufacture and distribute a vaccine, once found, like the partnership between AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford.

But this demands a truly global effort.

As the Prime Minister said, the Global Vaccine Summit was a moment when the world came together to unite humanity in the fight against disease.