



Daily Report

Monday, 14 September 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 14 September 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:37 P.M., 14 September 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

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Notes:

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

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

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Sam Tarry:

[85122]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reason the coach industry was ineligible for support from the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the coach industry.

Paul Scully:

Eligibility for the RHLGF was based on businesses being in scope of the Expanded Retail Discount Scheme for Business Rates, as set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>.

This eligibility definition was agreed as a way of ensuring that Local Authorities could target businesses at pace and ensure that the process of disbursing funding could proceed quickly.

The Department for Transport is monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the coach industry. Ministers and officials have met with the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) and considered an assessment provided by the CPT on the impact of COVID-19 on the coach industry.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for Transport, hosted a roundtable with the CPT and coach operators on the 15 July, and on 13 August spoke with the CPT's CEO to discuss wider issues facing the coach sector. Department for Transport officials continue to meet with the CPT regularly to discuss a range of issues including the challenges facing the coach industry.

■ **Business: Coronavirus**

Sam Tarry:

[85119]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing support to businesses that have received state aid during the covid-19 outbreak to help them address (a) long-term debt and (b) the risk of insolvency.

Paul Scully:

The Government has supported millions of firms over the course of the crisis to date, helping them protect jobs and stay in operation, ready to form part of the recovery.

We are aware that many companies have taken on substantial amounts of debt during the pandemic. Some of these companies have never taken on debt before and will need support to manage their debts and repayments. We are aware of external

proposals by think tanks and other bodies to support companies to recapitalise and we regularly consider a variety of policy ideas to identify the best way to support businesses through and beyond the pandemic.

■ **Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Sam Tarry:

[\[85118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the (a) number of companies in receipt of a coronavirus large business interruption loan that paid out dividends to shareholders before restrictions were put in place and (b) average amount that was paid out in dividends to shareholders.

Paul Scully:

As of 16 August, 60,409 facilities have been offered through the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS), worth a total of £13.68bn.

Restrictions on dividend payments have been in place since the introduction of the scheme on 20 April. Businesses taking out a loan through the scheme could continue making dividend payments, but could not increase the size of those payments for as long as any facility under CLBILS remained outstanding.

When the scheme was amended on 26 May to increase the maximum loan size to £200m, further restrictions on dividend payments were introduced for companies borrowing more than £50m. The new restrictions meant that borrowers seeking loans of over £50m could not make any dividend payments (other than those that have already been declared) until the facility had been repaid in full.

Shareholder dividends are listed in companies' annual reports and are available through Companies House records.

■ **Coronavirus: Research**

Geraint Davies:

[\[87470\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research into understanding the biological mechanisms of long-term covid-19 symptoms and air pollution.

Geraint Davies:

[\[87471\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research into covid-19 and respiratory conditions caused by air pollution.

Amanda Solloway:

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, has provided research funding for programmes looking into the factors that contribute to the severity of Covid-19 cases. This includes £4.9m funding to the ISARIC consortium for research and provision of real time information into the factors, including existing respiratory conditions, that put people most at risk of developing severe hospitalised illness as a result of Covid-19; and £1m to

OpenSAFELY, a secure platform linking the primary care NHS records of 24 million patients, which is able to identify patients at higher risk of admission, ventilation and death from Covid-19.

UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) provides a national capability in air pollution research that underpins ongoing evaluations of the potential relationship between long-term air pollution exposure, respiratory conditions and COVID-19 symptoms and mortality. UKRI has also funded or repurposed at least 12 research projects studying the links between Covid-19 and air quality.

Through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), the Department of Health and Social Care funds 14 Health Protection Research Units (HPRUs), which are research partnerships between universities and Public Health England (PHE). One of these Units, the NIHR HPRU in Environmental Exposures and Health based at Imperial College London, undertakes research on the health effects associated with exposure to a range of environmental pollutants. This includes research to investigate possible links between air pollution and COVID-19. Further information on projects on COVID-19 that are underway at the Unit can be found here:

<https://eeh.hpru.nihr.ac.uk/covid-19-projects/>.

Geraint Davies:

[87472]

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

Amanda Solloway:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave the Hon. Member for Dulwich and West Norwood on 7th September 2020 to Question [77719](#).

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination

Geraint Davies:

[87468]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research into the efficacy of a covid-19 vaccine in (a) older people and (b) other vulnerable groups.

Amanda Solloway:

The University of Oxford / Astra Zeneca Phase 3 trial includes branches that specifically looks at safety and efficacy of the vaccine in those aged between 56 – 69 and over 70. For these groups, researchers are assessing the immune response to the vaccine in people of different ages, to find out if there is variation in how well the immune system responds in older people. Other vaccine developers that the Government are working with may also decide to include specific groups such as these in their trials.

In addition to the work that vaccine developers are undertaking, the Government has funded the NHS Registry, developed by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). This national registry is encouraging people who may be disproportionately affected by COVID19, such as older people, older people with underlying health

conditions and people from different ethnic groups, to volunteer for clinical trials. This includes supporting the development of communications materials to provide information on taking part in COVID 19 vaccine trials via the NIHR website (Be Part of Research). These have been translated into other languages, including Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi and Bengali in order to reach the wider Asian community.

The Government also has a proactive communications programme aimed at the above-mentioned groups, to encourage greater sign up to the registry.

■ **Energy: Conservation**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[87557\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timescale is for the introduction of the Government's proposed Home Upgrade Grants.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Under the £2 billion Green Homes Grant funding announced by my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer on 8th July to save households money, cut carbon and create green jobs, £500 million has been earmarked for Local Authority delivery in England to improve the energy efficiency of low-income households.

The first phase of this funding, launched on 4th August, will see up to £200 million available to Local Authorities directly through a bidding process. The remaining £300 million will be allocated to the five regional Local Energy Hubs later this year to procure services that support upgrading eligible homes.

This funding represents a significant and accelerated down payment on decarbonising buildings to help stimulate the economic recovery and create green jobs.

■ **Fuel Poverty**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[87559\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if the Government will make an assessment of the potential merits of implementing a fuel poverty debt relief programme for winter 2020-21.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Department is working with Ofgem to assess the level and impact of domestic consumer energy debt this winter and we will continue to review options to support energy customers in debt, including those in or at risk of fuel poverty.

Ofgem rules require energy suppliers to offer customers at risk of, or in debt, the facility to repay their debt in instalments. Suppliers are also required to take all reasonable steps to take into account a customers ability to pay when calculating this. Ofgem issued an open letter in June, stating they would “not tolerate sharp practice or aggressive debt collection and suppliers could face enforcement action where this is the case”.

The Department secured an agreement with energy companies on 19th March 2020 to support their customers impacted by Covid-19, that, based on the circumstances could include reassessing, reducing or pausing debt repayments for households in financial distress. Companies have also agreed to refer customers who are struggling to pay their bills to third party debt advisors.

■ Future UK Offshore Oil and Gas Licensing Regime Review

Dr Alan Whitehead: [84958]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the terms of reference for the review of policy on the future UK offshore oil and gas licensing regime.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

On 3 September, the Government announced that it would conduct a review of policy on the future UK offshore oil and gas licensing regime. Details of that announcement can be seen on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-review-into-future-offshore-oil-and-gas-licensing-regime>. Terms of reference and emerging findings from this review will be published in due course.

Dr Alan Whitehead: [84959]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether the Oil and Gas Authority's mandate to Maximise Economic Recovery of oil and gas will be within scope of the review of policy on the future UK offshore oil and gas licensing regime.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Oil and Gas Authority's (OGA) mandate to maximise economic recovery of oil and gas (MER UK) is not within scope for this review. This review will look at policy on the future UK offshore oil and gas licensing regime as part of the wider aim of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The review will consider whether regulators have the right powers and processes in place to effect any changes to our future licensing regime.

■ Global Challenges Research Fund

Owen Thompson: [86710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to maintain the current level of Global Challenges funding.

Amanda Solloway:

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) has made an important contribution to global efforts to defeat poverty. With its focus on international research and innovation partnerships, GCRF is tackling some of the most intractable development challenges, which is why the Government has committed £1.5bn to the Fund since 2016.

The Department's future spending proposals are subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review, which was launched by the Chancellor in July. This will consider all areas of BEIS Research and Innovation, including activity such as GCRF which is funded by Official Development Assistance.

■ Horizon 2020

Geraint Davies:

[\[87469\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with the Minister of the Cabinet Office on the UK's future association with the Horizon Europe programme.

Amanda Solloway:

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy regularly speaks to my Rt. Hon. Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office about a range of policy issues, including the UK's potential association with Horizon Europe.

■ Hydrogen

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[85085\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the UK's hydrogen strategy; and what steps he is taking to formalise cross-departmental working on the Government's hydrogen strategy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to the development of hydrogen as a decarbonised energy carrier for the UK and we are currently developing our strategic approach to hydrogen. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is Chair of the Climate Action Implementation Cabinet Committee (CAI) which covers topics including hydrogen. BEIS officials and I also continue to work across government departments, including an on-going review of governance arrangements, to ensure we work effectively to develop new policy to help bring forward the technologies and supply chain we will need to grow the UK hydrogen economy.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[85087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to increase the number of trials that are testing the safety of using hydrogen for domestic heat.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Hydrogen is one potential option for decarbonising heating, alongside other solutions, including heat pumps and heat networks. The Government is therefore supporting a range of research, development and testing projects involving hydrogen to help determine the feasibility of using low carbon hydrogen as an alternative to the use of natural gas for heating in homes.

The Government is working closely with industry and other stakeholders to identify further testing and trials needed to provide evidence on issues including safety, feasibility, costs and benefits and the overall consumer experience.

Liz Saville Roberts:

[85088]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to promote the UK's hydrogen sector at COP26.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are exploring ways to promote UK hydrogen activity and enhance international cooperation at COP26.

COP provides an ideal platform to showcase UK's unique hydrogen opportunities. Harnessing UK geographical advantages such as offshore wind resource and potential CO2 storage for low carbon hydrogen production, with deployment across the energy system to enable deep decarbonisation in line with our net zero commitment.

Options under discussion include demonstration of hydrogen appliances developed under the Hy4Heat programme, as part of the BEIS Energy Innovation Portfolio; representation from leading UK hydrogen companies and projects; and discussion of international cooperation to accelerate clean energy innovation, including hydrogen. We will continue to develop this thinking in the coming months.

Andrew Griffith:

[85133]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the UK's hydrogen strategy; and what steps he is taking to formalise cross-departmental working on that strategy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government is committed to the development of hydrogen as a decarbonised energy carrier for the UK and are currently developing our strategic approach to hydrogen. My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is Chair of the Climate Action Implementation Cabinet Committee (CAI) which covers topics including hydrogen. BEIS officials and I also continue to work across government departments, including an on-going review of governance arrangements, to ensure we work effectively to develop new policy to help bring forward the technologies and supply chain we will need to grow the UK hydrogen economy.

Andrew Griffith:

[85134]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to promote the UK's hydrogen sector at COP26.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are exploring ways to promote UK hydrogen activity and enhance international cooperation at COP26.

COP provides an ideal platform to showcase UK's unique hydrogen opportunities. Harnessing UK geographical advantages such as offshore wind resource and potential CO2 storage for low carbon hydrogen production, with deployment across the energy system to enable deep decarbonisation in line with our net zero commitment.

Options under discussion include demonstration of hydrogen appliances developed under the Hy4Heat programme, as part of the BEIS Energy Innovation Portfolio; representation from leading UK hydrogen companies and projects; and discussion of international cooperation to accelerate clean energy innovation, including hydrogen. We will continue to develop this thinking in the coming months.

■ **Hydrogen Advisory Council**

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[85086\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish the dates on which the Hydrogen Advisory Council is planned to meet.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The inaugural meeting of the Hydrogen Advisory Council (HAC) was on 20 July 2020. It is expected to meet quarterly for at least the next two years with the next meeting scheduled on 14 October 2020.

Andrew Griffith:

[\[85135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will publish future meeting dates of the Hydrogen Advisory Council.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The inaugural meeting of the Hydrogen Advisory Council (HAC) was on 20 July 2020. It is expected to meet quarterly for at least the next two years with the next meeting scheduled on 14 October 2020.

■ **Night-time Economy: Coronavirus**

Andrew Rosindell:

[\[85963\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support (a) nightclubs and (b) other parts of the night-time economy which still remain closed during the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

We appreciate that the outbreak presents a significant challenge to the owners of nightclubs, which are still required to remain closed. The Government put in place an unprecedented programme of support to help businesses across the economy through the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, loan guarantees, grants, VAT deferral and the forfeiture moratorium. I am currently engaging with the nightclub sector to understand their immediate and longer-term needs.

■ OneWeb**Owen Thompson:**[\[85077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 1 September 2020 to Question 76792 on Oneweb: Investment, what assessment his Department has made of the ability of Oneweb to provide broadband to vast areas currently without connectivity, for example over entire oceans despite that system not having existing inter-satellite links.

Amanda Solloway:

OneWeb's technology has the potential for providing broadband access to millions of people in remote and rural locations currently without access.

In advance of the Government's investment, expert advice was provided on the commercial, financial and technical aspects of the investment. The investment will support the UK focus on research and innovation and will put Britain at the cutting edge of the latest advances in space technology.

■ Post Office Horizon IT System Independent Review**Marion Fellows:**[\[87580\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 14 July 2020 to Question 71096 on Post Office Horizon IT System Independent Review, whether he plans to maintain the timetable for (a) appointing a chair and (b) beginning the review by the end of September.

Paul Scully:

The Government wants to see the Horizon Independent Review start as soon as possible. We are making good progress with the appointment of a Chair. Once this process is complete, the Review will be formally launched.

■ Post Offices: Closures**Marion Fellows:**[\[86091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how many of each Post Office branch type were temporarily closed in (a) Scotland, (b) Wales, (c) Northern Ireland and (d) each region of England on 31 August 2020.

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the critical role that post offices play in communities and for small businesses across the UK.

While the Government sets the strategic direction for the Post Office, it allows the company the commercial freedom to deliver this strategy as an independent business. As such, the number and type of temporarily closed branches across the UK is an operational matters for Post Office Limited.

I have asked Nick Read, the Group Chief Executive of Post Office Limited, to write to the Hon Member about this matter. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

■ **Small Businesses: Competition**

Gareth Davies:

[\[86208\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment the Government has made of the potential benefits to SMEs of creating unfair competition legislation similar to the German Unfair Competition Act of 2004 or the US Trademark Dilution Revision Act 2006.

Paul Scully:

The Government is committed to tackling unfair business practices and keeps competition law under constant review to ensure that it is as effective as possible in protecting the interests of consumers and businesses.

■ **Social Rented Housing: Carbon Emissions**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[87558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what the timescale is for the introduction of the Government's proposed social housing decarbonisation programme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

On 8 July 2020, my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer's Summer Economic Update announced the £50m UK-wide Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator (SHDF Demonstrator) to start the decarbonisation of social housing over 2020/21, and to support green jobs as part of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan. The £50m project is a down payment towards the £3.8 billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in our Manifesto, allocations for which will be determined in due course. This is a 10-year scheme, running to 2030, beginning with the Demonstrator phase in 2020. This will mean warmer and more energy efficient homes and could reduce annual energy bills by hundreds of pounds for some of the poorest households in society, as well as lowering carbon emissions.

■ **Trade**

Sam Tarry:

[\[85123\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the devolved administrations on the Internal Market White Paper since its publication.

Paul Scully:

UK Government Ministers and officials have been open to engaging with all devolved administrations following the UK Internal White Paper publication on 16 July, with discussions held before and after receipt of the devolved administration's consultation responses. Further discussions are planned at Ministerial and official-level with all

three devolved administrations as the legislative Consent Motion process is engaged following the Bill's introduction.

■ **Travel Agents: Coronavirus**

Angela Crawley: [\[87582\]](#)

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

Paul Scully:

The Government recognises the outbound travel sector has been particularly hard hit by covid-19, and we will continue to engage regularly with ABTA and its members about the sector's recovery.

Businesses in the outbound travel sector have been able to access Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme, the loan schemes, VAT deferrals and cash grants of up to £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, as well as a broad range of other economic support.

Additionally, on 18 July the Government announced that ATOL-protected holidaymakers can book with confidence following confirmation that the Government will protect refund credit notes offered if packages are cancelled as a result of COVID-19.

■ **WH Smith: Post Offices**

Sam Tarry: [\[85117\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of WHSmith stores with in-store post offices; and what assessment he has made of the potential implications for the long-term resilience of the postal service of forthcoming restructuring and job losses at WHSmith.

Paul Scully:

WHSmith's restructuring programme is not expected to impact Post Office services provided in the 206 Post Offices operated within WHSmith stores.

The restructuring programme review of WHSmith's operations is to ensure the company is able to navigate the current uncertain economic times, particularly as a result of the decline in travel during Covid-19. However, the Department has an open dialogue with both Post Office Limited and WHSmith and will keep monitoring the situation closely.

■ **Blood: Contamination**

Christian Matheson:

[\[85068\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what plans he has to introduce a framework of compensation for the (a) victims and (b) families of the contaminated blood scandal.

Christian Matheson:

[\[85069\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, when a framework of compensation for the (a) victims and (b) families of the contaminated blood scandal is planned to be introduced.

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[87562\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will announce a framework of compensation for victims and families of the contaminated blood scandal.

Penny Mordaunt:

This government remains committed to considering a framework for compensation, as well as actions to address disparities in financial and non-financial support for people infected and affected across the UK.

Cabinet Office officials are working with their colleagues in HM Treasury, the Department of Health and Social Care, and health departments in the devolved administrations to take this forward. I will update the House and the Inquiry, and those infected and affected as soon as these considerations have been concluded.

■ **Brexit: Coronavirus**

Helen Hayes:

[\[86721\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Operation Yellowhammer Reasonable Worst Case Planning Assumptions coinciding with a potential second wave of covid-19 on (a) civil service capacity and (b) civil service preparedness.

Penny Mordaunt:

Operation Yellowhammer has been stood down.

■ **Coronavirus: Disinformation**

Chi Onwurah:

[\[84694\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the covid-19 fake news unit has made; and what criteria he is using to evaluate the performance of that unit.

Julia Lopez:

The Counter Disinformation Unit was established on 5 March 2020, bringing together cross-Government monitoring and analysis capabilities. Its primary function is to

provide a comprehensive picture of the extent, scope and the reach of disinformation and misinformation on Covid-19, and to work with partners to ensure appropriate action is taken.

Government has been identifying and resolving up to 70 incidents a week, often false narratives containing multiple misleading claims coordinating with departments across Whitehall to deploy an appropriate response. This can include a direct rebuttal on social media, working with platforms to remove harmful content, and ensuring public health campaigns are promoted through reliable sources. A range of criteria from engagement rates to speed of response is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken.

■ Honours

Seema Malhotra: [\[87554\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many people received honours in each constituency between August 2016 and August 2020.

Chloe Smith:

Honours recipients are not categorised by constituency. However, the honours lists, as published on GOV.UK, are searchable by county.

■ Hull and Goole Port Health Authority

Christine Jardine: [\[87620\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the locations are of the new Border Control Posts for the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority; whether those posts will be on or off the docks; and on what date he plans to make an announcement of those locations.

Christine Jardine: [\[87621\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of Government funding for the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority's preparation for the end of the transition period; whether funding for that purpose will be (a) made (i) direct or (ii) via local authorities and (b) ring-fenced; and how the level of that funding will be calculated.

Christine Jardine: [\[87622\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the timetable is for the development of an employment plan to ensure effective (a) employee cover and (b) public safety in the Hull and Goole Port Health Authority.

Penny Mordaunt:

I refer the hon. Member to the answer [given by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 13 July 2020](#) to Hywel Williams MP, and to [Rachel Reeves MP on 21 July 2020](#).

■ Visas: EU Countries

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[86533\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether visa-free travel for UK owners of second homes in the EU is an objective in negotiations on the future relationship with the EU.

Ronnie Cowan:

[\[86691\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, what advice his Department is providing to UK citizens who own a second home within the EU in relation to access after the end of the transition period.

Penny Mordaunt:

The Government is not seeking to agree specific mobility arrangements for owners of a second home.

After the end of the transition period, UK nationals will require permission from the relevant Member State to stay longer than 90 days in a rolling 180-day period.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

■ Cathedrals: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87595\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what support is being made available to cathedrals to tackle the financial challenges they are facing as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: The Church of England's 42 cathedrals contribute over £220million to the national economy and have, on average 10 million visitors in a typical year. The closure of churches and cathedrals due to Covid-19 has severely reduced both their ability to support the local and national economy. Estimates suggest that cathedrals are facing anticipated losses due to the pandemic of around £28million in 2020 and a projected further £15million in 2021.

Cathedrals are eligible and are being encouraged to apply for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and the Government's £1.57bn Cultural Recovery Fund.

The Church Commissioners have made money available to cathedrals in response to the pandemic, including through the £10 million cathedral sustainability fund, of which £1million is to support cathedrals wage bills, £1million to support Lay Clerks and cathedral music, £1million to support specialist heritage trades and a further £5 million on other projects to make cathedrals more sustainable. The Church Commissioners are currently consulting all cathedrals about their current circumstances and potential future financial and non-financial support needs.

■ Christianity: Oppression**Jim Shannon:****[86658]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church of England has made of the extent of the global persecution of Christians during the covid-19 pandemic.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Church of England is in regular communication with the Government and the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief on the issue of persecution of Christians worldwide.

The Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating the challenges facing Christians who have experienced persecution in some parts of the world as well as Christians and other faith groups in contexts of civil war. The leaders of the Anglican Communion are in close contact with each other to support in practical and prayerful ways.

Alexander Stafford:**[88422]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment the Church of England has made of the extent of global persecution of Christians during the covid-19 pandemic.

Andrew Selous:

The Church of England is in regular communication with the Government and the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief on the issue of persecution of Christians worldwide.

The Covid-19 pandemic is exacerbating the challenges facing Christians in places of conflict or persecution. The leaders of the Anglican Communion are in close contact to support each other in practical and prayerful ways.

■ Christianity: South Sudan**Jim Shannon:****[86666]**

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what support the Church of England is providing to the church in South Sudan following the shootings of 32 people and the death of the Dean at the cathedral of Saint Luke's in South Sudan.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The deaths of the Dean and members of the congregation of St Luke's Cathedral South Sudan are both tragic and appalling.

In response to the recent attack the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa has called on "all peace-loving institutions to raise their voice and call for peace negotiations in South Sudan and dialogue to address the inter-communal violence."

The Church of England and the Vatican have been working together closely on initiatives to bring peace to South Sudan. The Church of England will continue to

support reconciliation efforts and work with its international partners to end the protracted tribal conflict.

■ Church of England: Investment

Jim Shannon:

[86667]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, how the Church is using its investment portfolio to encourage (a) ethical business practices and (b) a reduction in dependency on fossil fuels.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The engagement of the Church of England National Investing Bodies ('NIBs'), including the Church Commissioners, is guided by the commitments made by the National Investing bodies in a July 2018 General Synod debate on climate change and investment.

The NIBs reaffirmed their commitment to engage urgently and robustly with companies rated poorly by the Transition Pathway Initiative and, beginning in 2020, to start to disinvest from the ones that are not taking their responsibilities seriously to assist with the transition to a low carbon economy. More information about the Transition Pathway can be found here:

<https://www.transitionpathwayinitiative.org/tpi/overview>

The NIBs have committed to divestment by 2023 from fossil fuel companies that they have assessed as not being prepared to align with the goal of the Paris Agreement to restrict the global average temperature rise to well below 2°C. This assessment will be made drawing on TPI data.

In 2020 the National Investing Bodies joined the UN net-zero asset owner alliance. More information about their engagement can be found at the link:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-national-investing-bodies-join-un-convened-net-zero-asset>

■ Church Schools: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[86657]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to support children to return to school as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: During the period of lockdown Church of England schools remained open to the children of key workers and to vulnerable children, with teachers working extremely hard to provide support for children at school and those who remained at home.

Church of England schools continue to follow national guidelines on opening and teaching during the current stage of the pandemic.

Parishes have supported local schools and teachers during this difficult time, with examples including donations of equipment for pupils, and parish rooms and halls being made available for use as extra classrooms in cases where social distancing has required it.

■ Churches

Jim Shannon:

[86660]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress the Church of England is making on its plans to establish 2,700 churches over the next ten years.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: In July 2020 the Church of England announced a Funding package worth £24 million to increase its presence in urban and deprived areas. More information can be found at:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-awards-ps24-million-grants-spread-christian-faith-towns-and>

■ Churches: Coronavirus

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[81536]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps he is taking to ensure the accuracy of guidance issue to people planning weddings to (a) protect the finances of those people and minimise disruption to weddings.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 9 September 2020]: Weddings are permitted in places of worship, providing certain public health criteria are met, including an advised maximum number of 30 people in attendance.

Up to date guidance for clergy on weddings and COVID-19 is provided on the Church of England website at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/COVID%2019%20advice%20for%20Clergy%20Conducting%20Weddings%20v5.1.pdf>

Jim Shannon:

[86659]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress the Church of England is making on reopening (a) churches and (b) cathedrals for (i) worship, (ii) weddings and (iii) other ceremonies.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: Worship, weddings, christenings and funerals in COVID-secure church buildings where appropriate social distancing can be achieved, remain permitted and are unaffected by the most recent Government announcement. The Church of England's most up to date guidance on COVID can be

seen here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

■ Churches: Greater London

Mark Pritchard:

[85999]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what assessment he has made of the financial effect on central London parishes of the congestion charge being levied on Sundays.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 9 September 2020]: I am aware of the pressure the extension of the congestion charge is placing on all who worship in those London parishes that are located within the boundary of the charge, and who must travel to them from outside that boundary. Though the Church Commissioners have not made formal representations, I am aware that approaches have been made to the Mayor of London by Churches Together in Westminster including St Martin-in-the-Fields and St James's, Piccadilly, alongside other denominations and faiths. Concern has been raised about the knock-on impact on social action project work carried out by many central London places of worship, which may see a fall in donations as a result of fewer regular worshippers or visitors.

■ Churches: Theft

Jim Shannon:

[86664]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England plans to take to tackle the theft of lead from churches.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: Thefts of metal and monumental stone from churches initially fell following the introduction of the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, but have begun to rise again. The Church of England submitted evidence to the Government's review of the Act and recommended legislation be updated to reflect new forms of thefts, the organised nature of the crime and smelting techniques. We await progress on that and in the meantime are working closely with the APPG for Metal Theft, Historic England and the Police, to support parishes that are impacted by this form of serious organised crime.

■ Explosions: Lebanon

Jim Shannon:

[86668]

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what support the Church of England is providing to the church and people of Lebanon to recover and rebuild following the explosion in the port of Beirut.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: Anglican institutions in Beirut were affected by the explosion. All Saints Episcopal Church and the Near Eastern School of Theology were severely damaged, being only a mile from the port. St Luke's school for disabled children thankfully escaped the blast, and the children were away because of the COVID-19 virus.

The Diocese of Jerusalem oversees the Anglican community in Lebanon, and the Church of England is supporting Archbishop Suheil Dawani's appeal to the Anglican Communion for support to repair damaged buildings and affected lives.

■ Marriage**Jim Shannon:**[\[86662\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church of England is taking to support marriage (a) for couples on low incomes (b) more widely.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: Couples who live within a parish or have a qualifying connection to it are able to marry in their parish church according to the rites of the Church of England. Marriage in a church remains a relatively inexpensive option, but an incumbent has the authority to waive some of the fees to help couples who may have particular financial difficulties or who are on low incomes.

Many parishes attend wedding fayres and work with local businesses, such as florists and events planners, to increase awareness of the options available to couples to be married in their local church.

In response to the Law Commission's announcement of a consultation on reform of wedding law, a Church of England spokesperson said: "Our research shows that being married in a place that has meaning is still important to couples and their families. The moments of waiting to walk down the aisle, standing at the steps, exchanging timeless vows that can only be said in a church, and turning to walk out of the church as a newly married couple, are cherished."

■ Mental Health: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:**[\[86663\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps the Church is taking to support mental health during the covid-19 pandemic.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: A central part of the Church's mission is to provide grief counselling and prayer in times of need, as well as assistance to those under pressure through provision of food and other help to the vulnerable and shielding. Healthcare chaplains continue to work alongside community and acute mental health services.

Parishes have been supporting vulnerable individuals to remain in contact with family, friends and their community, digitally and where possible by direct face to face contact. The reopening of church buildings for prayer, worship, weddings, baptisms and funerals has also provided mental and spiritual succour to clergy, laity and community.

The Church remains particularly concerned for children and young people who are young carers or living in homes where domestic abuse and violence is present. The Church continues to remain open as a first point of contact for vulnerable people and to support local charities and refuges.

■ Ordination

Jim Shannon:

[\[86661\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what progress the Church of England has been made on increasing the number of ordinands.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: 550 people began training for ordained ministry in the Church of England last year and 570 deacons were ordained in 2019 to a curacy parish.

The number of stipendiaries, or paid clergy, remained stable at 7,700, between 2018 and 2019, following a period of decline. There were 7,830 Readers or licensed lay ministers compared to just under 10,000 in 2010. Readers and licensed lay ministers are not ordained but can lead worship and preach in churches, among other roles.

■ St Margaret's Church Westminster: Coronavirus

Jim Shannon:

[\[86665\]](#)

To ask the Member for South West Bedfordshire, representing the Church Commissioners, what representations he has received on the continuation of Sunday services at St Margaret's, Westminster.

Andrew Selous:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: I have received correspondence from some of the congregation of St Margaret's and have met with the Dean and Rector along with Mr Speaker to better understand the reasons for the changes that the Abbey wish to initiate at St Margaret's.

DEFENCE■ **Armoured Fighting Vehicles: Procurement**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[87492\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) Mastiff, (b) Ridgeback, (c) Wolfhound, (d) Foxhound, (e) Warthog and (f) Jackalof protected mobility vehicles have been procured to date.

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[87493\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Husky Tactical Support Vehicles his Department has procured to date.

Jeremy Quin:

The number of vehicles procured are as follows:

FLEET (ALL VARIANTS)	TOTAL NUMBER PROCURED
Mastiff	450
Ridgeback	171
Wolfhound	125
Foxhound	400
Warthog	115
Jackal	502
Husky	338

■ **Defence: Coronavirus**

Mr Kevan Jones: [\[84967\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has held discussions with his counterparts in other governments on the potential merits of accelerating transnational defence programmes, as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Jeremy Quin:

I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to his Question 84653 on 10 September 2020.

Attachments:

1. 84653 - Defence Procurement [84653 - Defence Procurement.docx]

■ HMS Severn

Mr Kevan Jones:

[87495]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the total cost was to the public purse of the recommissioning of HMS Severn.

Jeremy Quin:

The total cost of the regeneration of HMS SEVERN was £8.36 million.

■ Military Aid

Mr Kevan Jones:

[87497]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September to Question 84972, whether the UK possessed good existing radar coverage in the area; and for what reasons his Department deployed the P-8 aircraft in the English Channel.

James Heappey:

The UK possesses good existing air surveillance radar coverage over the English Channel. Defence tasked the P-8A Poseidon aircraft to conduct missions in support of the Border Force operation to detect and track small boats crossing the English Channel from France with suspected migrants. The P-8A Poseidon is equipped with a maritime search radar that can detect surface contacts, including small boats.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ ARM

Sam Tarry:

[85120]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with (a) ARM Holdings Ltd and (b) Nvidia on the proposed purchase of ARM Holdings Ltd; and if he will publish details of those discussions.

Caroline Dinenage:

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders on a variety of issues. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website. It would be inappropriate to comment further on an ongoing commercial matter.

■ Charities: Finance

Rachael Maskell:

[84303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the continued allocation of funding to medical research charities.

Mr John Whittingdale:

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Government has committed a £750m targeted funding package to ensure the Voluntary, Community and social Enterprise sector can continue its vital work.

Ministers and officials in DCMS have maintained regular contact with other departments throughout the pandemic, including DHSC and BEIS, as we develop our response. BEIS and DHSC have been closely liaising with the Association of Medical Research Charities, as well as individual charities, to understand the impact of the pandemic on this sector and identify how best Government and charities can work together to ensure that patients continue benefiting from charity funded research.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme**Tracy Brabin:**[\[86127\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many workers in the digital, culture, media and sport sectors have been recipients of support from the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Mr John Whittingdale:

It is estimated that the number of workers furloughed across DCMS sectors (including tourism) peaked at 1.5 million on 31st May 2020. This represented 37% of the total DCMS workforce. The estimated number of furloughed workers in these sectors has since declined to 812,000, or 20% of the workforce, as of 9th August.

■ Culture: Coronavirus**Jonathan Gullis:**[\[86778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports, what fiscal steps he is taking to support cultural and creative industries affected by the covid-19 outbreak in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Culture Recovery Fund will provide £1.57 billion of targeted support to critical cultural, arts and heritage organisations to help them survive and recover through the coronavirus pandemic. Funding will be prioritised to institutions of national and international significance and those that are crucial to levelling up places and communities, including smaller organisations and cultural venues that are at the centre of their communities.

Key organisations in England have been able to apply for grants or loans. The relevant DCMS Arms Length Bodies (Arts Council England, Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and the British Film Institute) will make funding decisions for grants against the published criteria agreed by Ministers. In addition, the independent Culture Recovery Board will make decisions regarding applications for loans, and provide additional assurance over the largest grants.

Our priority is to ensure that organisations get the funding they need as swiftly as possible and we expect some funding decisions to be made this month with announcements soon after that.

The Underground live music venue in Stoke on Trent has already benefited from the £3.36 million Emergency Grassroot Music Venues Fund which has been shared among 135 venues across England who applied for support to survive the imminent risk of collapse caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

■ Internet: Bullying and Harassment

Holly Mumby-Croft:

[\[86785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what plans he has to strengthen legislation against (a) cyberbullying and (b) online abuse.

Caroline Dinenage:

The government is committed to making the UK the safest place in the world to go online. In April 2019, the government published the Online Harms White Paper, which set out plans to introduce world-leading legislation to make companies more responsible for their users' safety online. We will establish in law a new duty of care on companies towards their users which will be overseen by an independent regulator.

We published the initial government response in February, which set out the direction of travel, and will publish the full government response to the Online Harms White Paper later this year. We will follow the full government response with legislation, which will be ready early next year.

■ Performing Arts: Coronavirus

Mr Kevan Jones:

[\[85962\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what financial support is available to help stand-up comedy venues during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government appreciates that the Covid-19 pandemic presents a significant challenge to many of DCMS' sectors, including the stand-up comedy sector, which is why we announced unprecedented support for business and workers to protect them against the current economic emergency.

On Sunday 5 July 2020, the Secretary of State announced a major £1.57 billion support package for key cultural organisations to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. Live comedy is a much loved part of the British cultural landscape. Comedy venues and organisations will be eligible to apply for support through the package.

The Live Comedy Association attends the regular ministerially-chaired roundtables that ensure we are assisting all our Creative Industries sectors as effectively as

possible. In addition, officials are in regular contact with the Live Comedy Association, ensuring that the needs of the comedy industry are fully understood.

We will continue to work with the stand-up comedy sector to understand the difficulties the industry faces and help it access support through these challenging times and through recovery.

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[86537\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to his 5 July 2020 press release, when the Government plans to finalise its guidance on a phased return of the performing arts sector.

Caroline Dinéage:

The Performing Arts guidance published on 9 July sets out how organisations can prepare for and deliver their activities at each of the five stages set out in the Performing Arts Roadmap. This allows organisations to understand what will be required of them as we move to allowing fuller audiences within venues as set out for Stage 5 of the roadmap. We have always been clear that moving forward with the performing Arts roadmap depended on the prevalence of COVID-19.'

■ **PLASA: Coronavirus**

Sir Christopher Chope:

[\[86536\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will arrange an early meeting with the Professional Lighting and Sound Association to discuss the effect upon their members of the continuing covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the live events sector.

Caroline Dinéage:

We recognise the crucial role that lighting and sound technicians play in the UK's live music and events sector.

DCMS continues to engage with a range of trade representatives and Government departments to support creative businesses, and ensuring that the needs of its sectors, and those who work in them, are fully understood.

We are committed to continuing to work with the live music and events sectors to understand the difficulties they face and help them access support through these challenging times and through recovery.

■ **Redundancy: Coronavirus**

Tracy Brabin:

[\[86128\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what estimate the Government has made of the number of job losses in digital, culture, media and sport sectors since April 2020.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The latest ONS Business Impacts of Coronavirus Survey data, recorded from 27th July to 9th August, suggests that 1.9% of Accommodation and Food Services Activities workers have been made redundant as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, along with 1.0% of Arts, Entertainment and Recreation workers. Across the UK economy as a whole, the figure stands at 1.1%.

■ Small Businesses: Cybercrime**Chi Onwurah:**[\[87545\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many SME businesses have taken up the Government's Cyber Essentials scheme.

Matt Warman:

At the end of August 2020, 50,421 Cyber Essentials certificates had been awarded to organisations in the UK, including 38,168 to small and medium sized organisations. 11,506 certificates have been awarded so far this year, including 9,780 to SMEs. For a small number of older certificates (pre-2017) we do not have information available on the size of the organisation.

On 10 September 2020 the government announced a £500,000 fund to help SME businesses in the healthcare sector improve their digital resilience. The funding will enable SMEs to gain Cyber Essentials certification and take other steps to improve their cyber security, helping to ensure they can continue providing vital products and services to deal with the current pandemic.

■ Social Security Benefits**Chi Onwurah:**[\[83792\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 August 2020 to Question 75281 on Social Security Benefits, what plans the Government has for the implementation of the Covid Credit software referred to in that Answer; on what date that software will go live; and what (a) funding from the public purse and (b) other resources are being allocated to implementing that software.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Covid Credit is third party, proof-of-concept software. The government has not commissioned the software nor engaged with the developers.

HMRC recently published a tender (BIP514056627) for the provision of Payment Initiation and Account Information Services to make it easy for customers to pay by bank transfer using a secure, simple and efficient process.

Chi Onwurah:[\[83793\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 3 August 2020 to Question 75281 on Social Security Benefits, how many algorithms are involved in the development of the Covid Credit software referred to in that

Answer; and what assessments have been made of algorithmic bias in the application of that software.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Government's Data Ethics Framework and 'Guide to Using AI in the Public Sector' alongside other guidance available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), supports ethical and safe use of algorithms in the public sector. Building on the existing work on algorithmic and data ethics, the Government is now working to deliver more transparency on the use of algorithmic-assisted decision making within the public sector; and is working with leading organisations in the field of data and AI ethics on a proposed approach to algorithmic transparency.

However, Covid Credit is third party, proof-of-concept software. The government has not commissioned the software nor engaged with the developers, and is therefore unable to comment on its functionality.

■ **Sports: Coronavirus**

Catherine West:

[\[87614\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what additional funding his Department plans to make available to sports clubs to carry out additional cleaning of sports facilities required to restart outdoor club sports during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nigel Huddleston:

Sports and physical activity facilities play a crucial role in supporting adults and children to be active. It is important that sports clubs remain accessible for people from all backgrounds as we make efforts to return to normality after the Covid lockdown period.

Sport England have announced a £210 million package of support to help community clubs through this crisis.

■ **Voluntary Organisations: Finance**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[84302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the effect of changes in local government funding on resources available to voluntary sector organisations in the 2021-22 financial year.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Secretary of State regularly meets with my cabinet colleagues to discuss a broad range of issues. Future funding decisions remain subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) which was launched by the Chancellor in July. The Review, which will be published in the autumn, will set out the government's spending plans for the parliament.

EDUCATION**■ Assessments: Coronavirus****Rachael Maskell:****[87596]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of pupils taking a different form of end-of-year assessment due to the covid-19 outbreak at the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

Rachael Maskell:**[87598]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons his Department is not planning to introduce a combination of end-of-year and continuous assessment at the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

Exams and assessments are the best and fairest way of judging students' performance, and the Department expects next year's exam series to go ahead. The Department is working closely with Ofqual, the exam boards and groups representing teachers, schools and colleges to ensure that this happens as smoothly as possible. Ofqual has already consulted on a range of possible adaptations to GCSE, AS and A level exams and assessments next year, on a subject by subject basis, and has announced some changes that will reduce pressure on teaching time, and help to ensure that the young people taking exams next year have the same opportunities to progress as the students before them.

■ Education: Oldham**Jim McMahon:****[86733]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of trends in the level of attainment of (a) early years, (a) primary and (c) secondary pupils in Oldham as a result of its status as an Opportunity Area compared with those levels in other areas.

Michelle Donelan:

Evidence is at the heart of the Opportunity Areas programme. We are working closely with the 'What Works Centres' (including the Education Endowment Foundation) to identify and implement evidence-based interventions in Opportunity Areas that offer the best value for money and the potential to drive real change.

We continue to track progress in all of the Opportunity Areas to determine whether improvements have been realised against the priorities identified at the outset of the programme. The priorities identified in the Oldham Opportunity Area can be found in the delivery plan published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-and-opportunity-areas>. An evaluation of the programme is underway and will be published in due course.

In 2017, the percentage of children in early years education achieving a good level of development by age 5 in Oldham was 63.6%. In 2019, this percentage had increased to 68.1%, which is an increase of 4.5 percentage points.

The increase in all children in England achieving a good level of development by age 5 between 2017 and 2019 was 1.1 percentage point. In comparison, Oldham's attainment in early years has increased faster than the England increase. With 68.1% of children achieving a good level of development by age 5, Oldham remains below 2019's England average of 71.8%.

In Oldham, the percentage of pupils in primary school reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of key stage 2 increased from 57.2% in 2017 to 62.7% in 2019. This is a 5.5 percentage point increase. This is higher than the increase in England of 3.7 percentage points. At 62.7% of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of KS2 in 2019, Oldham remains below the 2019 England average of 65.3%.

In Oldham, the average Attainment 8 scores of pupils in secondary school at the end of key stage 4 had decreased by 1.5 percentage points between 2017 and 2019: it decreased from 43.6% in 2017 to 42.1% in 2019. This decrease was larger than the decrease in England of 0.4 percentage points, from 46.4% in 2017 to 46.8% on 2019. In 2019, Oldham's Attainment 8 scores of pupils at the end of key stage 4 were 4.7 points lower than the England average.

For comparison to other areas, the department's published data for early years can be found at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-early-years-foundation-stage-profile>, data on primary school pupils can be found at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-key-stage-2>, and data on secondary school pupils can be found at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-gcses-key-stage-4>.

■ English Language: Education

Mick Whitley: [86757]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that clinically vulnerable learners are able to continue to access English for Speakers of Other Languages provision during the 2020-21 academic year during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mick Whitley: [86758]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he is taking steps to increase funding for the provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages as a result of the increased costs of introducing remote and hybrid learning for that subject.

Mick Whitley: [86759]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing funding per learner at entry level for the provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Gillian Keegan:

The government recognises that language skills are crucial to help people integrate into life in England, as well as to break down barriers to work and career progression.

This is why we want to support all adults in England to secure the English language skills they need. We remain committed to the manifesto commitment to boost English language teaching to empower existing migrants and help promote integration into society.

We understand the challenges faced by further education providers due to the implications of the COVID-19 disruption and the issues that remote learning has for some learners. We want to get all further education learners, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, back into education settings 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 and teachers. From Autumn 2020, all learners will return to a full high-quality education programme delivered by their college or post-16 learning provider. We have also introduced a change to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Adult Education Budget (AEB) Funding Rules for 2020-21 academic year, to enable providers to use their Learner Support funds to purchase IT devices for learners (aged 19+) and to help them meet learners' IT connectivity costs, where these costs are a barrier to accessing or continuing in their training.

We fund adults through the £1.34 billion AEB for a range of courses and qualifications, including ESOL, so adults can secure the English language skills they need. Following the devolution of approximately half of the AEB, seven Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs), and the Greater London Authority (GLA), are now responsible for determining adult English language (and other) provision in their areas. Eligible adults resident in non-devolved areas of England are funded through the ESFA AEB and can access fully-funded ESOL if they are unemployed, looking for work and in receipt of certain benefits, or if they are employed and in receipt of a low-wage. All other ESFA AEB-eligible learners are co-funded with the Government contributing 50% of the course cost. ESFA allocations for 2020-21 have been confirmed, and payments will be made in line with the national profile, which has been confirmed in the ESFA AEB Funding and Performance Management Rules for 2020-21. We are looking carefully at further education funding, including ESOL, in preparation for the forthcoming Spending Review. Further information on the AEB funding rules for 2020-21 is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2020-to-2021>.

We do not ring-fence a particular amount of the ESFA AEB budget for ESOL, so colleges and training providers have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their AEB allocation to meet the needs of their communities. They are responsible for planning, with local partners, which ESOL courses can be delivered locally. We want to support all adults in England to secure the English language skills they need. While we are keen to support the learners who are most in need, we also believe that those who decide to settle in the UK have a responsibility to invest their own time and resources into learning English.

■ Foreign Students: Coronavirus

Mr Richard Holden:

[87707]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking in response to the situation of students planning to undertake a year abroad but who may be prevented from doing so as such travel is not classified as essential, thereby making insurance for universities invalid.

Michelle Donelan:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) do not make a judgement on whether any travel is essential. Their guidance is that: "Whether travel is essential or not is your own decision". This guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/about-foreign-commonwealth-development-office-travel-advice>.

Before starting a placement, students, including Erasmus+ participants, should consult with their provider to confirm details and check the living in country guide (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-living-in-guides>) and travel advice for the country they will be visiting, being conscious that their placement may not be able to continue as originally planned. To undertake a placement, participants should seek the agreement of their home provider and their host. There may be opportunities for it to start at a later date if the situation changes and this is feasible. Participants should be ready to comply with local isolation, testing or quarantine requirements, and will need to rely on the local health system.

We expect all higher education providers to explore alternative options for mobilities and study, whether blended or fully virtual, if appropriate, and to be flexible in their approach and be conscious of the potentially rapidly changing situation on a country by country basis. They should be ready to make quick changes to projects and mobilities, consider delaying mobilities and amending start and end dates, if feasible, as restrictions may change over time. We expect all universities, colleges, schools and other organisers managing international educational mobilities, to follow the relevant FCDO travel advice for the destination country and highlight this to their participants, being aware the situation can change rapidly.

While the government is in continual dialogue with the insurance sector, on its response to COVID-19, and is encouraging insurers to do all they can to support customers during this period, the position on the provision of COVID-19 insurance is that it is largely a commercial judgement for insurers. Cover for COVID-19 related cancellation is unlikely to be included in travel insurance policies bought or renewed after the pandemic was declared, e.g. in the event of the FCDO travel advice changing, as it is a known risk. This is in contrast to policies sold before the outbreak of COVID-19, which typically covered changes in FCDO advice.

■ Further Education: Coronavirus

Gill Furniss:

[86734]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of (a) removing or (b) relaxing rules surrounding requirements of study in relation to students who have not yet received a Level 2 in English and/or maths in the 2020-21 academic year in order to prevent the breakage of covid-secure bubbles within further education colleges.

Gillian Keegan:

Students who leave school with a good grasp of English and maths increase their chances of securing employment, apprenticeship or going on to further education. It is important now more than ever to give this opportunity to students who have yet to secure a Level 2 in these essential subjects and we will continue to do so.

Young people from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds will be amongst those hardest hit by the unprecedented disruption to their education as a result of COVID-19. I recognise that colleges and their staff around the country have worked tremendously hard responding to this unprecedented challenge and working with us to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our students. Colleges and providers swiftly moved more learning online to allow students to continue with studies remotely.

We are aware that the COVID-19 outbreak has caused disruption to people of all ages in education, in particular lost teaching time. Many further education providers opened over the summer for priority learners, subject to the required safety measures being met. We know that we have the professional knowledge and expertise in the education system to ensure that students recover and get back on track. From Autumn 2020, all learners will return to a full high-quality education programme delivered by their college or post-16 learning provider. To support providers, additional funding of up to £96m for the academic year 2020/21 has been made available to schools, colleges and other 16-19 providers to provide small group tuition for disadvantaged students whose learning has been disrupted.

■ International Baccalaureate

Simon Jupp:

[85129]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the International Baccalaureate Organisation on using predicted grades for International Baccalaureate qualifications.

Nick Gibb:

Ofqual had discussions with all awarding organisations, including the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), about their approach to summer 2020 examination results.

These discussions included how the awarding organisations intended to award grades where the examinations or assessments could not be adapted. While Ofqual

had a degree of oversight of awarding organisations' approaches, it did not mandate or validate the approach that each awarding organisation took.

The awarding approach for International Baccalaureate (IB) qualifications did not rely solely on using predicted grades from schools and colleges. The IBO also requested completed coursework from students that their external assessors marked and fed into their awarding process. In response to concerns raised by some schools following release of the IB grades in early July, the IBO announced the introduction of a 'results review service' whereby schools and colleges could provide further evidence if an individual student result, subject or cohort results were not in line with expected results based on student performance.

■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus

Matt Vickers:

[86203]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure the financial stability of early years providers during the covid-19 outbreak.

Vicky Ford:

The government understands the importance of childcare, which is why we are planning to spend over £3.6 billion on our free early education entitlements in 2020-21.

The COVID-19 outbreak is a testing and disruptive time for all parts of society and the economy, including for the early years sector. We recognise the risk to providers' financial viability that is caused by changing levels of parental demand.

We are providing extra stability and reassurance to nurseries and childminders that are open by 'block-buying' childcare places for the rest of this year at the level that we would have funded before the COVID-19 outbreak, regardless of how many children are attending.

On top of that, nurseries, childminders and pre-schools can claim for various other forms of business support, including for the Coronavirus Job Retention and Self Employment Income Support Schemes.

To provide additional support to firms to keep employees as demand returns, my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced the Job Retention Bonus. This is a one-off payment of £1,000 to employers for each employee who was ever furloughed, has been continuously employed until 31 January 2021 and is still employed by the same employer as of 31 January 2021.

Around £60 million per year of supplementary funding is also being provided to local authorities to enable them to protect maintained nursery schools' funding. We announced on 24 August that we will continue to provide this for the whole of the 2020-21 academic year.

We will continue to work closely with both local authorities and the early years sector organisations to monitor the impact of the outbreak on the sector.

Future funding for the sector will be considered in the next Spending Review.

■ Remote Education: Coronavirus

Mary Kelly Foy:

[86754]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government has taken to improve online access for disadvantaged pupils in the event of online teaching resuming during the covid-19 outbreak in the 2020-21 academic year.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has already delivered over 220,000 laptops and tablets to children who would not otherwise have access, as part of over £100 million invested to support remote education and access to online social care.

The Department is now supplementing this support by making an initial 150,000 additional devices available in the event that face to face schooling becomes disrupted as a result of local COVID-19 restrictions. This scheme will enable schools to support disadvantaged children in Year 3 to Year 11 who do not have their own devices. Schools will also be able to order devices for disadvantaged children across all year groups who are shielding as a result of official advice, all year groups who attend hospital schools and those completing their Key Stage 4 at a further education college.

As well as laptops and tablets, the Department has provided over 50,000 4G wireless routers to support disadvantaged children with internet connectivity. These routers come with free data for the autumn term and will allow local authorities and academy trusts to support children who may have their education and care disrupted because of official COVID-19 restrictions or disruption to face to face contact. In partnership with BT, the Department has also launched a service to provide children and young people free access to BT wifi hotspots.

The Department is also working with the major telecommunications companies to improve internet connectivity for disadvantaged and vulnerable families who rely on a mobile internet connection. We are piloting an approach where mobile network operators are providing temporary access to free additional data offering families more flexibility to access the resources that they need the most.

■ Schools: Coronavirus

Ms Lyn Brown:

[84990]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish guidance instructing schools not to include specific brands or types of face covering in their uniform policies for non-medical reasons.

Nick Gibb:

On 26 August 2020, the Department revised its guidance on face coverings in schools and colleges following a new statement by the World Health Organisation on 21 August. The guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-in-education>.

As the guidance outlines, from 1 September, in areas of national government intervention, in schools where year 7 and above are educated, face coverings should be worn by staff, visitors and pupils when moving around indoors, for example in corridors and communal areas, where social distancing cannot be safely managed. Nationwide, all schools have the discretion to require staff, visitors and pupils (in year 7 and above) to wear face coverings in indoor communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed, if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances. Based on current evidence and the measures that schools are already putting in place, as well as the negative impact on communication and teaching, face coverings are not necessary in the classroom.

The guidance points to Department for Health and Social Care advice on face coverings but does not specify a type or style of face covering. It sets out that it is reasonable to assume that staff and young people will have access to face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and notes that Public Health England has made available resources on how to make a simple face covering.

Stephen Morgan:

[87625]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the reduced ability of schools to ventilate classrooms during winter months on the safety of (a) teachers and (b) pupils during the covid-19; and if he will make a statement.

Stephen Morgan:

[87626]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that schools can properly ventilate classrooms in the winter months during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

On 2 July we published guidance to help schools prepare for all pupils, in all year groups, to return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term. The guidance can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

The above guidance sets out a system of controls which provide a framework for school leaders to put in place a range of proportionate protective measures for children and staff, which also ensure that all pupils receive a high quality education that enables them to thrive and progress. Measures include minimising contacts between groups and maintaining distance where possible, encouraging regular handwashing, and enhanced cleaning.

This includes advice that once the school is in operation, it is important to ensure good ventilation and maximise this wherever possible, for example, by opening windows and propping open doors, as long as they are not fire doors, where safe to do so (bearing in mind safeguarding in particular). Arrangements for ventilation will vary in each setting based on individual circumstances.

Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the COVID-19 outbreak available at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>.

■ Schools: Sports

Catherine West:

[87613]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to encourage schools to reopen their outdoor sports facilities in the evenings and weekends for (a) their own students and (b) external sports clubs.

Nick Gibb:

It is important that children continue to remain fit and active and take part in the 60 minutes of daily physical activity recommended by the Chief Medical Officers wherever possible.

Schools have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided for their own students, following the measures in their system of controls. The Department's guidance includes information on how schools can provide PE and opportunities for pupils to be active, including links to detailed advice from subject organisations. Schools are able to offer curricular and extra-curricular team sport, including contact sport, where there is approved guidance from national governing bodies. Guidance can be found via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Schools are also able to open up their facilities for use by external sports clubs at evenings and weekends. In doing so, they should ensure they are considering carefully how such arrangements can operate within their wider protective measures and should also have regard to any other relevant government guidance. For example, when opening up sports facilities for external use, the guidance issued by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on working safely during the COVID-19 outbreak for providers of grassroots sport and gym or leisure facilities should be followed: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/providers-of-grassroots-sport-and-gym-leisure-facilities>.

Schools and external providers should also consult the guidance produced for those who run community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

■ Teachers: Coronavirus

Stephen Morgan:

[87627]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the additional teacher timetable planning required as a result of the covid-19 on the workloads of teachers.

Nick Gibb:

The Government is grateful for the continued hard work of head teachers, teachers and support staff in their efforts to ensure that all pupils, in all year groups, have been able to return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

Our guidance for the full opening of schools recognises that schools may need to alter the way in which they deploy their staff and use existing staff more flexibly. Managers should discuss and agree any changes to staff roles with individuals. It is important that planning builds in the need to avoid increases in unnecessary and unmanageable workload burdens. The Department has published a range of resources, including case studies to support remote education, that help address staff workload: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/case-studies-remote-education-practice-for-schools-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

Over the next few months, we will continue to work closely with school leaders, teachers and their representatives to continue to address workload issues and provide support for schools.

■ Teaching Excellence Framework Independent Review

Chi Onwurah:

[86653]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress has been made by the Independent review into the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework; when Dame Shirley Pearce will make a report to him; and if that report will be made publicly available.

Michelle Donelan:

The Higher Education and Research Act (2017) requires that the report of the independent review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework should be laid before Parliament.

The reviewer, Dame Shirley Pearce, has submitted her report to ministers and we are considering the report's evidence and recommendations. We intend to lay the report in due course and to publish it alongside the government's response.

■ Universities: Admissions

Dr Luke Evans:

[86765]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress he is making in supporting universities to manage the increased number of places available to students for the 2020-21 academic year.

Michelle Donelan:

I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Bosworth, to the answer I gave on 9 September 2020 to [84361](#).

■ **Universities: Finance****Mr Steve Baker:****[85039]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy under his Department's restructuring regime to enable (a) Buckinghamshire New University and (b) other financially strong higher education institutions to assist nearby institutions in financial difficulty; and if he will make a statement.

Michelle Donelan:

The government recognises the value of the higher education sector and that a high level of uncertainty remains around the scale of problems that higher education providers, as a whole and individually, may face in the coming academic year. We have been working closely with the higher education sector, in the Higher Education Taskforce, as well as with the Office for Students (OfS) and across the government to understand the financial risks that providers are facing and to help providers to access the support on offer. Providers with concerns about their financial viability or sustainability have been encouraged to contact the OfS at the earliest opportunity. They can now also directly contact the department's Restructuring Unit at: HE.RestructuringRegime@education.gov.uk.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced further information about the Higher Education Restructuring Regime on 16 July and more details are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-restructuring-regime>.

This may be deployed as a last resort, if a decision has been made to support a provider in England, when other steps to preserve a provider's viability and to mitigate the risks of financial failure have not proved sufficient. The overarching objectives that will guide the department's assessment of cases will be to protect the welfare of current students, to preserve the sector's internationally outstanding science base and to support the role that higher education providers play in regional and local economies through the provision of high-quality courses aligned with economic and societal needs.

We will consider providers' circumstances on a case-by-case basis, supported by expert advice, to ensure there is a robust value-for-money case for intervention. In cases where an Independent Business Review is carried out, the resulting restructuring plan may include options for a merger as well as for consolidation and services sharing between providers. The department's Restructuring Unit will work with the provider and other stakeholders to ensure that the best option forward is chosen to ensure that the overarching objectives, as mentioned previously, are met.

Regarding the circumstances of Buckinghamshire New University, the government does not comment on individual higher education providers.

Universities: Overseas Students**Chi Onwurah:****[86652]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the British Council on the number of international students expected to enrol in UK universities during academic years (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22, (c) 2022-23; and what support his Department has offered to the British Council to help attract international students for the academic year 2020-21.

Michelle Donelan:

The government has been clear that our world-leading universities, which thrive on being global institutions, will always be open to international students. I have met with the British Council to discuss how we can best attract international students, including through effective communications.

Engaging closely with other government departments and the higher education (HE) sector, including the British Council, the department is working to reassure current and prospective international students that UK HE is 'open for business', remains world-class and is a safe and tolerant place to study. This includes continued work with Study UK (the government's international student recruitment campaign led by the British Council), support for the sector-led #WeAreTogether campaign and a package of bespoke communications directly targeting international students, making clear our world-leading UK offer.

As part of this communications activity, the government has also recently approved £1 million for the British Council-led Study UK campaign, to help drive the international student intake in 2020 from 16 global markets and to further promote the new graduate route, which is a significant improvement in our offer to international students that will help ensure the UK HE sector remains competitive internationally.

I have also written open letters to international students (hosted on the British Council led Study UK website) and placed contributions in overseas newspapers.

Additionally, we have enlisted the support of our embassies, British Council offices and staff abroad to make clear that international students are welcome in the UK.

In addition, the government has been working with the HE sector to ensure existing rules and processes are as flexible as possible under the current circumstances to ensure that international students planning to study in the UK from autumn 2020 can do so. Speaking at the British Council's Going Global event on 5 June, I outlined measures we are taking to support international students and the HE sector against the global challenges posed by COVID-19. This includes reassuring international students who are considering study in the UK that distance/blended learning will be permitted for the 20/21 academic year, provided that students intend to transition to face-to-face learning as soon as circumstances allow.

Finally, we recognise that embarking on a course of study at a UK HE institution is a significant commitment and we are encouraged to see HE providers doing their utmost to support students during this time.

■ Vocational Education: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87599\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that Btec assessments can be adapted in the event of further lockdown restrictions placed on educational settings during the covid-19 outbreak.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has been working with Ofqual regarding requirements for assessments and examinations for vocational and technical qualifications, which include BTEC qualifications, in the 2020/21 academic year. Ofqual is currently consulting and engaging with awarding organisations to agree revisions to its Extraordinary Regulatory Framework and its associated guidance on how awarding organisations can adapt assessments in 2020/21 to take account of any public health restrictions.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

■ Animal Products: Imports

Zarah Sultana:

[\[87687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to ban the import of hunting trophies.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government committed in its manifesto to introduce a ban on the import of hunting trophies from endangered species. The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed the publication of the Government response to the recent consultation and call for evidence on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies. We will set out our plans for action on this important area as soon as it is practical to do so.

■ Bovine Tuberculosis: Disease Control

Tom Randall:

[\[86204\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish Professor Malcolm Bennett's badger roadkill study of the Edge area.

Victoria Prentis:

The Defra-funded survey of TB in badgers in the Edge area of England involved examination and sampling of carcasses of found-dead badgers for the presence of *Mycobacterium bovis* (the bacterium that causes TB). Professor Bennett's work formed part of that project. Researchers are currently working on a peer-reviewed publication of their study in a scientific journal and a final report will be published by Defra on the <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/> website in due course.

Tom Randall:

[86205]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when he plans to publish the Animal and Plant Health Agency maps of the Edge area.

Victoria Prentis:

An interactive map showing the different bovine TB risk areas in Great Britain, including England's Edge Area, can be found here: <https://tbhub.co.uk/preventing-tb-breakdowns/bovine-tb-risk-map/>.

■ **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Industrial Health and Safety**

Grahame Morris:

[87532]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the request made to his Department by the PCS union under Regulation 9 of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 to form a building-wide health and safety committee for 2 Marsham Street.

Victoria Prentis:

Consideration has been given to the request made to Defra by the PCS union to form a building-wide health and safety committee for 2 Marsham Street. For the purposes of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 health and safety remains a delegated matter for which each individual departmental employer is responsible.

However, in recognition of Defra's responsibilities for cooperation and coordination with other employers in shared workplaces, Defra is supportive of trade union health and safety representatives joining the existing 2 Marsham Street joint "House Committee". We consider this to be a positive step forward in the interest of constructive trade union dialogue in relation to the spaces that are shared between the separate employers based in the building.

I understand that other departments who occupy 2 Marsham Street are also supportive of this approach and the Home Office, who are the lead occupier at 2 Marsham Street, will be working with PCS to take this forward on behalf of all occupants.

■ **Food: UK Trade with EU**

Hilary Benn:

[87485]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what advice he has issued to food manufacturers on food packaging labelling requirements from 1 Jan 2021 for items (a) exported to the EU and (b) shipped from GB to Northern Ireland.

Hilary Benn:

[87486]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether new food packaging labelling will be required from 1 Jan 2021 for items (a) exported to the EU and (b) shipped from GB to Northern Ireland.

Victoria Prentis:

Ministers meet regularly with food manufacturers, and representatives of other parts of the supply chain, to discuss preparations for the end of the transition period including for food labelling. The GOV.UK website provides guidance on these matters and is kept under review and updated as appropriate. Some food labels may need to change after the transition period depending on where the food is marketed and what information is provided on the label. I can confirm that there will be a period of adjustment for labelling changes required at the end of the transition period. During this period the changes that UK businesses need to make when selling between different markets will be minimised. We are working to determine the appropriate time industry needs to make changes and will provide guidance as soon as we can do so, to ensure that businesses have clarity and certainty.

■ Wines: Imports**Luke Pollard:**[\[85111\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answers of 26 June 2020 to Question 60861 and of 9 June 2020 to Question 54850 on Wine: Imports, which Government Department or agency will be responsible for keeping the list of (a) competent authorities, (b) authorised laboratories, and (c) the registration numbers of wine producers, and processors and single points of contact in each EU member state; and what steps that Department or agency has taken to collect the necessary information from its counterparts in EU member states.

Victoria Prentis:

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be responsible for compiling and maintaining the information required for imports of wine into Great Britain. Under retained EU law, information verifying certification of wine imports is based on notifications received from the competent authorities of third countries. To date, no such information has been received from the EU or its Member States.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ Afghanistan: Overseas Aid****Yasmin Qureshi:**[\[83731\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the budget was for the Department for International Development's Afghanistan programmes in 2020-21; and how much that budget will be reduced by as a result of the proposed reduction of £2.9 billion in Official Development Assistance announced on 22 July 2020.

Nigel Adams:

Revised ODA allocations for 2020/21 will be published by HM Treasury at Autumn Budget.

■ Alassane Ouattara**Andrew Rosindell:**[\[81615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports that the President of the Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattara, will seek a third term in office.

James Duddridge:

President Ouattara has registered to stand as his party's candidate in Côte d'Ivoire's forthcoming presidential election. The Independent Electoral Commission in Côte d'Ivoire is responsible for reviewing the eligibility of candidates alongside the Constitutional Council. The final list of eligible candidates will be published later this month.

We believe long term peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire can best be achieved through peaceful, free and credible elections, in line with international law, and encourage all parties to work towards this goal. We urge all parties to participate responsibly, engage fully in the process, avoid the use of inflammatory language, and denounce violence and hate speech. To support these aims, our Embassy in Abidjan is supporting security forces' training focused on ensuring public security during the election period is maintained, including respect for human rights. We are following developments closely and expect elections to be conducted transparently, following due process before and during the poll in October.

■ British Nationals Abroad: Coronavirus**Jim Shannon:**[\[84697\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of consular assistance for UK citizens seeking to return to the UK during the covid-19 pandemic.

Nigel Adams:

Helping British travellers who needed and wanted to return to the UK is one of the Government's highest priorities during the height of the COVID pandemic. Since the outbreak in Wuhan, we estimate that over 1.3 million people have returned to the UK via commercial routes - many supported by our work to keep key routes and transit hubs open. We have brought home over 38,000 people on 186 special charter flights organised by the FCDO, from 57 countries and territories. In addition, more than 19,000 British passengers from 60 cruise ships were successfully disembarked, many directly supported by HMG. We continue to provide consular support to British nationals in country and we are working to ensure commercial routes are maintained. While no further charters are currently planned, we continue to monitor risks globally and to review how best to provide assistance where necessary. Anyone who still needs some support can contact the FCDO 24/7 for advice.

■ China: International Organisations

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[86074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the number of Chinese Communist Party officials holding senior positions in United Nations agencies and other international organisations; and whether his Department has made an assessment of potential trends in the number of Chinese Communist Party officials holding senior positions in those agencies and international organisation in the next five years.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: We will continue to monitor trends of representation in the UN and wider international system.

■ China: Uighurs

Rachel Hopkins:

[\[82646\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations his Department has made to the Chinese authorities on reports of the mass sterilisation of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang; and if he will make a statement.

Nigel Adams:

As I set out during an Urgent Question in the House of Commons on 29 June, we are seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Xinjiang. We are aware of reports of forced sterilisation of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, which would amount to a gross violation of human rights. We are closely monitoring all available evidence, and have raised the issue with Chinese officials. On 28 July, the Foreign Secretary expressed his serious concerns about the human rights situation in Xinjiang to his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister and State Councillor Wang Yi.

■ Côte d'Ivoire: Violence

Stephen Morgan:

[\[82328\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help reduce violence committed against civilians in the Ivory Coast as a result of conflict between Government forces and those protesting against President Alassane Ouattara's decision to run for a third term in that country.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government has a strong partnership with Côte d'Ivoire. Stability and inclusive economic growth are shared priorities, with a view to consolidating peace after a decade of crisis and uncertainty. We take every opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to peaceful, free and credible elections, in line with international law, and encourage all parties to work towards this goal. We have done so directly with government and opposition political parties in Côte d'Ivoire.

The elections are the responsibility of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, all political parties, and the Ivoirian people. We urge all parties to participate responsibly, engage

fully in the process and avoid the use of inflammatory language. Alongside members of the international community, our Embassy in Abidjan is working closely with the United Nations Development Programme to support fair and transparent elections. This includes £300,000 of funding to support dialogue and prevention management of the risks of electoral violence. We continue to follow developments closely.

■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[78806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the debt levels of lower-income countries on their ability to tackle the covid-19 pandemic.

James Duddridge:

The UK Government is deeply concerned by the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on developing countries. Many entered the COVID-19 crisis in an already vulnerable position. For example, half of low-income developing countries already had high public debt levels. The crisis has brought an exceptional set of shocks: much lower exports, lower export prices, fewer financial inflows and reduced earnings from tourism. Lower GDP forecasts have made existing debt levels more worrying: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasts that the average level of debt-to-GDP will be 5.1 percentage points higher in low income developing countries in 2020 than expected, and 7.3 percentage points higher in Africa. Some countries will have limited scope for additional borrowing and this, together with any increase in debt service costs could impact the availability of resources for crisis response and recovery, particularly for those countries which entered the crisis at high risk of debt distress.

In response to the crisis, the UK, alongside the G20 and the Paris Club of official creditors, has committed to a temporary suspension of debt payments from the poorest countries. So far, 42 countries have sought support and over \$5 billion of debt service is expected to be deferred, allowing countries to redirect finances towards mitigating the health and economic impacts of Covid-19. This initiative will help countries tackle the Covid-19 pandemic whilst providing time to assess what future support is required.

The UK has also committed up to £150 million to the IMF's Catastrophe and Containment Relief Fund, so far benefitting 29 of the poorest countries through covering their debt repayments to the IMF. We have also committed £1 million to the African Legal Support Facility to advise African countries on debt.

Rachael Maskell:

[\[84295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate he has made of the number of health workers in developing countries whose training to respond to covid-19 was funded from the UK aid budget.

Wendy Morton:

UK Aid has long supported our partner countries to increase the availability of skilled, trained and supported health workers. These health workers are essential to the COVID-19 response and ensuring that essential health services continue to be accessible. UK aid funded organisations and programmes have flexed to enable health worker training and other activities required to respond to COVID-19. These include regional and country programmes working on health systems, reproductive health, neglected tropical diseases and water, sanitation and hygiene and our funding to multilateral partners including Global Polio Eradication Initiative, Gavi, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the World Bank.

■ Developing Countries: Death**Owen Thompson:**[\[84706\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to publish an action plan for meeting Sustainable Development Goal 3.2 on ending preventable deaths of children and mothers.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is committed to ending the preventable deaths of mothers, new-born babies and children by 2030 as part of UK leadership in the global response to COVID-19 and prioritising poverty reduction for the 'bottom billion'.

We intend to publish our approach to delivering this commitment in due course.

■ Developing Countries: Health Services and Nutrition**Owen Thompson:**[\[84705\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if his Department will maintain existing levels of funding for (a) child, new-born and maternal health interventions and (b) nutrition programmes.

Wendy Morton:

The UK Government remains committed to supporting child, newborn and maternal health and nutrition interventions as part of our manifesto commitment to end preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children by 2030.

The UK has pledged £1.65 billion to support Gavi's goal to immunise a further 300 million children and save up to 8 million lives. The UK has also committed to spending at least £225 million per year on family planning until 2022. Between April 2018 and March 2019 alone, at least 23.5 million women and girls were reached through UK funding.

Last week, we announced package of £119 million UK Aid to address COVID-19 and famine, which includes a new partnership with UNICEF to address acute malnutrition more effectively and efficiently. We are also continuing planned support for a number of existing nutrition initiatives, including the Power of Nutrition financing facility, the Access to Nutrition Index and the Scaling Up Nutrition movement. Decisions on future

spend will be informed by the outcomes of the Integrated Review and the Spending Review.

■ **Developing Countries: Nutrition**

Preet Kaur Gill: [\[84323\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Government plans to make its pledge of funding for Nutrition for Growth post-2020.

Wendy Morton:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer given to PQ 74465 on 22 July 2020.

■ **Developing Countries: Sustainable Development**

Rachael Maskell: [\[84294\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the £2.9 billion reduction of funding for Official Development Assistance on the UK's contribution to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Wendy Morton:

Given the expected fall in Gross National Income (GNI) this year, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of the aid portfolio to make sure we continue to support the most vulnerable around the world and meet our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on development assistance. We have ensured a strong focus on poverty reduction for the 'bottom billion', tackling climate change and reversing biodiversity loss, championing girls' education and the global response to Covid-19. These priority areas are closely aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which we remain committed to.

■ **Eastern Europe and South America: Human Rights**

Catherine West: [\[86730\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many of his staff are dedicated to working on human rights issues in (a) eastern Europe (b) South America.

Wendy Morton:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: The majority of FCDO staff working on human rights issues are deployed in our large network of embassies and consulates around eastern Europe and South America. In the UK, staff across several FCDO directorates spend all or a part of their time working on various aspects of human rights in those regions. The UK is committed to protecting and promoting human rights, democratic freedoms and civil society throughout the world and to raising issues and cases of concern.

■ Foreign Students: Travel Information

Mark Eastwood:

[\[86185\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of classifying travel to study abroad as essential travel for the purposes of his Department's foreign travel advice.

Nigel Adams:

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) travel advice is to help British nationals make informed decisions about foreign travel. The Government's overriding concern is always the safety and security of British nationals. Whether travel is essential or not is a personal decision. Travellers may have urgent family or business commitments to attend to. Circumstances differ from person to person. Only individuals can make an informed decision based on the risks.

■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Gender

Deidre Brock:

[\[84284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to continue to promote the principles that were in the Department for International Development's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality.

Wendy Morton:

Advancing gender equality and women's rights are a core part of the UK Government's mission, and Global Britain's role as a force for good in the world, including fulfilling every girl's right to 12 years of quality education. The Government remains steadfast in its commitment to this agenda.

As part of the launch of the new Department, we will refresh and build on existing strategies, as well as develop new approaches, but we do not see the core ambitions or principles of the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality changing. The challenges of advancing girls' education, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), women's political empowerment, women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) are as acute now, if not more so, as when we published the strategy in 2018.

The new FCDO will continue to be a progressive force for women and girls, including for their sexual and reproductive health and rights, right to education and ensuring that their needs are central to our COVID-19 humanitarian response. We are committed to highlighting the needs and rights of all women and girls.

Beth Winter:

[\[86189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to retain the former Department for International Development's Strategic Vision for Gender Equality as a core pillar in his Department.

Wendy Morton:

Advancing gender equality and women's rights are a core part of the UK Government's mission, and Global Britain's role as a force for good in the world,

including fulfilling every girl's right to 12 years of quality education. The Government remains steadfast in its commitment to this agenda. We will work closely with partners across HMG to leverage the best development, diplomatic, defence and trade approaches to achieve maximum impact.

As part of the launch of the new Department, we will refresh and build on existing strategies, as well as develop new approaches, but we do not see the core ambitions of the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality changing. The challenges of advancing girls' education, sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), women's political empowerment, women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) are as acute now, if not more so, as when we published the strategy in 2018.

■ Gaza: Coronavirus

Rushanara Ali: [\[85042\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the humanitarian situation in Gaza in relation to recent locally-transmitted cases of covid-19.

Rushanara Ali: [\[85043\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment his Department has made of the capacity of the health system in Gaza to cope with the recent increase in locally-transmitted covid-19 cases.

Rushanara Ali: [\[85047\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps his Department has taken to support the covid-19 response in the occupied Palestinian territories.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government remains deeply concerned by the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), which has now reached over 30,000 (as of 6 September). The capacity of the Palestinian health system, especially in Gaza, to cope with the increase in COVID-19 cases has been severely impaired by longstanding Israeli movement and access restrictions and shortages in specialised staff, drugs and equipment.

The UK's recent £840,000 funding contribution has enabled the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF to purchase and co-ordinate the delivery of medical equipment, treat critical care patients, train frontline public health personnel and scale up laboratory testing capacity. The Foreign Secretary also recently announced a further £2.7 million funding to UN agencies to provide food assistance, medical supplies and personal protection for the most vulnerable Palestinians.

In addition to our commitment to funding, our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate-General in Jerusalem frequently urge the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to take steps to improve conditions in Gaza.

■ Hong Kong: National Security

Mr Jonathan Lord:

[\[84227\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the effect of the national security law on the people of Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary made clear in Parliament on 1 July, the enactment and imposition by China of national security legislation for Hong Kong constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The legislation violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority, provided for in the Joint Declaration. Furthermore, it contains a slew of measures that directly threaten the freedoms and rights protected by the Joint Declaration. Since the legislation was introduced, the Hong Kong authorities have arrested a number of political figures in Hong Kong.

The Foreign Secretary set out our concerns about the national security legislation to State Councillor/Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, on 8 June and 28 July. FCDO officials also continue to raise our concerns with the Hong Kong authorities, including with members of the Executive Council and the President of the Legislative Council.

On 9 August, the Foreign Secretary issued a statement together with the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, which expressed shared concern at Beijing's imposition of national security legislation. We will continue to bring together our international partners to stand up for the people of Hong Kong, to call out the violation of their freedoms, and to hold China to their international obligations freely assumed under international law.

Jim Shannon:

[\[84258\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on national security legislation in Hong Kong; and whether he has made progress on preventing human rights violations in Hong Kong.

Nigel Adams:

As the Foreign Secretary made clear in Parliament on 1 July, the enactment and imposition by China of national security legislation for Hong Kong constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The legislation violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority, provided for in the Joint Declaration. Furthermore, it contains a slew of measures that directly threaten the freedoms and rights protected by the Joint Declaration. Since the legislation was introduced, the Hong Kong authorities have arrested a number of political figures in Hong Kong.

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■ India and Pakistan: Locusts

Jim Shannon:

[\[84255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department has provided within the last six months to (a) Pakistan and (b) India to tackle locust invasions.

Nigel Adams:

Globally, the UK has contributed a total of £25million to the UN Food and Agriculture Association (FAO) Desert Locust Appeal. Some of this funding is being used to tackle breeding grounds in Yemen which are the source of many of the locusts currently affecting India and Pakistan.

More specifically, in Pakistan, we have committed £2million of UK aid to strengthen the Government of Pakistan's ability to respond to the crisis, support the livelihoods of 18,000 affected farmers and provide equipment for affected areas. This includes the purchase of 50 vehicle-mounted sprayers, from UK-based manufacturer Micron Group, to ensure the government has the most up-to-date and appropriate equipment

We have not provided direct funding to India. The FAO is supporting the Government of India's Locust Watch Organisation with procurement and coordination of equipment and pesticide supplies.

■ International Decade for People of African Descent

Caroline Lucas:

[\[81772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 4 July 2019 to Question 270326 on the International Decade for People of African Descent, what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on recognition, justice and development for people of African descent; and if he will make it his policy to participate in the UN Decade for African People and support the theme entitled People of African descent: recognition, justice and development.

Nigel Adams:

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has regular discussions about how to tackle injustices and advocate for respect among different ethnic groups internationally. This includes calling upon countries to uphold their human rights obligations, particularly through international institutions such as the UN. The UK joined consensus on the resolution proclaiming the International

Decade for People of African Descent. We will continue to work to eradicate discrimination and intolerance at home, and use the FCDO as a force for good in addressing injustices overseas.

■ Kenya: Intelligence Services

Stephen Timms:

[\[87473\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the relationship is between his Department's counter-terrorism partner ARCTIC and the Kenyan paramilitary unit, the Rapid Response Team.

James Cleverly:

It is the long standing practise of successive governments not to comment on details of national security.

■ Mauritius: Oil

Neil Coyle:

[\[81961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oil leak of August 2020 in Mauritius, what steps his Department is taking to support the Mauritian Government.

James Duddridge:

In phone calls with the Mauritian Foreign Minister on 14 and 19 August, I offered the UK's support and asked Mauritius how best we could assist in the aftermath of the spill.

I also spoke to two of the UK experts on 3 September to hear directly how their work has contributed in the aftermath of the oil spill. The UK subsequently deployed three ecology experts from the UK's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. They are assessing the scale of the damage and helping Mauritius identify the best ways to restore its coastline and protect species at risk. A package of legal and technical advice has been provided to assist with the safe disposal of the stricken ship. The UK has also committed funds to support the Mauritian Wildlife Fund with urgent work on local nature reserves. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and assist the Mauritian Government to limit the impact of the spill.

■ Mozambique: Politics and Government

Ruth Jones:

[\[82378\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the political situation in Mozambique.

James Duddridge:

Mozambique is an important partner for the UK, and a valued member of the Commonwealth. We continue to work closely with the Government of Mozambique on a broad range of issues. The Foreign Secretary reiterated these messages when he spoke to President Nyusi on 11 June.

We are encouraged by recent progress in Mozambique's post-civil war peace process. This has recently successfully reintegrated former Renamo fighters into either the Mozambican military or civil society through the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process which was agreed as part of the peace deal in August 2019. The UK has contributed over £1 million to Mozambique's DDR programme.

We are watching developments in the insurgency in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province with concern and providing our support to the Government of Mozambique. The problem requires a cross Government response, including tackling the underlying issues which foster the conditions of such an insurgency. I spoke to Foreign Minister Macamo on 23 July, congratulating Mozambique's efforts to address the causes of instability through the creation of the Integrated Department for the Development of Northern Mozambique (ADIN), and to encourage a holistic approach to tackling the insurgency. I also reiterated our concern over the disappearance of Ibraimo Abu Mbaruco.

We were concerned to note the attack on the independent media offices of one of Mozambique's main independent media outlets, Canal de Moçambique, on 23 August. We are fully committed to promoting freedom of expression and freedom of the media and welcome President Nyusi's commitment that those responsible will be brought to justice. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon spoke to President Nyusi on 24 August regarding this worrying development.

■ Mozambique: Security

Ruth Jones:

[82377]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the security situation in Mozambique.

James Duddridge:

The UK is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in northern Mozambique and the increasing attacks by groups with links to Islamic extremism. We strongly condemn the targeting of civilians and the temporary seizures of the towns of Quissanga and Mocimboa da Praia by insurgent groups in March and August 2020. We are working with the Government of Mozambique to address the drivers of conflict and instability in northern Mozambique, including through engagement with the Government of Mozambique's regional development authority in Cabo Delgado and by providing targeted technical assistance under the framework of a Defence Memorandum of Understanding.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) plays a central role in achieving peace and stability in the Southern African region. We welcome the leadership by President Nyusi at the SADC summit on 14 August, in which SADC members discussed a shared approach to help resolve the Cabo Delgado insurgency.

■ National Security: Hong Kong

Paul Girvan:

[82298]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government will take against UK-headquartered companies who assist the Chinese authorities in enforcing the National Security Laws in Hong Kong against people with British National (Overseas) status.

Nigel Adams:

HMG does not comment on the commercial decision making of companies. However, we are clear that we have made a historic commitment to the people of Hong Kong to protect their rights and freedoms, and we will hold China to its international obligations.

■ Nigeria: Christianity

John Penrose:

[81745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for which (a) Nigerian Government officials and (b) civil society groups the UK Government will work with as a result of the declaration of July 2018 by the Nigerian House of Representatives that the killing of Christian farmers in Nigeria amounts to genocide.

James Duddridge:

We are aware of the statement made by the Nigerian House of Representatives in July 2018 on killings in Plateau State.

The UK Government condemns all incidents of intercommunal violence in Nigeria. We have made clear to the Nigerian authorities at the highest levels the importance of protecting civilians, including ethnic and religious minorities, and human rights for all.

The UK Government's assessment remains that religion is not the principal driver of most incidents of intercommunal violence in Nigeria. The underlying drivers of conflict are complex, and include competition over land, water and resources, as well as rapid population growth. We hosted a joint conference on 'Fostering Social Cohesion in Nigeria' in February. Attendees included representatives from civil society, faith and political leaders, representatives from the Nigerian Government and UK parliamentarians. The discussion focused on the complex causes of conflict and explored solutions: a full report from the conference has been published:

<https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/event/wp1752/>

It is UK Government policy not to unilaterally determine whether genocide has occurred, in line with the Genocide Convention. This is a matter for competent courts and tribunals, including the International Criminal Court, after consideration of all the evidence, rather than governments or non-judicial bodies.

■ Overseas Aid

Rachael Maskell:

[84293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate his Department has made of the financial effect of a fall in Gross National Income on the Official Development Assistance budget.

James Cleverly:

Given the likely decrease in the size of the economy this year, and therefore a decrease in the value of the 0.7 per cent commitment, a package of £2.9 billion of reductions in the Government's planned Official Development Assistance (ODA) spend has been agreed. This package includes underspends, delaying activity and stopping some spend.

As normal, there will continue to be adjustments in-year to individual departmental ODA spend to meet the 0.7 per cent commitment, especially as the economic picture becomes clearer.

Owen Thompson:

[84708]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when his Department will publish its planned spending distribution for UK Official Development Assistance.

James Cleverly:

As usual, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) National Statistics publication - 'Statistics on International Development' will provide a full breakdown of UK Official Development Assistance spend (for the previous calendar year).

The FCDO planned programme spend for 2021/22 will be published in the FCDO annual report in July 2021.

■ Taiwan: World Health Organisation

Stephen Kinnock:

[86073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to build support to help Taiwan gain observer status on the World Health Organisation in advance of the November 2020 meeting of the World Health Assembly.

Nigel Adams:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The UK continues to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organisations where statehood is not a prerequisite and where Taiwan can make a valuable contribution. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office supports the Department for Health in lobbying for Taiwan's participation in World Health Organisation (WHO) meetings. The UK is working with likeminded countries to lobby the WHO at official level to issue an invitation to Taiwan to observe the World Health Assembly in November and allow Taiwan to participate in relevant WHO technical meetings. Lessons learnt from

Taiwan's effective tackling of the Covid-19 pandemic adds significant value to the international fight against the virus.

■ **USA: Coronavirus**

Apsana Begum:

[84365]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps the Government has taken to support UK citizens working in the US during the covid-19 pandemic.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is in regular contact at the highest levels with our US partners on our joint response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. British nationals abroad are encouraged to sign up for travel advice alerts which will be updated with new information as it becomes available. Anyone who needs some support can contact the FCDO 24/7 for advice. Information on the consular assistance the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office can provide to British nationals overseas can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-british-nationals-abroad-a-guide>

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Cancer: Clinical Trials**

Bambos Charalambous:

[82271]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of clinical trials involving 13 to 24 year olds with cancer that have been disrupted or abandoned as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Department's National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network reports that its portfolio of studies is not consistently coded with specific age ranges, and thus the information requested is not directly available.

■ **Cancer: Coronavirus**

Grahame Morris:

[81803]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of clinical trials involving 13 to 24 year olds with cancer that have been disrupted or abandoned as a direct result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: The Department's National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network reports that its portfolio of studies is not consistently coded with specific age ranges, and thus the information requested is not directly available.

■ Clinical Trials: Children and Young People**Jim Shannon:**[\[83809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the number of clinical trials involving 13-24 year olds with cancer which have been disrupted or abandoned as a direct result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Department's National Institute for Health Research Clinical Research Network reports that its portfolio of studies is not consistently coded with specific age ranges, and thus the information requested is not directly available.

■ Clinical Trials: Coronavirus**Chi Onwurah:**[\[84241\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of (a) the covid-19 outbreak and (b) resultant (i) funding reductions and (ii) other factors on the operation of medical trials; and what estimate he has made of the number of deaths as a result of those affected medical trials.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 led the National Health Service to suspend many routine clinical services and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to prepare to support the Government's research response. Subsequently, decisions were taken by research sponsors, funders, investigators and study sites to pause some non-COVID-19 research, and by the NIHR Clinical Research Network to pause set up of new sites or studies, other than for nationally prioritised COVID-19 studies. This led to a rapid and significant reduction in clinical research activity.

The NIHR published a Restart Framework in May 2020 and has established groups to oversee and coordinate the restart of non-COVID-19 research. Restart of non-COVID-19 trials of life-preserving or life-extending treatments that are not otherwise available to patients remain a priority.

We have no evidence to date that studies underway prior to the pandemic, including those paused or stopped, have been impacted by reductions in funding. We are working with partners to assess the potential impact on funding available for future studies.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Sir Mark Hendrick:**[\[81555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase the frequency of his weekly review of lockdown measures across England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

National decision-making takes place through the Government's Local Action Committee command structure. It can escalate concerns and issues to the COVID

Operations Committee to engage ministers across Government. The command structure is as follows:

- The Local Action Committee (gold) meets weekly. However, additional meetings are held if the data indicates they are needed;
- The Weekly Containment Group (silver) meets weekly. However, they can be convened rapidly as required; and
- The Daily Containment Group (bronze) meets daily and provides situational awareness on the latest outbreaks and epidemiological picture. This group also reviews and evaluates local outbreak response and action extra support.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[81851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to review Government covid-19 guidance applying to non-cohabiting couples in multiple-occupancy households to allow them to meet up without social distancing.

Julian Sturdy:

[\[81852\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of whether it would be safe to amend Government covid-19 guidance applying to non-cohabiting couples in multiple-occupancy households to allow them to meet up without social distancing.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We recognise how hard the impact of COVID-19 has been on people's relationships with their loved ones. Since 4 July, Government guidance has allowed couples to meet both indoors and outdoors. Single-adult households are able to form a support bubble which allows for close contact as normal. The guidance on social distancing from people you do not live with is critical to controlling the spread of the virus and keeping people safe, but we recognise that this is particularly challenging for people who do not cohabit with their partners to comply with. We are looking closely at this issue at present.

■ **Coronavirus: Funerals**

Preet Kaur Gill:

[\[84326\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of whether the maximum number of people that can attend a funeral can be increased safely during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

There remains an increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 where families and communities come together following the death of a loved one, from any cause. While recognising the importance of these rituals and gatherings, it is strongly advised, in order to stay safe, that numbers of mourners in physical attendance are kept to a modest number.

The premises will limit capacity based on how many people it can safely accommodate with social distancing in place. The guidance advises that the number of attendees should be restricted to a maximum of 30 persons for public health reasons. This is on the basis there is a high risk of social mixing and contact due to the nature of the events. In some cases the premises may restrict attendance to less than 30 people.

Guidance for managing a funeral during the COVID-19 pandemic is provided at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

■ Coronavirus: Mental Health

Munira Wilson:

[82467]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to (a) undertake and (b) commission research into the longer-term effect of the covid-19 lockdown on people's mental health.

Edward Argar:

Through the Rapid Response and the Rapid Rolling Calls, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation have funded studies that aim to make a significant contribution to the understanding, prevention and management of COVID-19.

As part of the Rolling Call, a highlight notice was published in June for research proposals which aimed to reduce the emergence of new, and exacerbation of existing, mental health problems, and to improve outcomes for those whose mental health has already been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. 64 applications were considered as part of the mental health highlight notice, and the successful studies are in the process of being contracted.

The NIHR Policy Research Programme's current call 'Recovery, Renewal, Reset: Research to inform policy responses to COVID-19 in the health and social care systems' seeks to fund research which will provide timely evidence to inform policy decisions on recovery from the initial crisis, and to mitigate longer-term impacts on individuals, health and social care systems and wider society.

Simon Jupp:

[82610]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that charitable organisations providing (a) mental health, (b) learning disability and (c) autism services in receipt of public funds provide adequate levels of service during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

During the COVID-19 outbreak the Government provided over £10 million of additional funding to mental health, learning disability and autism charities to support

adults and children. We have also provided local authorities with £3.7 billion for COVID-19 pressures, including social care services provided by charitable organisations. Where charitable organisations are in receipt of funding from the Government, robust governance and assurance processes are in place to manage the effective use of funding to achieve agreed outcomes.

Clinical commissioning groups are responsible for the planning and commissioning of healthcare services for their local population, which includes commissioning charitable organisations to provide services. However, they must be assured of the quality of services they commission, taking into account both National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines and the Care Quality Commission's data about service providers. Local authorities are responsible for commissioning social care services and ensuring quality standards with providers.

■ **Coronavirus: Protective Clothing**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[\[81560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether regulation 32(2)c of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 applies to procuring vendors in making preparations for a second wave of the covid-19 outbreak.

Edward Argar:

The Department assesses the market conditions for procuring supplies related to any procurement, including those relating to COVID-19, in accordance with procurement guidance and regulations. Where any procurement meets the tests for the use of Regulation 32 then that approached will be used; where it does not, other approaches will be considered.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Personnel Management**

John Stevenson:

[\[84193\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many full-time equivalent staff were employed in the Department's human resources section in April 2020.

Edward Argar:

45.75 full-time equivalent staff were employed in the Department's Human Resources section as of 30 April 2020. This figure includes civil servants on permanent contract, fixed term appointment and loaned in from other Government departments. Since this time the Department has expanded in size, and this has included growth in the Human Resources section.

■ **Department of Health and Social Care: Staff**

Neil O'Brien:

[\[83944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many members of staff in NHS England have equality, diversity or inclusion in their job title.

Helen Whately:

To provide the highest standard of care it is vital that the National Health Service workforce reflects the diverse communities that it serves. With regards to current employees of NHS England with either of the three characteristics 'Equality, Diversity or Inclusion' in their job title, there are 28 employees and one secondee who fit this description.

Eating Disorders: Health Services**Wera Hobhouse:**[\[83899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans his Department has to ensure that (a) young people and (b) adults with Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder can access evidence-based treatment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In response to concerns about gaps in provision and access to appropriate treatment for children and young people with Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder, NHS England and NHS Improvement funded a national pilot in seven community eating disorder services in England which ran from September 2019 to March 2020.

The pilot funded training, delivered by expert academics and clinicians, to support the adaptation of existing care pathways, assessments and treatment interventions to better meet the needs of children and young people with this condition.

This autumn, learning from the pilot will be shared with all other community eating disorder teams to support delivery of appropriate care across England. This learning will also support adult community eating disorder teams in providing quality care to adults with the condition.

Health Services: Immigrants**Daniel Zeichner:**[\[86078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what guidance the NHS issues to people with settled status on providing documentary evidence to prove that they are entitled to free NHS treatment.

Edward Argar:

European Economic Area (EEA)/Swiss citizens do not require confirmation of settled/pre-settled status to access National Health Service care. Settled/pre-settled status is an immigration status related to the European Union Settlement Scheme, securing an individual's rights under the Withdrawal Agreement to reside in the United Kingdom beyond 2020.

Access to free NHS secondary care is entirely based on being 'ordinarily resident' in the UK. Being ordinarily resident means, broadly, living in the UK on a lawful and properly settled basis for the time being, with non-EEA nationals who are subject to immigration control also required to have an immigration status of 'indefinite leave to remain'. From 2021, the new global immigration system will apply the same requirements to migrants from the EEA and Switzerland.

Where a patient's ordinarily resident status is not known, it will be for the NHS organisation that provides the treatment to assess this, based on the evidence of lawful, settled residence the patient provides.

Olivia Blake:

[\[86214\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reason his Department does not collect data on how many migrants have received bills for healthcare treatment in error during the covid-19 exemption period for charges.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: Administration and the charging of patients is the responsibility of individual National Health Service trusts. The Department does not routinely seek additional data which was not routinely collected before COVID-19, to enable NHS trusts to focus on the delivery of their services to patients.

■ **Health Services: Redbridge**

Wes Streeting:

[\[84712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve referral to treatment times in the London Borough of Redbridge.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 September 2020]: As a result of COVID-19, there has been a severe impact on referral-to-treatment waiting times for providers across Barking, Havering and Redbridge, as with many across the country. NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with providers to put a robust strategy in place and all acute providers are working together closely to maximise capacity across north east London boroughs.

There is a plan in place to significantly reduce the current number of people waiting over the remainder of 2020/21, and this includes a monthly trajectory from the Phase Three response, with a focus on key specialties such as acute pain, trauma and orthopaedic surgery, urology and neurosurgery.

■ **Maternity Services: Coronavirus**

Ian Lavery:

[\[86051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when covid-19 restrictions will be lifted allowing partners to attend maternity appointments and scans.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service is making arrangements to ensure that women are supported and cared for safely through pregnancy, birth and the period afterwards during this pandemic.

Decisions on partners attending scans and appointments is subject to local discretion by trusts and other NHS bodies.

The new 'Framework to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services' was published on 8 September to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services. was published on 8 September The Framework is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/par001599-framework-for-the-reintroduction-of-visitors-throughout-maternity-services-sep-2020.pdf>

We expect trusts to use this Framework and consider as a priority how access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be reintroduced whilst maintaining the safety of all service users, staff and visitors.

■ Menorrhagia: Health Services

Sarah Champion:

[86066]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure that women with heavy menstrual bleeding receive a timely diagnosis (a) as covid-19 restrictions are eased and (b) after the covid-19 outbreak.

Sarah Champion:

[86067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to help ensure that women with (a) heavy menstrual bleeding and (b) other women-specific conditions are not deterred from presenting at primary care by covid-19 concerns.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Government agrees that it is important for women to have access to support (including information and treatment) for conditions such as heavy menstrual bleeding.

NHS England advises that any woman who is experiencing pain, or discomfort due to conditions such as heavy menstrual bleeding should seek advice from a general practitioner. Advice is also available on NHS.UK, where you can undertake a quick 'Heavy period self-assessment', which can advise on simple steps that may help.

We can also advise that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has produced a guideline on assessment and treatment of heavy menstrual bleeding, which was published in March 2018.

The National Health Service wrote to local systems on 31 July to set out the actions we are asking the NHS to take to restore and recover services whilst maintaining capacity to deal with future COVID-19 demand and winter pressures. This includes a full set of actions to ensure general practice and community services – including women's health – can restore activity to usual levels and reach out proactively to patients whose care may have been delayed.

■ Mental Health Act 1983

Dr Lisa Cameron:

[\[84279\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to reform the Mental Health Act 1983 during the 2019 Parliament; and whether children's mental health needs will be part of those reforms.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have committed to publishing a White Paper which will set out the Government's response to Sir Simon Wessely's Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 and pave the way for reform of the Act.

We will publish our White Paper as soon as it is possible to do so. We will consult publicly on our proposals and will bring forward a Bill to amend the Act when parliamentary time allows.

The Independent Review made a number of recommendations around how the law works for children and young people. The Government will respond to these in the White Paper.

■ Mental Health Services

Stuart Anderson:

[\[84348\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what support is providing to people with mental health conditions as an alternative to medically prescribed drugs.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The most appropriate form of treatment for an individual patient is a matter for clinicians and patients, based on each patient's individual clinical circumstances.

Over 1 million people with mental health conditions are now accessing psychological and talking therapies through Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services each year. Under the NHS Long Term Plan, the Government is committed to an additional 380,000 people per year being able to access National Institute for Health and Care Excellence-approved IAPT therapies by 2023/24.

In addition, we are developing new and integrated models of primary and community mental health care which will give 370,000 adults with severe mental illnesses greater choice and control over their care and support them to live well in their communities by 2023/24.

■ NHS: Coronavirus

Dan Carden:

[\[82320\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to update NHS guidance on allowing non-essential visitors to NHS facilities as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Edward Argar:

On 5 June 2020, NHS England revised its guidance on how National Health Service organisations may choose to facilitate visiting across healthcare inpatient settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The national suspension on visiting imposed under previous guidance was lifted with immediate effect.

Visiting is now subject to local discretion by trusts and other NHS bodies, and will take into account local prevalence. The number of visitors at the bedside is limited to one close family contact or somebody important to the patient. However, where it is possible to maintain social distancing throughout the visit, a second additional visitor can be permitted in certain circumstances including those individuals receiving end-of-life care.

■ Pharmacy: Pay**Charlotte Nichols:**[\[85116\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he make it his policy to raise pharmacy staff wages in line with pay rises for other public sector workers.

Helen Whately:

Over one million National Health Service staff, including pharmacy staff employed on the Agenda for Change Contract, continue to benefit from the three-year Agenda for Change pay and contract reform deal (2018/19-2020/21), agreed in partnership with NHS trade unions and employer representatives.

The multi-year Agenda for Change pay and contract reform deal has seen year on year pay increases; those below the top of their pay band have seen increases of at least 9% and pay for most staff at the top of their pay band has increased by 6.5%.

We expect the independent NHS pay review body to return to making pay recommendations for Agenda for Change staff for 2021/22.

For pharmacy staff not directly employed in the NHS it is for their employer to determine pay. Community pharmacies are private businesses and it is for these employers to determine staff salaries.

■ Plastic Surgery: Training**Mr Kevan Jones:**[\[85950\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plan the Government has to introduce a mandated standard of education and training for people who practise in the aesthetics sector.

Mr Kevan Jones:[\[85951\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans the Government has to implement statutory regulation of the aesthetics sector.

Mr Kevan Jones:

[85957]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether practitioners of aesthetic treatments are required to undertake a mandatory risk assessment of each patient prior to treatment.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Government is committed to improving the safety of cosmetic procedures through better training for practitioners, and clear information so that people can make informed decisions about their care.

The Department is exploring the regulation of premises, practitioners, products and consumer safeguards. This includes an assessment of the regulation of practitioners in the aesthetics sector and working with stakeholders to ensure that practitioners are able to identify providers of accredited training.

The Government expects providers of cosmetic procedures to operate responsibly by conducting a pre-treatment consultation and ensuring they hold the requisite.

■ **Public Sector: Contracts**

Sir Mark Hendrick:

[81561]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, what assessment the Government makes when procuring (a) goods (b) services and (c) works of the ability of successful bidding companies to produce the items ordered.

Edward Argar:

Using regulation 32(2)(c) under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 suppliers will be evaluated by Departmental officials on their financial standing, compliance with minimum product, service and technical specifications and ability to perform the contract. Contracts are awarded by the appropriate Departmental accounting officer in line with Departmental terms and conditions.

Over 1,000 purchase orders have been raised with suppliers for COVID-19 related work under regulation 32(2)(c), the majority through a direct award. Contracts are awarded by the appropriate Departmental accounting officer in line with Departmental terms and conditions which contract management clauses to assess performance and value for money throughout the lifetime of the contract.

■ **Screening: Redbridge**

Wes Streeting:

[84710]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of waiting times and access to phlebotomy services in the London Borough of Redbridge.

Wes Streeting:[\[84711\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve access to phlebotomy services in the London Borough of Redbridge.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 8 September 2020]: The local National Health Service in Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals is moving community blood testing services that (pre-COVID-19) took place in Queen's or King George Hospitals, into some general practitioner surgeries and health centres.

The teams are working hard to ensure the new services are up and running as soon as possible. Establishing these community settings and getting them up and running means that patients who require non-urgent blood tests are currently facing waits but the new services means patients can expect a reduction in waiting times. Additional clinics in Redbridge have also been established.

■ **Social Services: Coronavirus****Mary Kelly Foy:**[\[86168\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date he will publish the Social Care Taskforce plan for supporting the social care sector through coronavirus.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The recommendations from the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Taskforce will shape our approach to COVID-19 in the adult social care sector and, in particular, the plans we put in place for winter which we will set out in the Adult Social Care Winter Plan. The Taskforce concluded at the end of August and will publish its recommendations in September on the advice on what measures need to be in place across all parts of the care sector in England to respond to COVID-19 and winter.

■ **Social Services: Finance****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[84750\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it was Government policy to link the increase in social care funding allocated to local councils during the covid-19 outbreak to the transfer of (a) untested and (b) covid-19 positive patients from hospitals to care homes.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 8 September 2020]: It is our priority to ensure that everyone receives the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

We have never made it a requirement nationally that additional funding for care homes was conditional on care homes accepting discharged patients.

As set out in the Adult Social Care Action Plan on 15 April, all patients are required to be tested prior to discharge to a care home. The Adult Social Care Action Plan is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-social-care-action-plan>

This is an unprecedented global pandemic and at every stage we have been guided by the latest scientific advice. We keep our policies under continuous review, based on the emerging international and domestic evidence.

■ Suicide: Males

Dr Matthew Offord:

[84213]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of male suicides in each of the last three years.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government takes male suicides very seriously and is working with partners to address the recent upward trend in male suicide registrations.

In 2018, the number of total suicide registrations in England increased significantly by 570 to 5,021. This increase was driven largely by male suicides. In 2019, the number of male suicide registrations was 5.7% higher than the total in 2018 (3,800 deaths) but this was not a statistically significant increase in the England male suicide rate.

Provisional quarter 1 data for 2020 is consistent with those figures observed in previous years, where the rate has seen an upward trend in quarter one and a potential decrease in quarter 2 provisional suicide registrations, which may be due to COVID-19 related delays in reporting. Men aged 45 to 49 years continue to have the highest suicide rate of all age segments of men.

The annual suicide statistics published by Office for National Statistics reflect suicide registrations not actual suicides (i.e. these relate to dates when the suicide was registered rather than the date of the death itself). In England, all deaths caused by suicide are certified by a coroner following an inquest and cannot be registered until the inquest is completed, which can take months.

■ Supported Housing: Visits

Theresa Villiers:

[84979]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to facilitate visits to supported living facilities for disabled people in a covid-19-secure way.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 September 2020]: We appreciate the challenges which people in supported living and their families have faced as a result of lockdown.

Supported living managers should work with the people they support to follow Government guidelines for visiting in supported living arrangements and social distancing which are available at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supported-living-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-guidance-for-supported-living>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Providers should advise individuals about the safest way to have visitors.

As policy develops, we will continue to update the relevant guidance. Providers should continue to refer to existing guidance as the easing of lockdown continues.

■ Veterans: Coronavirus

Kirsten Oswald:

[86083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the mental health of former armed forces personnel.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In June, the Office for Veterans Affairs announced a study with King's College London to understand the effect of COVID-19 on former service personnel.

The study will look at whether COVID-19 has had any specific impact on the veteran community in the United Kingdom. This will allow policy makers across Government to understand potential issues affecting veterans and respond accordingly based on expert advice and evidence.

The first results are expected to be published in autumn/winter 2020.

HOME OFFICE

■ Borders: Republic of Ireland

Paul Girvan:

[85102]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department plans to take to stop illegal entry to the UK across its border with the Republic of Ireland.

Chris Philp:

As part of the Common Travel Area (CTA) arrangements, the UK does not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from within the CTA, with no immigration checks whatsoever on the Northern Ireland-Ireland land border. However, everyone entering the UK, regardless of where they enter from, is required to meet UK immigration framework. The UK does conduct intelligence-led controls on CTA routes, including away from the land border in Northern Ireland. This is to detect those who intend to abuse CTA arrangements. Anyone identified attempting to circumvent UK border controls is liable to be removed, if they are not lawfully present within the UK.

We also work closely with Ireland to secure the external CTA border, including data sharing and operational co-operation.

■ Passengers: Coronavirus

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[\[83883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passengers have arrived in the UK by sea, by individual country, from those countries not included in the Government's travel corridors, since 3 July 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not routinely release location specific statistics on the arrival of passengers to an individual airport.

However, the Home Office is due to publish additional statistics relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system in the next few weeks.

These statistics will be published on the gov.uk website.

Nick Thomas-Symonds:

[\[84311\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many passengers in total have arrived in the UK by air from countries not included on the list of covid-19 travel corridors since 3 July 2020.

Chris Philp:

The Home Office does not routinely release location specific statistics on the arrival of passengers by specific modes of transport.

However, the Home Office is due to publish additional statistics relating to Covid-19 and the immigration system in the next few weeks.

This statistics will be published on the gov.uk website

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Change of Use

Steve Reed:

[\[87555\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many changes of building use to residential under permitted development rights complied with minimum space standards in each of the last five years.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department does not hold information in the format requested.

■ Leasehold

Shabana Mahmood:

[\[86618\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he is making in encouraging the insurance industry to take a more nuanced approach to situations where leaseholders are unable to obtain mortgages or re-mortgage their properties because they do not possess an External Wall System (1) form.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: The EWS1 form was introduced by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) to assist in valuation of high-rise residential buildings for mortgage purposes. Government does not support a blanket approach that some lenders have adopted through requesting a EWS1 for lower risk properties. There is other information which building owners can provide to lenders and we are working with the sector to raise awareness. We are also working with professional bodies to increase the number of skilled professionals who can undertake external wall assessments where one is required. Lenders have assured the Minister for Building Safety that leaseholders should face no barrier to renewing their mortgage with their existing lender.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Coronavirus**Jon Trickett:**[\[77518\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when a covid-19 risk assessment was undertaken for his Department's office on Marsham Street; who carried out that risk assessment; what proportion of staff will be able to return to work in that office; what reduction in workplace capacity that risk assessment identified; how decisions on which staff will be required return to his Department's offices are made; and if he will place a copy of that risk assessment in the Library.

Kelly Tolhurst:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) risk assessment for Marsham Street was finalised and published on 28th July 2020. The risk assessment for the building was undertaken by the MHCLG Estates Team in close consultation with both the Home Office, who are the site landlord, and Bouygues, the contracted FM supplier for the building and Arcadis who MHCLG have contracted to support the risk assessment process.

Following initial discussions, a maximum building occupancy was agreed between the Home Office and all tenants of the building, reflecting the available resources to safely maintain the building. For MHCLG this was initially set at 150 staff, ensuring that social distancing measures could be adhered to, as well as ensuring a significant pressure reduction on entry and exit points. This works out at approximately 11 per cent of normal workstation capacity available for MHCLG staff.

As resources to maintain the building have returned to normal, we have been able to increase our capacity limit, taking account of social distancing measures, and now have 450 workstations available for use. This represents around 37 per cent of our normal workstation level.

■ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: Industrial Health and Safety

Grahame Morris:

[\[87533\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the request made to his Department by the PCS union under Regulation 9 of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 to form a building-wide health and safety committee for 2 Marsham Street.

Kelly Tolhurst:

My Department has regular discussions with the Trade Unions and this request is currently being considered .

■ Planning Permission

Alex Cunningham:

[\[86647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will publish the (a) public inquiry planning decisions he has yet to make where a planning inspector's report has been submitted to his office and (b) the date on which each of those planning inspectors' reports were submitted to his office.

Alex Cunningham:

[\[86648\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 20 July 2020 to Question 72897 on Planning Permission, what progress he has been made on those public inquiry planning decisions.

Christopher Pincher:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: Of the 12 cases listed in the Answer of 20 July 2020 to Question UIN 72897, six have since been determined, and one addendum report received. Those cases remaining to be determined are set out below:

CASE (LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY)	DATE INSPECTOR'S REPORT SUBMITTED TO MHCLG
Broad Lane Essington & Holyhead Rd Wergs (South Staffs)	13/5/19
Land north of Barleycastle Lane, Appleton Thorn (Warrington)	11/12/19, plus addendum report received 09/09/20
Land Adjacent Dinnington Road, Woodsetts (Rotherham)	6/1/20
Ellesmere Port Wellsite, Portside One (Cheshire West and Chester)	6/1/20

South-west Sittingbourne/Wises Lane (Swale) 13/2/20

Anglia Square (Norwich) 8/6/20

There are a variety of reasons why decisions may be delayed including policy complexities, and changes in local or national policy which require further correspondence with parties.

Steve Reed:

[\[87556\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many local authorities have requested permission to undertake article 4 direction to restrict the scope of permitted development rights in each of the last five years; and how many of those requests were granted.

Christopher Pincher:

None.

■ Private Rented Housing: Rents

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[87573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people renting homes in the private rented sector who are in more than six months arrears as at 1 September 2020.

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[87574\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what estimate he has made of the number of people renting homes in the private rented sector who were in arrears before 31 March 2020 and who remain in arrears at 1 September 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The Government has established an unprecedented package of support to protect renters throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, with support for businesses to pay staff salaries and strengthening the welfare safety-net with a nearly £9.3 billion boost to the welfare system. This includes an extra £1 billion to increase Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates so that they cover the lowest 30 per cent of market rents, meaning we have now spent £25 billion supporting households to meet the cost of rent in the private and social rented sectors. For those renters who require additional support, there is an existing £180 million of Government funding for Discretionary Housing Payments made available this year, an increase of £40 million from last year, which is for councils to distribute to support renters with housing costs.

Research by the National Residential Landlords Association found that 87 per cent of private tenants had paid their rent as normal throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE**■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia****Emily Thornberry:**[\[84672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 7 July 2020, HCWS339 on Trade Update, whether the 15 July 2020 air-strike on houses in al-Hazm, Yemen has been (a) evaluated under the revised methodology developed by her Department to consider whether or not it constitutes a possible violation of international humanitarian law and (b) classed as a possible violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[84679\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 7 July 2020, HCWS339 on Trade Update, whether the 13 July 2020 air-strike in Hajjah, Yemen, has been (a) evaluated under the revised methodology developed by her Department to consider whether or not it constitutes a possible violation of international humanitarian law and (b) classed as a possible violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Emily Thornberry:[\[84680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 7 July 2020, HCWS339 on Trade Update, whether the 6 August 2020 air-strike on cars and houses in al-Jawf, Yemen, has been (a) evaluated under the revised methodology developed by her Department to consider whether or not it constitutes a possible violation of international humanitarian law and (b) classed as a possible violation of International Humanitarian Law.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

We are, of course, concerned by reports of civilian deaths as a result of airstrikes in Yemen.

The Written Ministerial Statement of 7th July 2020 gave details of the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Analysis applied to allegations of breaches of IHL, as part of an overall assessment against Criterion 2c of the 'Consolidated Criteria', which addresses whether there is a clear risk that items might be used in serious violations of IHL.

Such IHL analysis is, of course, ongoing and considers credible incidents of concern that we are aware of. Assessments are carried out to determine whether it is possible that the alleged incident constituted a breach of IHL, or whether it is unlikely that it represents a breach.

Assessments use all available sources of information, including some that are necessarily confidential and sensitive. As a result, we are not able to provide details of individual assessments for national security reasons.

The United Kingdom regularly raises the importance of IHL – and of thoroughly investigating alleged violations – with Saudi Arabia.

■ Department for International Trade: Government Procurement Card**Emily Thornberry:**[\[87519\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the (a) number and (b) grades of staff in her Department who have been issued with electronic purchasing cards.

Greg Hands:

As of September 2020, there are 187 staff in the Department for International Trade who have been issued with electronic purchasing cards. The grades of these staff are as follows:

Senior Civil Service band 4 2

Senior Civil Service band 3 1

Senior Civil Service band 2 15

Senior Civil Service band 1 20

Grade 6 21

Grade 7 39

Senior Executive Officer 29

Higher Executive Officer 33

Executive Officer 21

Administrative Officer 6

■ Department for International Trade: Hotels**Emily Thornberry:**[\[87520\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if she will publish the (a) locations and (b) names of the hotels where her Department incurred expenditure of £2,129.84 and £1,883.33 on 15 January 2019; and how that expenditure was broken down by (i) accommodation, (ii) subsistence and (iii) other costs.

Greg Hands:

The hotel was booked for the World Economic Forum in Davos, and covered my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade, one Special Adviser and the Principal Private Secretary.

The Department does not disclose the names of hotels for security reasons.

The cost incurred was for accommodation. Demand for accommodation during this event is very high.

■ **Department for International Trade: Thomas Tucker**

Emily Thornberry: [87503]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2020 to Question 78562, what is the (a) primary trading address and (b) company registration number of the external stakeholder listed in her record of ministerial meetings as Tommy Tucker whom she met on 10 October 2019.

Greg Hands:

The information is available from Companies House at:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-information-about-a-company>

■ **Department for International Trade: Worzals Farm Shop**

Emily Thornberry: [87521]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to her Department's transparency data on DIT Ministers' meetings: January to March 2020, if she will publish details of the (a) location, (b) agenda, (c) attendees, (d) refreshments provided and (e) any other costs incurred for her meeting with Worzals Farm Shop and Cafe on 13 March 2020.

Greg Hands:

The meeting was held at the Worzals Farm Shop & Café to discuss issues including the seasonal workers scheme.

■ **Dual Use Goods and Technologies: Export Controls**

Mark Tami: [87490]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how long on average it takes her Department to respond to an application for an export licence for a dual use product in cases where that licence is (a) issued and (b) not issued.

Mark Tami: [87491]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what longest length of time has been taken by her Department to respond to an application for an export licence for a dual use product in cases where that licence has been (a) issued and (b) not issued.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

Considering applications that were completed in 2019, the longest length of time taken for a dual-use item licence to be refused in 2019 was 315 working days; the longest length of time taken for a dual-use item licence to be issued was 731 working days. The latter application is not typical, but required a government-to-government assurance and could not be completed until the foreign government involved had provided the necessary documentation.

The average processing time for all Standard Individual Export Licence (SIEL) applications was 19 working days in 2019. These include military rated, dual use and other rateable items, such as end use and human rights related items. The results

also include applications that were either stopped/withdrawn, or did not require a licence. The average processing time for solely dual use items can only be provided at disproportionate costs.

The Rt Hon. Gentleman may find it helpful to know that median processing times – and the number of applications that are processed within 20/60 working days – are published on GOV.UK.

■ **Riot Control Weapons: USA**

Emily Thornberry:

[84171]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, on what date she instructed her Department to (a) initiate a reassessment of exports of riot control equipment to the US and (b) suspend the licencing of new or pending export applications until that reassessment had been completed.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

It is standard practice in the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) to convene a meeting of officials across government departments when a change of circumstances has occurred in any country.

ECJU have been monitoring the situation in the United States since George Floyd was killed on 25th May 2020 and such a meeting was convened on 4th June 2020.

It was decided at the meeting that, in light of the situation there, a reassessment should be undertaken by officials, in order to assess whether relevant licences were consistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria and, in particular, the requirement under Criterion 2a not to grant licences if there is a clear risk that the items might be used for internal repression.

Officials also decided, at that meeting, that the assessment of pending licences would not be finalised until that reassessment had been completed.

Emily Thornberry:

[84173]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the re-assessment of exports of riot control equipment to the US conducted by her Department in June 2020, which minister was (a) presented with the conclusions of that re-assessment and (b) responsible for taking the decision to resume the licensing of exports suspended while that re-assessment took place.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena:

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office conducted the reassessment and agreed the conclusions of that reassessment with the Foreign Secretary. The conclusions of the reassessment were then presented to me and I took the decision, on behalf of my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade, not to suspend, amend or revoke existing licences and to continue to process pending applications for crowd control equipment to the US.

The Rt Hon. Lady will be aware from previous answers that it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the US remains a beacon for freedom, opportunity and

democracy. The US maintains the rule of law and has robust institutions. Further, there is democratic oversight, accountability and extensive public scrutiny, including by an active civil society and free press.

■ Shipping: Coronavirus

Steve Double:

[\[85071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what plans her Department has to support the maritime sector as part of the economic recovery from covid-19.

Graham Stuart:

With 95% of our imports and exports reliant on the sea and just under 1 million jobs dependent on maritime related activities, the maritime sector is critical to the UK's economy. Uncertainties around global recovery and fluctuations in global trade have severely impacted the sector.

The Department for International Trade's (DIT) support for the maritime sector's recovery is being developed in partnership with the Department for Transport (DfT), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and key industry bodies; the DfT COVID-19 recovery plan will be published in the coming months.

DIT is delivering a programme of virtual trade events to help the sector reach existing and potential customers across the globe, mitigating some of the impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions on physical trade events. DIT remains committed to delivering *Promoting the UK's world-class global maritime offer*, the Department's five-year plan for the sector, focused on the key themes and drivers of growth identified in Government's Maritime 2050 Strategy.

■ Shipping: Exports

Steve Double:

[\[85072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what steps her Department is taking to support exports from the maritime sector.

Graham Stuart:

The maritime sector is highly export oriented. The Department for International Trade (DIT) is focused on delivering *Promoting the UK's world-class global maritime offer*, the Department's five-year plan for the sector. The plan, developed in partnership with industry, focuses on UK strengths in many of the key technologies that will drive the future of maritime. These include digital, smart and green shipping and we will ensure that the UK maximises its share of a market that is projected to grow to £13 billion per year globally by 2030, from £4 billion today.

DIT is also working with other Government departments and industry to realise the ambitions of Maritime 2050, the Government's strategy for the maritime sector. We will be supporting our world-leading maritime services sector, including shipping, insurance and arbitration, and supporting growth across the United Kingdom by leading generation of export opportunities in support of the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Later this year, DIT is intending to launch a new Export Strategy, which forms an integral part of the Government's package of responses to COVID-19 and sets a long-term strategic roadmap for UK exporters as the Transition Period comes to an end.

■ Tourism: Airports

Emily Thornberry:

[85993]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what the cost to the public purse was of advertising space for the GREAT campaign at UK international airports during (a) February, (b) March, (c) April, (d) May, (e) June, and (f) July (i) 2019 and (ii) 2020.

Graham Stuart:

The GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign showcases all four corners of our nation to inspire the world and encourage people to visit, do business, invest and study in the UK. GREAT unites the efforts of the public and private sector to generate jobs and growth for Britain and Northern Ireland.

The vast majority of advertising space across the seven UK international airports where the GREAT campaign features was provided at no cost to the public purse.

The total cost of advertising space during the timeframes specified was £7000, which was spent on a specific campaign as part of the broader Exporting is GREAT campaign to feature local businesses and promote exports.

■ World Trade Organisation: Public Appointments

Emily Thornberry:

[85995]

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, how many hours of staff time at each grade were involved in (a) scripting, filming and editing and (b) distributing her Department's campaign video for the UK's nominee for the role of director general of the World Trade Organization.

Greg Hands:

Scripting, filming, and editing the Department's campaign video for the UK's nominee for the role of Director General at the World Trade Organisation took in the region of 15-20 hours to complete.

We do not hold detailed records of the time and grade of employees involved.

JUSTICE

■ Coroners

Rachael Maskell:

[87593]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, for what reason a coroner's inquest is not held in circumstances where someone has been convicted in relation to the death of that individual.

Alex Chalk:

Schedule 1 to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 provides that where a coroner's investigation is suspended because there are relevant criminal proceedings, the investigation may only be resumed if the coroner thinks there is sufficient reason for doing so. This is a judicial decision for the coroner.

In most circumstances a homicide trial will fulfil the function of the inquest in answering the four statutory questions (of who died and how, when and where they died) and any information needed to register the death.

Where the investigation or inquest is resumed, its conclusion on the cause of death must be consistent with the outcome of the criminal trial.

Further information can be found in our "Guide to Coroner Services for Bereaved People" which can be accessed at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/859076/guide-to-coroner-services-bereaved-people-jan-2020.pdf

Courts: Coronavirus**John Spellar:****[85937]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of re-opening recently closed Courts in order to help tackle the backlog in cases arising from the covid-19 outbreak.

Chris Philp:

On 19 July, HM Courts & Tribunals Service announced ten Nightingale court locations to provide additional capacity for the courts and tribunals estate on a temporary basis. We assessed the merits of using unsold former court buildings as Nightingale courts and are using the former Fleetwood Magistrates' Court and former Telford County Court buildings for this purpose.

HMCTS has published an update on their response to covid-19 in the criminal courts in England and Wales (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-and-tribunal-recovery-update-in-response-to-coronavirus>). This includes details on the use of Nightingale courts and our plans to open additional locations. We will continue to consider former court buildings as we work to increase our capacity.

Alex Cunningham:**[87544]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, on which dates each of the Nightingale courts started trials; when those courts will be operating at full capacity; and what plans the Government has for further Nightingale courts.

Chris Philp:

The table below provides the dates on which each Nightingale court began to conduct hearings including civil, family, tribunals and non-custodial crime work.

LOCATION	HEARINGS COMMENCED
Prospero House, London	03/08/2020
Former Telford County Court	17/08/2020
Former Fleetwood Magistrates Court	24/08/2020
*Hertfordshire Development Centre	17/08/2020
Swansea Civic Centre	17/08/2020
Cloth Hall Court, Leeds	28/08/2020
Middlesbrough Town Hall	18/08/2020
East Pallant House, Chichester	20/07/2020
Petty France, London	24/08/2020
Peterborough Cathedral	01/09/2020

*The venue in Hertfordshire was hired for a specific period to meet a targeted operational need. This site is now closed.

We are listing cases for all the available hearing space at the nine Nightingale courts that are currently open in order to maximise our hearing capacity.

HMCTS has published an update on their response to Covid-19 in the criminal courts in England and Wales (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-and-tribunal-recovery-update-in-response-to-coronavirus>). This provides a comprehensive update on recovery plans and includes details about Nightingale courts and our plans to open additional locations.

■ Courts: Costs

Ellie Reeves:

[86141]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, pursuant to the Answer of 1 September 2020 to Question 78820 on Nightingale courts, how many cases have been heard at each of the active nightingale court locations; if he will publish the ongoing running costs for each of those locations; and when the final remaining nightingale court locations will be operational.

Chris Philp:

HMCTS has published an update on their response to covid-19 in the criminal courts in England and Wales (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-and-tribunal-recovery-update-in-response-to-coronavirus>). This provides a comprehensive update on recovery plans and includes details about Nightingale courts and our plans to open additional locations.

HMCTS has been tracking the utilisation of each of the Nightingale courts for the first weeks of operation and this is shown in the table below. Utilisation gives a better view of how much the courts are used than figures on cases heard – where courts are deliberately designed to hear longer cases, ‘cases heard’ might be low despite the court being in constant use. These estimates have been compiled from local records and compared very favourably with the utilisation of permanent courts prior to Covid-19.

LOCATION	DATE OPENED	UTILISATION
Prospero House, London	03/08/2020	81%
Former Telford County Court	17/08/2020	100%
Former Fleetwood Magistrates Court	24/08/2020	70%
*Hertfordshire Development Centre	17/08/2020	80%
Swansea Civic Centre	17/08/2020	87%
Cloth Hall Court, Leeds	28/08/2020	85%
Middlesbrough Town Hall	18/08/2020	95%
East Pallant House, Chichester	20/07/2020	83%
Petty France, London	24/08/2020	70%
Peterborough Cathedral	01/09/2020	80%**

*The venue in Hertfordshire was hired for a specific period to meet a targeted operational need. This site is now closed.

** Estimated utilisation based on forward listing.

The first 18 Nightingale courts will have an overall cost at the end of the financial year of £10m, excluding judicial costs.

■ Dangerous Driving: Sentencing

Rachael Maskell:

[86096]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has taken recent steps to review sentencing policy for dangerous driving.

Chris Philp:

The government has committed to increase the maximum penalty for causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving when under the influence

of drink or drugs to life imprisonment and create a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving. We will legislate as soon as possible.

■ Human Trafficking and Slavery

Karen Bradley:

[R] [87539]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Justice, how many people were (a) prosecuted and (b) convicted of human trafficking and modern slavery offences as the principal offence; of those people how many were EEA or Swiss nationals excluding UK nationals; how many additional people flagged by the CPS as being investigated for human trafficking and modern slavery offences were (i) prosecuted and (ii) convicted of other offences; and of those people how many were EEA or Swiss nationals excluding UK nationals in each calendar year from 2016 to 2019.

Alex Chalk:

The Ministry of Justice has published data on the number of people prosecuted and convicted in England and Wales up to the year ending December 2019 for the following human trafficking-related offences and offences under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, available at the link below:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888344/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx

Filter 'Offence' by:

- 72 Human trafficking for sexual exploitation
- 78.1 Human trafficking for non-sexual exploitation
- 106 Modern Slavery

The resulting table will then display the those prosecuted and convicted for the above offences over the 2013-2019 period.

However, it is not possible to identify the nationality of the defendants as this information is not held in the courts proceedings database.

Moreover, CPS flagged data relating to individuals prosecuted for human trafficking or modern slavery does not identify the specific offences prosecuted or convicted.

■ Judicial Review: Northern Ireland and Scotland

Kenny MacAskil:

[86762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what discussions he had with representatives of the judiciary in Scotland and Northern Ireland ahead of the announcement of the launch of the independent panel to look at judicial review on 31 July 2020.

Chris Philp:

Letters were sent to the Lord President of Scotland and the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland on July 30th confirming the Panel's details, prior to the announcement of the panel on July 31st.

■ Ministry of Justice: Personnel Management

John Stevenson:

[\[84207\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time equivalent staff were employed in his Department's human resources section in April 2020.

Chris Philp:

As at 30th April 2020, 945.01 FTE were employed in the Human Resources departments of the Ministry of Justice, including HMCTS & HMPPS.

■ Prisoners' Release: Housing

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[84993\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what lessons he has learnt from the implementation of his Department's accommodation support scheme for prison leavers.

Lucy Frazer:

Everyone leaving prison should have somewhere safe and secure to live; accommodation enables offenders to hold down a job and reduces the likelihood of them reoffending.

As part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Justice secured £8.5 million to support individuals at risk of homelessness on their release from prison and help them to move on into permanent accommodation. The scheme ran between 18th May and 31st August and provided up to 56 nights' accommodation meaning some prison leavers can be accommodated up until the 26th October. While it was designed as an emergency, temporary response to support prison leavers at risk of homelessness during the pandemic, the department is keen to develop longer-term improvements. We will review the scheme over the coming months and use those lessons as we develop and roll out our wider reforms to probation services over the coming year.

As part of its COVID-19 response, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) set up seven Homelessness Prevention Taskforces to work with local authorities and other partners to find accommodation for offenders released from prison; these taskforces are still active. While we are currently reviewing the operation of these taskforces, the operational benefits of the taskforces are such that we are considering how to continue them in the long-term.

■ Prisoners' Transfers: Foreign Nationals

Karen Bradley:

[\[R\] \[87543\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many foreign national offenders convicted of human trafficking or modern slavery offences were returned to their country of origin under (a) the Early Removal Scheme, (b) an EU Prisoner Transfer Framework Decision, (c) the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons and (d) bilateral prisoner transfer agreements in each year from 2016

to 2019; and under each scheme how many returned offenders were EEA or Swiss nationals in each of those years.

Lucy Frazer:

We continue to remove foreign national offenders where routes are available.

Since 2010, we have removed over 55,000 foreign national offenders from our prisons, immigration removal centres and the community, with 4,743 removed in 2019/20.

We are absolutely committed to removing foreign national offenders from the UK and continue to work closely with international governments to maximise the removal of serious and persistent offenders.

We are constantly reviewing progress to ensure that all options are being pursued and that our early removal mechanisms are working as effectively as possible.

The latest published information on foreign national offenders returned under the Early Removal and Facilitated Returns Schemes is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-enforcement-data-august-2020> (Table FNO_09 in *Transparency data Immigration Enforcement data: August 2020*, provides the numbers of foreign nationals removed under the Early Removal Scheme every year since 2010 but that there is no published data that breaks down these numbers by nationality or offence type).

	FNOs REPATRIATED UNDER EUPTFD CONVICTED OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING OR MODERN SLAVERY OFFENCES	FNOs REPATRIATED UNDER CoE CONVENTION CONVICTED OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING OR MODERN SLAVERY OFFENCES	FNOs REPATRIATED UNDER BILATERAL PTAS CONVICTED OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING OR MODERN SLAVERY OFFENCES
2016	2	0	0
2017	0	0	0
2018	1	0	0
2019	2	0	0

All five prisoners repatriated under the EUPTFD were EEA nationals.

■ **Prisons: Coronavirus**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[84991]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of covid-19 sick pay policies implemented by G4S at (a) Altcourse Prison and (b) other private prisons managed by G4S, with regard to (i) fair treatment of staff across the

prison estate in England and Wales, (ii) the public health necessity of self-isolation and household isolation for covid-19 symptoms and (iii) the effect on staff health and wellbeing if staff members who have suffered from covid-19 symptoms return to work before they are fit to do so.

Lucy Frazer:

All staffing matters, including sick pay, sit with contractors. There is no requirement in the contracts to agree such matters with the Ministry of Justice.

Ms Lyn Brown:

[84992]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will make an assessment of the effect on (a) fair treatment of staff, (b) rates of absence, (c) staff morale and (d) staff retention of the absence of Payment Plus Bonus Scheme payments during the covid-19 outbreak, in private prisons in England and Wales.

Lucy Frazer:

We put a range of measures in place to support our prisons and to safeguard staff and offenders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Covid Payment Plus Special Bonus Scheme, was available for all prison staff, in any establishment, including privately run prisons, where additional hours are required due to staff absence. Annual leave buy-back was the only element of the scheme that was not available to staff in privately run prisons. For staffing working in privately run prisons, all staffing matters, including bonus payment schemes, are managed by their employers.

We are very grateful to prison staff, who have continued to work hard through extraordinary circumstances. This includes staff working out our private prisons, which continue to play an important role in the prison estate. We have and will continue to work closely with private providers throughout the pandemic.

■ **Probate: Applications**

John Stevenson:

[84190]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the average time taken was to process an application for probate in March (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Chris Philp:

Official statistics on the average length of time from receipt of the application to the issue of a grant of probate cover only the period from July to September 2019 onwards. HMCTS internal management information from a decommissioned case management system, which is not subject to the rigorous quality assurance processes of official statistics, has been used for the periods before that date to show the average times from receipt of an application to a grant being issued.

The introduction of a new digital case management system in 2019 changed the business process for accounting for the receipt date of applications which need to be held due to errors or missing documentation. The figures for March 2020 are therefore not directly comparable to those from March 2018 and March 2019.

AVERAGE TIME TO GRANT ISSUE FOR GRANTS OF REPRESENTATION, BY GRANT TYPE, ENGLAND AND WALES ^{1,2}

Probate		
Application submission to grant issue		
	Mean weeks	Median weeks
March 2018	3	N/A
March 2019	3	N/A
March 2020	7 ³	5 ³

SOURCE FOR MARCH 2018 AND 2019 IS THE NOW DECOMMISSIONED PROBATEMAN SYSTEM AND MARCH 2020 DATA IS HMCTS CORE CASE DATA

- 1) HMCTS Core Case Data (CCD) came into effect at the end of March 2019, following a transition between data systems recording information regarding The Probate Service
- 2) The average timeliness figures are produced by calculating the time from application/document receipt (which may be from an earlier period) to the grant issued made in that period
- 3) Includes cases stopped and put on hold for errors or missing documentation

■ **Probate: Operating Costs**

John Stevenson:

[\[84191\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what the running costs of the Probate Office were in March (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Chris Philp:

Answer to question part:

- a) The costs of the Probate jurisdiction for 2017-18 were £5.7m.
- b) The costs of the Probate jurisdiction for 2018-19 were £5.9m.
- c) The costs of the Probate jurisdiction for 2019-20 were £7.5m.

■ **Probate: Solicitors**

Steve McCabe:

[\[85935\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what steps his Department is taking to help improve communications between (a) probate registry offices and (b) solicitors.

Chris Philp:

As part of the £1bn HMCTS reform programme a new online service has been introduced for use by probate professionals. The service is available 24 hours a day and enables professionals access to real time information about the progress of their digital case without the need to contact HMCTS.

In addition to the online system, as of March 2020, all calls are now answered by the Courts & Tribunals Service Centres which are equipped with modern technology to monitor performance levels and make improvements to the service being offered.

HMCTS also regularly meets with a variety of probate legal professional representative bodies to consult and update on forthcoming changes whilst gathering and responding to feedback.

■ **Probate: Staff****John Stevenson:**[\[84189\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many full-time equivalent staff were employed in probate offices in March (a) 2018, (b) 2019 and (c) 2020.

Chris Philp:

The information requested as to the number of full time equivalent staff employed in probate offices can be found in the table below.

Probate FTE broken down per site between 2018-2020 ^{1, 2}

PROBATE	DEC.18	MAR.19	MAR.20
Courts and Tribunal Service Centre (Birmingham)	0	18	91
Birmingham Registry	10	7	0
Oxford Registry	16	16	16
Manchester Registry	16	15	15
London Registry	13	12	13
Cardiff Registry	18	18	13
Leeds Registry	10	11	4
Liverpool Registry	13	13	8
Newcastle Registry	20	21	22
Winchester Registry	12	12	9
Brighton Registry	14	10	10

PROBATE	DEC.18	MAR.19	MAR.20
Ipswich Registry	8	5	6
Bristol Registry	3	3	5
Registrars	3	3	3
Total	156	164	215

SOURCE:
CTSC AND
NBC
WORKFORCE
MANAGEMENT
RESOURCING
DATA

1) NBC resourcing plans did not break down per registry prior to December 2018. Table is reflective of when the data was broken down with no material change to the total FTE from March 2018 (153 FTE) - December 2018 156 FTE).

2) CTSC data only available from go live in 2019.

■ Slavery: Court Orders

Karen Bradley:

[R] [\[87541\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Justice, how many (i) Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders and (ii) Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders were made by courts in each calendar year from 2016 to 2019 inclusive; and how many of those were made in respect of (a) EEA or Swiss nationals, excluding UK nationals and (b) UK nationals.

Chris Philp:

The number of i) Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders and ii) Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders in each calendar year from 2016- 2019 can be found in the accompanying tables. Robust data in relation to nationality is not held in the HMCTS courts Management Information Database.

Attachments:

1. Table [Copy of PQ_87541_table.xlsx]

■ Solicitors: Legal Aid Scheme

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[85023\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many firms of solicitors hold a criminal legal aid contract as at 1 September 2020.

Karl Turner:

[R] [\[85024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many firms of solicitors hold a civil legal aid contract as of 1 September 2020.

Alex Chalk:

Please note for the figures provided that some firms may have more than one office. There are currently 1,138 firms who hold a Criminal Legal Aid Contract. There are currently 1,478 firms who hold a Civil Legal Aid Contract. This data is correct as at 7 September 2020.

The Legal Aid Agency frequently reviews market capacity to make sure there is adequate provision around the country and moves quickly to ensure provision where gaps may appear.

■ **Unpaid Work: Coronavirus**

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[84182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress has been made on restarting unpaid work programmes during the covid-19 outbreak; and what guidance his Department has published for people subject to unpaid work requirements in relation to the number of hours and timescales required.

Chris Philp:

The Probation Services have a responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of service users during the pandemic. From 23 March 2020, all Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) have been operating an Exceptional Delivery Model (EDM) in accordance with Government advice and guidance on social distancing measures to help stem the rise of the COVID-19 infection rate. As a result, a number of services that rely on group work needed to be suspended, however, wherever possible remote delivery was provided either by Offender managers or supply chains within CRCs. The EDMs were clear that probation providers were to maintain contact with service users, and that wellbeing and services would be discussed with individuals.

All providers are in the process of increasing operational delivery. We are working with CRCs to return to the service levels in place prior to the pandemic as soon as possible while ensuring safe working. HMPPS officials are closely tracking the volume of unpaid work (UPW) hours being delivered each week, with that amount increasing on a weekly basis.

Service users have 12 months to complete their UPW requirement. As part of the induction process the number of hours and timescales for completion are clearly articulated to service users. As a result of reduced services during the pandemic a number of Service Users were unable to undertake their UPW hours. During this time both Offender managers and UPW supervisors carried out welfare calls to Service Users to ensure they were updated. Since the recommencement of UPW, CRCs have prioritised those nearing the end of their 12-month requirement to ensure the UPW hours are delivered.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Marriage: Northern Ireland

Gavin Robinson: [\[87560\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 18 May 2020 to Question 45240, when he plans to publish the responses to his Department's consultation on same-sex religious marriage and entitlements in Northern Ireland, which closed on 23 February 2020.

Mr Robin Walker:

On 16 July 2020, we published the Government response to the consultation on same-sex religious marriage in Northern Ireland; the same day the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2020 were laid in Parliament to provide for same-sex religious marriage in Northern Ireland from 1 September 2020.

The Government response can be accessed on nio.gov.uk and outlines the background to the consultation, including the relevant legal powers of the Government to change the law, analysis undertaken for each question asked in the consultation and what the regulations provide.

The Government remains committed to delivering conversion entitlements regulations and publishing the Government response to that consultation as soon as possible before the end of 2020.

TRANSPORT

■ Airlines: Coronavirus

Ruth Cadbury: [\[85064\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the competitiveness of passenger airlines within the aviation sector.

Andrew Stephenson:

The government recognises the challenging times facing the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19 and the unprecedented impact it has had on global travel, with flight numbers down significantly year on year throughout the crisis. The government is monitoring the impact of the pandemic on the UK aviation sector, including passenger airlines operating in the UK, and will continue to keep the impact on competition in the sector under review.

■ Airports: Coronavirus

Sarah Olney: [\[85093\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans the Government has to introduce covid-19 testing for departures and arrivals at airports.

Andrew Stephenson:

We are actively working on the practicalities of using testing to release people from self-isolation earlier than 14 days. Department officials are working with health experts with the aim of cutting the self-isolation period without adding to infection risk or infringing on our overall NHS test capacity.

■ Aviation: Finance**Ruth Cadbury:**[\[85062\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Government's financial support for the aviation sector.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department for Transport is in regular contact with HM Treasury regarding the challenges facing the aviation sector as a result of COVID-19. The sector is crucial to the UK's economy and businesses across the industry are able to draw on the unprecedented package of economic measures we have put in place during this time.

This includes a Bank of England scheme for firms to raise capital and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme which facilitates access to finance for businesses affected by the outbreak. HMRC is also ready to help all businesses and self-employed individuals, experiencing temporary financial difficulties due to coronavirus. You can access their "Time to Pay" arrangements, which eases restrictions with tax bills and VAT deferrals.

The Government is also ensuring financial support for employees through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme covering 80% of furloughed employees' usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, alongside the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and pension contributions.

■ Engines: Carbon Emissions**Kerry McCarthy:**[\[87500\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what assessment he has made of the contribution to carbon emissions of non-road mobile machinery (NRMM); and whether the Government has plans to include NRMM engines in its strategy to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Rachel Maclean:

The categorisation of Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) relates to a wide range of technologies, and the department will be working closely with DEFRA and BEIS to ensure emissions reduce in line with the Government's net zero commitments.

■ Manchester-Sheffield Railway Line

Sir Edward Davey: [\[86534\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he issued a ministerial direction in relation to the temporary closure of the Manchester Piccadilly to Rose Hill Marple railway line.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

Following my meeting with the operator on 4 September, and after reviewing its options, Northern is introducing two trains in the morning, Monday to Friday, for Rose Hill-Marple from today, which will help school children and morning commuters. There will be an additional afternoon service, arriving at Rose Hill-Marple at 1514 and arriving Manchester Piccadilly half an hour later. From the 26 October schools' half-term, Northern will provide a regular service every 90 minutes during the day between Manchester Piccadilly and Rose Hill Marple.

■ Motor Vehicles: Hydrogen

Ben Lake: [\[85100\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to bring forward plans for a nationwide hydrogen refuelling network.

Rachel Maclean:

The UK has one of the largest hydrogen refuelling networks in Europe, with thirteen publicly accessible stations. We have taken a strategic approach in its delivery to date, funding stations and the local fleets that they will serve together. This is ensuring station utilisation as the hydrogen transport market develops. The Government's £23m Hydrogen for Transport Programme is further increasing the uptake of fuel cell electric vehicles and growing the number of publicly accessible hydrogen refuelling stations. The programme is delivering new refuelling stations, upgrading some existing stations and deploying hundreds of new hydrogen vehicles.

■ Roads: Kent

Hilary Benn: [\[87487\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, which Government agency or agencies will be responsible for (a) checking lorry paperwork, (b) issuing fines and (c) impounding non-compliant lorries under the proposed Kent Access Permit scheme.

Rachel Maclean:

In August 2020, Her Majesty's Government consulted on the use of a Kent Access Permit (KAP) for any EU-bound Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV – goods vehicles weighing more than 7.5 tonnes) taking goods via the Short Straits Channel crossing after the end of the EU transition period. Under these proposals, if taken forward:

1. Contractors working for DfT, HMRC and Defra (or its agencies) would confirm if an HGV driver has a valid KAP using the Smart Freight Service, and in some cases, conduct documentation checks.

2. Fixed Penalty Notices or Financial Penalty Deposit Notices of £300 would be issued by the Police or the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) if an HCV driver did not have a valid KAP.
3. The DVSA would be able to impound vehicles should the driver choose not to pay the fine.

■ Shipping: Coronavirus

Steve Double:

[85074]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what support his Department is providing to the maritime sector as part of the economic recovery from covid-19.

Andrew Stephenson:

The maritime sector plays a vital role in the UK economy and continues to provide vital freight and key worker services throughout the pandemic. However, as with many parts of the economy, it has faced significant disruption and challenges. That is why the Chancellor announced a £330bn package of financial support to support businesses and employees during these unprecedented times. In addition, the Department provided bespoke financial support to ensure that critical lifeline and freight services continued to operate through the most challenging period.

My Department is now working closely across the maritime sector on their restart plans identifying the support that is needed to enable the safe resumption and continued increase of services and operations. We are also working with the sector on a longer-term Maritime Recovery Plan which will build on the Maritime 2050 launched by the Government last year. The Recovery Plan will draw on the plans the industry has already provided and consider both fiscal and non-fiscal opportunities.

■ Shipping: Exhaust Emissions

Steve Double:

[85073]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions his Department has had with representatives of the maritime sector on the level of funding required to decarbonise maritime.

Andrew Stephenson:

My officials have regularly engaged with the UK maritime industry on this matter, particularly since the launch of the Clean Maritime Council, which was established in 2018 to ensure strong collaboration between Government, industry and academia on maritime decarbonisation. The Council underpinned the publication of the Clean Maritime Plan, which was published in July 2019 and made a number of recommendations relating to funding.

Key recommendations included the commitment by Government to funding a competition for innovation in clean maritime in 2019 and a round of Government grant support for early stage research projects in the same year. Both commitments have been delivered, with the Clean Maritime Call funding round having supported 24 green shipping projects and having been six-times oversubscribed.

Today my officials continue to engage with industry to develop a Covid-19 Recovery Plan for Maritime. The Recovery Plan will consider how economic recovery for the maritime sector can be aligned with the need to reduce and eventually eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. Ensuring that we plan for a green recovery has been jointly identified by Government and industry as a top priority.

Steve Double:

[85075]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps his Department is taking to decarbonise the maritime sector as part of meeting the net zero target by 2050.

Andrew Stephenson:

The Department is pursuing efforts at both domestic and international levels to decarbonise the maritime sector.

Domestically work has continued on delivering the ambition set out in the Clean Maritime Plan, including research into zero emissions clusters and consideration of the tax treatment of marine fuel as part of a wider Treasury initiative, and the Department is currently preparing a package of further, ambitious measures for inclusion in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Internationally, we are working with other high ambition States at the International Maritime Organization to agree ambitious measures to peak, and rapidly reducing emissions from the sector, in line with the IMO's initial strategy on Greenhouse Gas.

■ Trains: Hydrogen

Ben Lake:

[85099]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to bring forward plans for hydrogen trains.

Rachel Maclean:

The Government supports using hydrogen powered trains on the railway to help deliver our target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Department is working with Network Rail and the rail industry to determine which parts of the network will be best suited to electrification, and which to hydrogen as well as battery. This work will support the Department's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, to be published at the end of this year.

The Government is supporting development of hydrogen technology through innovation funding and research, including work on safety and wider issues that will have to be considered to allow the smooth entry into service on the network of hydrogen trains.

■ Transport: Hydrogen

Ben Lake:

[85098]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to bring forward plans for a hydrogen hub.

Rachel Maclean:

The Transport Secretary is exploring options for green hydrogen in transport across freight, buses, trains, maritime and aviation and how the UK can lead the world in its deployment and use. Further details will follow in due course.

TREASURY**■ Aviation: Coronavirus****Ruth Cadbury:**[\[85065\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what representations his Department has received from (a) British Airways and (b) International Airlines Group on the Government's support for the aviation sector.

Kemi Badenoch:

Treasury Ministers and officials meet with a wide range of stakeholders across sectors as part of ongoing policy development and implementation.

Ministers and officials from the Department for Transport are in regular contact with airlines, airports and unions to understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on the sector and its workers.

Due to commercial sensitivity, the Government cannot comment on individual companies.

Ruth Cadbury:[\[85067\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Government's financial support for the aviation industry during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government recognises the challenging times facing the aviation industry as a result of COVID-19. Firms experiencing difficulties as a result of COVID-19 can draw upon the unprecedented package of measures announced by the Chancellor, including schemes to raise capital, flexibilities with tax bills, and financial support for employees. The aerospace sector and its aviation customers are being supported with over £8.5 billion support through the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility, grants for research and development, loan guarantees and support for aerospace exports.

■ Bus Services: Coronavirus**Derek Twigg:**[\[87488\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will take steps to ensure that the coach travel sector is treated as part of the leisure sector and able to access support available to leisure businesses during the covid-19 outbreak.

Kemi Badenoch:

The Government has delivered on its promise to stand by businesses and workers throughout the pandemic and has provided one of the most comprehensive and generous packages of support globally. This support has included billions of pounds for businesses through loans and grants, support for millions of jobs through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

Coach companies, along with other businesses, continue to have access to a range of support measures including, but not limited to:

- A Discretionary Grant Fund for Local Authorities in England
- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)
- The Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBL) for small and micro enterprises
- VAT deferral for up to 12 months (for the period 20 March – 30 June 2020)
- The Time To Pay scheme, through which businesses in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, can receive support with their tax affairs
- Protection for commercial leaseholders against automatic forfeiture for non-payment until September 30, 2020.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme opened to all employers on 20th April.

■ Business: Loans**Stephen Farry:****[86210]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps the Government is taking to monitor the lending practices of banks.

John Glen:

Although the Treasury sets the legal framework for the regulation of financial services, it does not have investigative powers of its own.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) is responsible for the regulation and monitoring of regulated mortgage and consumer lending. The FCA assesses every regulated firm's fitness to trade as part of the authorisation process, including banks, and it has put in place binding standards on firms. It proactively monitors the market, focusing on the areas most likely to cause consumer harm, and it has various methods to punish breaches of its rules – there is no limit on the fines it can levy and, crucially, it can force firms to compensate consumers. In addition to following FCA rules, banks undertaking regulated consumer credit lending must also comply with relevant parts the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

On business lending, the Government continues to monitor the market and work closely with banks and other finance providers to ensure SMEs can access the finance they need, including through the government-backed loan guarantee schemes.

If, as a result of a bank's lending practices, an individual or an SME feels they have been treated unfairly they can refer complaints to the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS). The FOS provides a free, independent dispute resolution service for bank customers.

■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Stella Creasy:

[\[87537\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of furlough agreements that purport to oblige employees (a) to pay back the contributions that the employer makes to their furlough and (b) who choose not to return to work to be liable to their employers for those contributions.

Jesse Norman:

The scheme rules make it clear that employers must pass on 100 per cent of the grant to their furloughed employees and employees must receive at least 80 per cent of their reference pay. HMRC have powers to check and recover any amounts claimed where the employee has not been paid accordingly. If workers are concerned they are not receiving their entitlement, they should report their employer to HMRC via the online fraud reporting tool, or call HMRC's fraud hotline. The Government will retain the right to retrospectively audit all aspects of the scheme with scope to claw back fraudulent or erroneous claims.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[87717\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what Equality Impact Assessments were undertaken on the (a) design of and (b) the conclusion of the Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

When designing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme and Job Retention Bonus policies, the Treasury undertook an analysis of how the policies were likely to affect individuals sharing protected characteristics in line with its Public Sector Equality Duties. This is in accordance with the internal procedural requirements and support in place for ensuring that equalities considerations inform decisions taken by ministers.

Nadia Whittome:

[\[87718\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he undertook a regional impact assessment of the (a) implementation and (b) closure of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

When launching the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the Government prioritised helping the greatest number of people as quickly as possible and the scheme was made available across all regions UK-wide. There has been broad consistency in furlough rates across the UK. The latest available statistics show the West Midlands region of England has had the highest take-up rate of 34 per cent and the East region of England has had the lowest take-up of 30 per cent. The number of

employments furloughed in the UK decreased from a peak of 8.9 million on 8 May to 6.8 million by 30 June.

After eight months of the CJRS, the scheme will close. The CJRS must be temporary and the Government must ensure people across all regions of the UK can get back to work safely and get the UK economy up and running again. The Government is providing support directly to people and businesses across the whole of the UK with the UK-wide measures announced in the Plan for Jobs.

Nadia Whittome:

[87719]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he made an assessment of the potential merits of different scheme designs when he made an assessment of the potential merits of ending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in October 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Jesse Norman:

As the economic recovery continues, the Government must adjust support accordingly. Ending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme after eight months ensures that people are not trapped in jobs that can only exist because of a Government subsidy. The scheme will wind down, flexibly and gradually, supporting businesses and people through to October. This is the best means by which to ensure people's livelihoods are protected as the Government supports the resumption of economic demand.

Nadia Whittome:

[87720]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on what dates he met and with which business representatives he discussed the design and closure of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme; and what the outcomes were of those discussions.

Jesse Norman:

HM Treasury has been working closely with business representatives, unions, and Government colleagues to ensure that this decision works for both employers and employees and is coherent with the wider Government response. An Institute for Government report recently remarked "the quality and intensity of engagement on the CJRS and SEISS were described to us as being markedly different from normal experience of working with government."

For example, the Treasury has engaged frequently with the Confederation of British Industry; the most recent meeting being alongside Trades Union Congress representatives on 7 September. The Chancellor attended this meeting and took on board the concerns and proposals raised. HM Treasury will continue to work with businesses, unions and representative groups as part of the Government's continuing monitoring of the economy.

■ Hospices: Scotland

Martin Docherty-Hughes:

[\[85057\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he will plans to announce a final consequential funding figure for hospices in Scotland in respect of the £200 million allocated to hospices in April, May, June as part of the UK Government's £750 million coronavirus funding for charities, and the further funding provided in July 2020.

Steve Barclay:

On 24 July, we made an unprecedented upfront guarantee to the Scottish government. We guaranteed that they will receive at least £6.5bn in additional resource funding this year on top of their Spring Budget funding. This certainty ensures they can plan and deliver their coronavirus response. It is up to the Scottish government to allocate this funding across their devolved responsibilities as they see fit, including to hospices.

■ Mortgages: Repossession Orders

Derek Twigg:

[\[87489\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent discussions he has had with mortgage providers on preventing the repossession of family homes of small business owners whose business has failed due to the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

The Government has been working closely with mortgage lenders throughout this period in order to provide as much certainty as possible to homeowners. In March we announced the availability of a 3-month mortgage payment deferral to help those struggling with the financial impact of Covid-19. Alongside this, FCA guidance from 2 June provided homeowners with the option of a second 3-month deferral, as well as confirming the lender ban on repossessions until 31 October 2020 meaning no homeowner will face repossession through this uncertain time.

■ Social Security Benefits: Northern Ireland

Claire Hanna:

[\[87709\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many households in Northern Ireland have been affected by the loss of the child element of child tax credit and universal credit for a third or later child born on or after 6 April 2017 as a result of not meeting any listed exceptions; and how much money those affected households have not been entitled to as a result of the social security changes that took place on 6 April 2017.

Claire Hanna:

[\[87710\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many households in Northern Ireland have been affected by the ending of the family element of child tax credit as a result of having no children on their claim who were born before 6 April 2017; and what estimate he has made of the amount of money to which those households have not been entitled.

Steve Barclay:

With reference to your first question, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) administers Universal Credit (UC) for Great Britain and therefore does not hold data relating to Northern Ireland. DWP have passed this part of your question to the Northern Ireland Social Security Agency for response.

Please find below a table summarising the estimated number of tax credit recipient families affected by the policy to support a maximum of two children and the foregone entitlement of ineligible children for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 tax years in Northern Ireland.

	NUMBER OF FAMILIES AFFECTED	ENTITLEMENT OF INELIGIBLE CHILDREN
2017/18	1,300	£3.6m
2018/19	3,900	£10.9m

Please find below a table summarising the estimated number of tax credit recipient families affected by the withdrawal of the family element of tax credits for families without a child born before 6 April 2017 and the associated entitlement amount for which they are ineligible.

	NUMBER OF FAMILIES AFFECTED	ENTITLEMENT OF INELIGIBLE FAMILIES
2017/18	1,400	£0.8m
2018/19	3,100	£1.7m

WALES■ **Wales Office: Training****Neil O'Brien:**[\[86163\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how much the Department spent on unconscious bias training in each of the last five years.

David T C Davies:

Nothing. All staff at the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (OSSW) undertake unconscious bias training through Civil Service Learning at no direct cost to the Office.

WOMEN AND EQUALITIES**■ Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: Standards****Dr Rupa Huq:****[86724]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what estimate she has made of the average time taken by the Race and Ethnic Disparities Commission to respond to queries from members of the public.

Dr Rupa Huq:**[86725]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what plans the Race and Ethnic Disparities Commission has to investigate inequalities of (a) outcome from the judicial system and (b) composition of (i) Supreme Court judges, (ii) Court of Appeal judges (iii) civil court judges, (iv) magistrates court judges, (v) barristers and solicitors and other legal professionals, (vi) the Crown Prosecution Service and (vii) the police.

Dr Rupa Huq:**[86726]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, whether Race and Ethnic Disparities Commissioners will receive unconscious bias training in connection with their role.

Dr Rupa Huq:**[86727]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what steps her Department took to ensure that recruitment of the (a) Commissioners and (b) staff of the Race and Ethnic Disparities Commission was (a) open, (b) fair and (c) transparent.

Dr Rupa Huq:**[86728]**

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, what the cost to the public purse was of establishing the Race and Ethnic Disparities Commission.

Kemi Badenoch:

The [Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparity](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities) is supported by a secretariat based in the Cabinet Office, who handle correspondence in line with the published departmental guidance and requirements as set out in relevant legislation. Those wishing to submit evidence to the Commission are encouraged to send contributions via email, noting that it may take longer to process items sent by post. Further details of the Commission, its work and how to contact them are published on www.gov.uk/government/organisations/commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities

As outlined on the Commission website, the Commission will focus on areas including poverty, education, employment, health and the criminal justice system, and will look at outcomes for the whole population.

The Commissioners were appointed by the Prime Minister after a thorough process, and we are pleased to have such a diverse range of Commissioners that can bring a wealth of talent to their roles. The Commissioners are not remunerated for their roles and are not required to undertake unconscious bias training under their terms of appointment.

The secretariat to the Commission is made up of Cabinet Office staff, who were recruited in line with the Civil Service Commission's Recruitment Principles.

Any activities associated with the Commission will be handled in line with the relevant Cabinet Office policies ensuring effective use of public money and transparency in line with departmental annual reporting.

WORK AND PENSIONS

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Mr Alistair Carmichael:

[\[905948\]](#)

What steps she is taking to encourage SMEs to participate in the Kickstart scheme.

Mims Davies:

We are determined that small businesses play a key part in the Kickstart Scheme. We are actively encouraging a range of organisations to step forward as intermediaries, this includes the Chambers of Commerce, Local Authorities and charities – so they can support small employers offer Kickstart roles to young people.

■ Carer's Allowance

Stuart Anderson:

[\[87662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of increasing the level of the cap on the carer's allowance income threshold to help support greater participation in the workforce.

Justin Tomlinson:

Carer's Allowance (CA) does not have a general income test. Rather it has a weekly earnings limit which acts as the test as to whether the carer is in gainful employment or not (this is a basic qualifying condition for CA).

Whilst the Government does not link the earnings limit to any other particular factor, it does keep it under regular review and increases it when it is warranted and affordable. The increase in the CA earnings limit from £123 to £128 a week in April 2020 was in line with average earnings growth.

DWP is undertaking research into carers employment and potential barriers to working. We will look at any findings from the research and other evidence with an open mind when the level of the earnings limit is next considered.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Internet

Daniel Kawczynski:

[\[84989\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many complaints were received about the website of the Child Maintenance Service in (a) 2017 and (b) 2019.

Mims Davies:

We have assumed that the website referred to is the Child Maintenance Self-Service system. This information is not produced within our published data, nor collated centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

■ Child Maintenance Service: Operating Costs**Daniel Kawczynski:**[\[84988\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what the cost of running the Child Maintenance Service was in (a) 2017 and (b) 2019.

Mims Davies:

The cost of running the Child Maintenance Service is reported in financial years rather than calendar years, the costs for the four financial years that include calendar years 2017 and 2019 are as follows:

2016/17 - £275.11m (excluding income) or £260.52m net of income

2017/18 - £221.73m (excluding income) or £199.67m net of income

2018/19 - £189.00m (excluding income) or £153.88m net of income

2019/20 - £189.77m (excluding income) or £146.17m net of income

Increasing income over time is due to both increasing caseloads on the CMS 2012 scheme and improvements to case compliance.

■ Department for Work and Pensions: Industrial Health and Safety**Grahame Morris:**[\[87535\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether a health and safety committee will be formed for the Benton Park site, where a request has been made under Regulation 9 of the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 by two safety representatives.

Mims Davies:

The Department for Work and Pensions is fully committed to its collaborative approach with Trade Union representatives and to meeting Health and Safety legislative requirements; as such it has a full Safety Committee Structure in place that includes the provision for such a meeting to be held in relation to the Benton Park site, and does so.

■ Employment: Coronavirus**Zarah Sultana:**[\[87688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps the Government will take protect shielding workers returning to the workplace.

Mims Davies:

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 first published on 11 May 2020 and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Restrictions on people who had previously been shielded have been paused and Public Health England has published guidance to help those people to safely return to work: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

■ Employment: Disability

Jonathan Gullis:

[86774]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what support her Department is providing to help disabled people in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Kidsgrove find and stay in work during the covid-19 outbreak.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Government has put in place a range of provision to help disabled people find and stay in work across the country. We are already helping disabled people stay in work and enter work through a range of programmes, including Access to Work, Disability Confident, the Work and Health Programme and the Intensive Personalised Employment Support Programme. During the Covid-19 outbreak, we have provided this support remotely and made the Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support programmes easier to access by allowing self-referrals as well as referrals through work coaches.

■ Kickstart Scheme

Catherine West:

[87611]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will publish further guidance on the kickstart scheme to clarify recommendations on the skills development element expected of employers entering that scheme; and what steps her Department is taking to publicise that scheme to small and medium size cultural and sport charities.

Mims Davies:

The department is working with employers and organisations of all sizes and sectors, encouraging them to participate in Kickstart and provide opportunities for young people. We know employers, large and small, are considering applying to the Scheme and are keen to find out more. Our 637 Jobcentres are securing local employer and intermediary commitment, bringing forward bids across the country.

Guidance has been published through the gov.uk site on the requirements of Kickstart, and officials will continue to update this as the scheme evolves.

■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

Dr Julian Lewis:

[\[83656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the extent to which the rise in retirement age for women has resulted in vulnerable 60 to 65 year-olds continuing to work during the covid-19 outbreak; what progress she has made in developing a fair transitional scheme to delayed retirement for women born in the 1950s; and what extra support will be given to the poorest women in that category.

Guy Opperman:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: Parliament set out in the Pensions Acts fair transitional arrangements when it introduced the changes to State Pension age, including measures in 2011, costing £1.1 billion, to ensure that no woman's pension age changed by more than 18 months. It is not proposed to amend the Pensions Act of 1995, 2008 or 2011 or change the £1.1 billion transitional provision. There are no plans for further transitional provisions. The government strengthened the financial safety net for those who need it during the COVID-19 pandemic. Support is available through the welfare system for people who are unable to work or are on a low income, including those that are nearing their State Pension age.

■ Universal Credit

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[87499\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what recent assessment she has made of the effect of universal credit benefit caps on people who are in receipt of statutory sick pay.

Mims Davies:

The benefit cap will not apply if total household earnings, which include Statutory Sick Pay, in each assessment period are at least £604 and households may be exempt for a period of nine-months if they have a sustained work history.

Claimants can approach their local authority for a Discretionary Housing Payment if they need additional support to meet rental costs.

■ Universal Credit: Cancer

Henry Smith:

[\[86019\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what discussions her Department has had with representatives of (a) Macmillan Cancer Support and (b) other similar charities on the potential merits of retaining (i) remote identity verification, (ii) flexible assessments and (iii) other such recently introduced measures to help universal credit claimants living with cancer.

Justin Tomlinson:

The Department and its Ministers work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders, including local authorities, charities and employer groups, and listens directly to their feedback about Universal Credit. At its core, Universal Credit is about ensuring we deliver a service which is tailored to individual claimant circumstances and abilities. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, we adapted many of our services to be delivered remotely, and we will consider if changes can be retained longer term. But, many claimants benefit from having face to face contact with Work Coaches to overcome barriers and we will ensure this method of contact continues to be used where appropriate.

Measures, such as identity verification, are key components of the Universal Credit claim process to confirm the accuracy of information supplied, allowing us to make timely and accurate decisions. In addition to our usual online verification, since early June we have been trialling the online identity service, Confirm Your Identity. This has enabled a higher number of claimants to verify their identity online, and we are continually monitoring and testing the impact this has on a claimant's ability to verify remotely.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

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): [\[HCWS451\]](#)

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 eighth round of negotiations.

Led by the UK's Chief Negotiator, David Frost, negotiators from the UK and the EU held discussions in London on 8-10 September 2020. There were substantive discussions on almost all issues.

Discussions covered all workstreams including:

- Trade in goods: Core areas of the goods elements of the FTA, including the UK's regulatory regime on SPS and proposals for Product Specific Rules of Origin.
- Trade in services, investment and other FTA issues: Including professional qualifications, investment, telecommunications and intellectual property (including geographical indications).
- Fisheries: Quota-sharing and stock lists.
- "Level playing field": Covering subsidies, tax and dispute settlement.
- Energy: Including civil nuclear cooperation, nuclear safety and electricity trading.
- Transport: Road haulage standards, aviation security and Air Traffic Management (ATM).
- Law enforcement: Including Mutual Legal Assistance, Prum, extradition, and criminal records exchange.
- Mobility and social security coordination: Social security coordination arrangements.
- Participation in Union programmes: financial management, EGNOS (European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service), EU SST (Space Surveillance and Tracking) and Peace+.

These were useful exchanges. However, a number of challenging areas remain and the divergences on some are still significant. We have been consistently clear from the start of this process about the basis on which agreement is possible between us and these fundamentals remain.

We remain committed to working hard to reach agreement by the middle of October, as the Prime Minister set out in his statement of 7 September. Negotiators have agreed to

meet again, as planned in line with the Terms of Reference, in Brussels this week to continue discussions.

HOME OFFICE

■ Violence

The Minister of State for Crime, Policing and the Fire Service (Kit Malthouse): **[\[HCWS450\]](#)**

Every knife crime is a tragedy, and any victim is one too many. The Government is taking action on every level to cut crime and make our streets safer, but we know there is much more to do to protect the public and end the scourge of serious violence.

The case for urgent action is clear. In the year to March 2020 alone 256 people were stabbed to death in England and Wales. Recorded knife crime rose to 46,265 in the same period, with a staggering 4,547 weapons offences committed by children last year. Thousands of people are seeking hospital treatment for stab wounds each year, with some offences never reported.

To save lives and prevent injury we must stop serious violence from happening in the first place. Too many people who carry knives and weapons go on to offend time and time again, with 29% of offenders in 2019 having previous convictions. Our determination to break this deadly cycle of persistent offending led to our manifesto commitment to introduce Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs).

Front line police have long told us that stop and search is a vital tool to crack down on violent crime; it acts as a deterrent and helps keep knives and weapons off our streets. We have listened to them, and to the recommendation of the Centre for Social Justice, to propose a new court order to bear down on known offenders. These SVROs would give the police personalised powers to target those already convicted of certain knife offences – giving them the automatic right to search those who pose the greatest risk. These searches could take place without suspicion so that these known criminals could be stopped at any time.

The intention is for SVROs to complement existing stop and search powers and to prevent known offenders carrying weapons with impunity. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, a court would have the power to impose them following conviction for any relevant offence. They could then set the length of the order, which would apply from the moment the offender walked free, either while on licence or where there was no immediate jail time. The offender would then be more likely to be stopped by the police and searched to see if they are carrying a knife again. If caught out they would be brought back before the court where they could expect to receive a custodial sentence under the existing ‘two strikes’ legislation brought in by the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.

SVROs would empower the police to stop and challenge those who are known to carry knives. They will help to keep communities safer by giving officers a tool to help tackle the most dangerous offenders.

The Government hopes that they will also help the police more effectively target their approach. We know that stop and search disproportionately affects Black people, with the latest figures showing they are 9.7 times more likely to be stopped than those who were White. We are clear that no one should ever be targeted because of the colour of their skin.

We are consulting on the design of SVROs and welcome views on how we can ensure these important tools are used appropriately. Anyone with an interest in this important issue is invited to contribute, including those involved in law enforcement, victims of knife crime and their families.

This consultation will help inform our next steps in the fight against serious violence. It will run from Monday 14 September to Sunday 8 November, and will be available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/serious-violence-reduction-orders>

I will also place a copy of the consultation document in the Libraries of both Houses.