



This report shows written answers and statements provided on 24 September 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:30 P.M., 24 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

#### ■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

**Alexander Stafford:**

[91743]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on funding for (a) projects for deploying hydrogen in shipping and (b) a roll-out of electric charging points in ports.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

My Rt. Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not held any discussions with my Rt. Hon. Friend Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer in relation to these specific issues.

There are however regular discussions between BEIS, the Department for Transport and HM Treasury officials in relation green shipping, including the deployment of alternative fuels such as hydrogen, and the provision of shore power in UK Ports.

**Alexander Stafford:**

[91745]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to create a new ministerial responsibility within his Department to support the mining sector.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Government recognises and values the importance of mining as a foundation industry serving a number of other vital industrial activities, and therefore this sector is covered by the responsibilities of my Hon. Friend the Minister for Business and Industry.

#### ■ Carbon Emissions

**Layla Moran:**

[91716]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make an assessment of the UK's historic carbon emissions.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

BEIS publishes estimates of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK each year, with historical data on a consistent basis. The latest estimates going back to 1990 and including a provisional 2019 estimate can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-2019>. They show that an estimated 435 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO<sub>2</sub>e) were emitted in 2019 in the UK, down from 794 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 1990.

In addition, estimates of carbon dioxide emissions in the UK since 1970 are available in table 4 in the data tables accompanying the final 2018 greenhouse gas estimates:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions->

[national-statistics-1990-to-2018](#). The estimates for 1970 to 1989 do not include all of the sources of carbon dioxide emission included for 1990 onwards and estimates for other greenhouse gases are not available before 1990.

#### ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Apprentices

**Robert Halfon:** [\[91617\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department is making on meeting the 2.3 per cent public sector apprenticeship target; and when his Department will meet that target.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Department gives full regard to the public sector apprenticeship target. The Department, and each of the Executive Agencies that contribute to our target, have apprenticeship plans that focus on specific capability needs and skills.

Departmental progress towards the 2.3% target is published annually on GOV.UK.

Data for 2017-18 is published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-apprenticeship-data-2017-to-2018>.

Data for 2018-19 is published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-apprenticeship-data-2018-to-2019>.

Data for 2019-20 will be published at the end of September 2020.

We are committed to increasing the number of apprentices and we are working towards the 2.3% target. The impact of the current pandemic has slowed recruitment due to priority work and logistics. With the current strategy and targets coming to an end in April 2021, the Department is already focusing on how best to support the apprenticeship agenda and drive forward apprentice recruitment.

#### ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Carbon Emissions

**Paula Barker:** [\[91183\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will place in the Library his Department's plan to reduce its carbon emissions.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

Work is in progress to reduce the Department's carbon emissions and become net zero in the earliest possible timeframe, and by 2050 at the latest. BEIS has already reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 65% from a 09/10 baseline.

#### ■ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: Sustainable Development

**Paula Barker:** [\[91179\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what consultative arrangements are in place between trade unions and his Department to discuss sustainability issues at his Department.

**Nadhim Zahawi:**

The Department has a range of consultative practices in place to ensure regular and meaningful engagement with our Departmental Trade Unions on internal policy matters, including sustainability considerations.

**Fossil Fuels****Nadia Whittome:**[\[92952\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to Government criteria on corporate sponsors for COP26, whether he plans to exclude companies involved in the extraction and production of fossil fuels as potential sponsors for that conference.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

We are looking to partner with organisations at COP26 with strong climate credentials, particularly those who have set ambitious net zero commitments by 2050 or earlier, with a credible short term action plan to achieve this (e.g. Science Based Targets). We conduct due diligence on all potential sponsors, and will ensure compliance with rigorous government standards.

You can find details about sponsorship on the COP26 website here.

**Infrastructure: Carbon Emissions****Layla Moran:**[\[91714\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to account for carbon emissions in the UK's overseas infrastructure projects.

**Kwasi Kwarteng:**

The Department spends overseas development assistance (ODA) on infrastructure programmes through its International Climate Finance (ICF).

The aim of the ICF is to support developing countries to respond to the challenges and opportunities of climate change, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions through initiatives such as the UK Sustainable Infrastructure Programme. All ICF programmes are assessed against an analytical framework which includes taking account of the impact on emissions in developing countries. The latest ICF results publication estimates that across HMG, ICF programmes have reduced or avoided 31 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions between 2011/12 and 2019/20, and will deliver much greater savings over their lifetimes (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-finance-results>).

**Post Office: Subsidies****Marion Fellows:**[\[91668\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much of the public subsidy to Post Office Ltd was spent on operations in (a) Scotland, (b) England, (c) Wales and (d) Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

**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 amount of public subsidy given to Post Office Ltd. to use for operations across the UK are operational matter for Post Office Limited.

**■ Redundancy: Yorkshire and the Humber****Jon Trickett:**[\[90939\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate the Insolvency Service has made of the number of employees notified in HR1 forms as being at risk of redundancy in (a) West Yorkshire and (b) Yorkshire and the Humber since March 2020.

**Paul Scully:**

The Insolvency Service's Redundancy Payments Service collects HR1 data and shares it with Government Departments and Agencies which provide support for redundant employees and the unemployed. HR1s are submitted by employers where there is a proposal to make 20 or more redundancies at an establishment. HR1s may include proposed dismissals due to changes to terms and conditions or a proposed relocation of employees which may not necessarily result in any redundancies.

The HR1s received detail a maximum number of potentially affected employees and the Insolvency Service makes no estimations from the HR1 returns of the number of employees that may be at risk in any particular location .

**■ Travel Agents: Coronavirus****Nickie Aiken:**[\[91156\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 87582 on Travel Agents: Coronavirus, what support his Department is providing to travel agents whose focus is on inbound travel from (a) the US and (b) other countries.

**Paul Scully:**

The Government recognises the travel sector has been particularly hard hit by COVID-19, and we know quarantine measures are having an impact on inbound travel, but the measures are necessary to mitigate the risk of imported cases.

Businesses in the travel sector whose focus is on inbound travel have access to the Government extensive support package previously mentioned, including the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme, the business interruption loan schemes, VAT deferrals and cash grants of up to £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.



**CABINET OFFICE****■ Cabinet Office: Apprentices****Robert Halfon:****[91613]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress his Department is making on meeting the 2.3 per cent public sector apprenticeship target; and when his Department will meet that target.

**Julia Lopez:**

As of 31 March 2020, the Civil Service has achieved a total of 2.1% of its total workforce as apprentices. Since 1 April 2020, Cabinet Office has achieved c.1% apprentice starts representing more apprentice starts at this stage in the financial year than in previous years. We run regular recruitment campaigns for apprentices; with a new campaign being advertised this week. The data for 2018/19 can be found [here](#). The data for 2019/20 will be released on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) by the end of September 2020.

Departments are committed to increasing the number of apprentices across the Civil Service and continue to work towards the 2.3% target. The current pandemic has had an impact on the Cabinet Office's apprenticeship ambition due to priority work and logistics. With the current strategy and targets coming to an end in April 2021, the Civil Service is already focusing on how to continue to support the apprenticeship agenda and drive forward apprenticeship recruitment, pulling on the Plan for Jobs initiative and considering the current economic situation.

**■ Cabinet Office: Correspondence****Catherine West:****[91112]**

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what his Department's average reply time has been for ministerial letters in each of the last five months.

**Julia Lopez:**

Correspondence is a vitally important interface with members of the public, Members of Parliament and Peers, and should be given the highest priority.

The Government attaches great importance to the effective and timely handling of correspondence. Departments have seen a significant increase in correspondence during the pandemic but are required to provide a substantial response to all correspondence from MPs and Peers in 20 days. Departments are not required to keep a record of the average response time. The Cabinet Office responded to 58% of MP and Peer correspondence within 20 days between April - June 2020, and to the remaining correspondence as quickly as possible. Officials are working to improve response time.

**■ Coronavirus: Quarantine****Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[84327\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how many (a) civil service staff and (b) members of the Government have taken time off work to self-isolate (i) in each Department and (ii) at each pay grade.

**Julia Lopez:**

The information requested is not centrally held.

**DEFENCE****■ Shipping: Registration****Luke Pollard:** [\[91720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what restrictions are in place on the use of the term HMS when naming a boat.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[92890\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to tackle the unauthorised use of the term HMS.

**James Heappey:**

In UK Government usage, the term 'Her Majesty's Ship' is reserved to ships, submarines and establishments of the Royal Navy, in commission.

The Ministry of Defence does not regulate the use of names or prefixes for ships or boats not operated by the Department.

**■ Yemen: Military Intervention****Emily Thornberry:** [\[91595\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September to Question 86598, in respect of the 33 allegations entered into the MOD tracker and awaiting assessment, (a) whether that assessment is now complete, (b) whether the incidents were evaluated under the revised methodology to consider whether they constituted possible violations of international humanitarian law, and (c) if he will publish the results of that evaluation.

**James Heappey:**

Of the 33 allegations awaiting assessment, 30 have been assessed. All were evaluated using the revised methodology. Publication of specific information about these assessments is being withheld for the purposes of safeguarding national security and/or because its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and another State/other States.

**Emily Thornberry:**[\[91596\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September to Question 86598, on what dates his Department began and ended its evaluation of the 316 credible incidents entered into the MOD tracker,; and what estimate he has made of the number of hours allocated to the evaluation of those 316 incidents within that period.

**James Heapey:**

The evaluation of the 316 credible allegations entered in the Ministry of Defence tracker using a revised methodology began after the Court of Appeal's decision was handed down on 20 June 2019. The assessments were concluded by 22 May 2020. No records have been kept of how many hours were allocated to this process. Each allegation was subject to expert analysis based on the information available.

**DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT**■ **Broadband: Stoke on Trent****Jonathan Gullis:**[\[89875\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking increase the availability of full fibre broadband in Stoke-on-Trent.

**Matt Warman:**

Good progress has been made in the Stoke-on-Trent North constituency, with over 99% of premises in the constituency able to access superfast broadband. This is up from 73% in March 2013. Gigabit-capable coverage in the constituency stands at 8%.

There is an active Local Full Fibre Network Project (LFFN) taking place in Stoke-on-Trent with around 110km of new fibre network being built with the aim of creating 100% city wide full fibre connectivity. DCMS have invested over £9 million into this project with a supplier also contributing. There is a video which gives an overview of this Government funded project in Stoke here: <https://vimeo.com/368247591>

On top of that, 25 premises took advantage of our recently closed Gigabit Voucher Scheme in the area.

For those premises that are still struggling with slow speeds, there are a number of options available to them. DCMS runs another voucher scheme that can be used by rural communities across the UK to reduce the cost of installing gigabit-capable connectivity. This provides a voucher worth up to £3,500 for eligible small businesses and vouchers worth up to £1,500 for residents. However, Staffordshire County Council have recently committed to “top up” these voucher values investing £1m of funding in addition to eligible funding from the Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme. This means that in rural areas of Staffordshire, residents can get a voucher of up to £3,500 and small businesses a voucher of up to £5,500.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

**Tracy Brabin:**

[\[92851\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of the ending of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme on levels of employment in the (a) digital, (b) culture, (c) media and (d) sport sectors.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

DCMS has undertaken a survey and review of the impact of coronavirus on businesses and organisations. The second round of findings on this was published on 23rd September. This review found that the proportion of organisations with over 50% of employees furloughed is 38% for digital, 24% for culture, 25% for media and 28% for sport.

46% of respondents to the DCMS business survey said they have furloughed at least one employee in response to the Coronavirus outbreak. 42% of respondents with at least one employee currently furloughed reported that they expected to make further redundancies once the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) ends.

## ■ Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Apprentices

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[91624\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what progress his Department is making on meeting the 2.3 per cent public sector apprenticeship target; and when his Department will meet that target.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

As of 31 March 2020, the Civil Service has achieved a total of 2.1% of its total workforce as apprentices against the legislative target for the public sector of 2.3% by March 2021. DCMS has achieved 1.9% apprentices of the total staff employed within the department. We are reviewing our departmental apprenticeship strategy and are working to achieve the target for 2020/21 through a mixture of new appointments and development opportunities for existing staff. Given this target is a percentage of the total workforce the percentage changes in line with workforce fluctuations over time therefore making it challenging to predict when a department will meet it. The data for 2018/19 can be found [here](#). The data for 2019/20 will be released on [gov.uk](#) by the end of September 2020.

Departments are committed to increasing the number of apprentices across the Civil Service and continue to work towards the 2.3% target. The impact of the current pandemic has slowed recruitment due to priority work and logistics. With the current strategy and targets coming to an end in April 2021, the Civil Service is already focusing on how to continue to support the apprenticeship agenda and drive forward apprenticeship recruitment, pulling on the Plan for Jobs initiative and considering the current economic situation.

**■ DVDs and Film: Internet****Sarah Champion:**[\[90135\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals in line with New Zealand legislation extending regulation of classification of films and DVDs to online streaming platforms from 2021.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

The Government will continue to unlock the huge opportunities presented by digital technologies while seeking to minimise the risks to online consumers. While adoption of the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) best practice age ratings by online platforms is currently voluntary, we welcome Netflix's commitment to work towards complete coverage of its content under the BBFC's ratings and support the BBFC's drive to encourage other Video On Demand platforms to follow suit. By doing so, this will provide consumers with well recognised age ratings and consumer advice.

**■ Internet: Children****Jo Stevens:**[\[91080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of Apple's proposed decision to enable DNS-over-HTTPS (DoH) in the upcoming updates for iOS and MacO on parents ability to keep their children safe online.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

We are aware of ongoing developments relating to the DNS over HTTPS protocol and are working with industry and other key stakeholders to understand potential unintended consequences arising from its implementation. We are working closely with a wide range of relevant stakeholders to ensure that new technologies do not compromise the safety of children online.

**■ Internet: Safety****Jo Stevens:**[\[91079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with (a) Apple, (b) Google (c) Microsoft and (d) Mozilla on (i) new DNS over HTTPS protocol and (ii) the online safety and security of UK citizens.

**Caroline Dinenage:**

We are aware of ongoing developments relating to the DNS over HTTPS protocol and are working with industry and other key stakeholders to understand potential unintended consequences arising from its implementation.

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with industry and other stakeholders on a range of issues, including online safety. Details of Ministerial meetings are published quarterly on the Gov.uk website.

**■ Music: Coronavirus****Conor McGinn:**[\[89759\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to help non-profit community clubs manage the safe return of live entertainment, following the resumption from 15 August 2020 of socially-distanced indoor performances in England.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

On 9 July we published guidance for people who work in performing arts, including arts organisations, venue operators and participants which will help people understand how they can work and take part in the performing arts safely, and keep their audiences safe.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 9 September, our guidance was updated to require that people must not meet socially in groups of more than 6. This will apply indoors and outdoors.

Venues such as theatres, concert halls and other entertainment venues that are already able to host larger numbers, and are Covid secure in line with the relevant guidance, will continue to be able to do so. As part of these changes venues and organisers will need to ensure that the gatherings limit of 6 is not exceeded and that groups are kept separate from one another to ensure they do not mix and do not exceed the new legal limits. Venues and organisers will also have a clear duty to ensure their premises are COVID-19 Secure.

**Conor McGinn:**[\[89760\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions his Department has had with the Committee of Registered Clubs Associations and its affiliates on managing the safe return of live entertainment during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

Ministers and officials have regular meetings and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders on a variety of issues.

We have worked closely with stakeholders through both the Visitor Economy and Events & Entertainment Working Groups to develop Covid-19 Secure reopening guidance for providers of live entertainment. We continue to meet with sector representatives to discuss the specific issues impacting the full return of live entertainment.

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**[\[90027\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will make (a) instrumental musical tuition and (b) choir practices exempt from the limit of six persons meeting together during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Caroline Dinéage:**

As of 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this

is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than six at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than six (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.

We will continue to work with the Performing Arts sector to understand how the new regulations affect those engaging in activity. We have always been clear that the easing of restrictions depends on the prevalence of COVID-19.

### ■ Religious Hatred: Internet

**Jonathan Gullis:**

[\[89876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps his Department is taking to tackle (a) anti-semitism and (b) islamophobia online.

**Caroline Dinenge:**

The Government is absolutely clear that there is no place for hateful content online. In April 2019 the Government published the Online Harms White Paper setting out our plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place to be online. In February 2020 the Initial Government Response to the consultation was published indicating the direction of travel for the legislation. The Full Government Response detailing proposals for the legislation will be published later this year.

Government recognises that incidents of online hate crime are becoming more prevalent and we are taking action to tackle the issue. We allocated £200,000 for a new national police hub to tackle the emerging threat of online hate crimes which went live in January 2018. We have been supporting initiatives specific to tackling islamophobia and anti-semitism. We have committed £100,000 for the Antisemitism Policy Trust to support their work to tackle online antisemitism, and acknowledge this as a growing area of concern. We have also supported Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Attacks) with just over £2.8m between 2016 and 2020 to monitor and combat anti-Muslim hatred (including online).

### ■ Remembrance Day: Coronavirus

**Sir Desmond Swayne:**

[\[90930\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether (a) outdoor Remembrance Sunday and (b) other outdoor remembrance services will be exempt from the rule of six covid-19 regulations; and if he will make statement.

**Caroline Dinenge:**

DCMS is only responsible for organising and delivering the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Whitehall on 8 November.

We have taken advice from Public Health England on the appropriate controls and mitigations to ensure safe social distancing and we will continually review the

situation seeking advice from health experts and making necessary changes where and when required.

Those organising local Remembrance Sunday events across the UK should follow the guidance on outdoor events prepared and issued by the Events Industry Forum, with input from DCMS and in consultation with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive. This guidance can be found [here](#). The Local Government Association has also issued guidance for local authorities about outdoor events [here](#).

**Tom Tugendhat:** **[92810]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will issue guidance on the safe holding of Remembrance Sunday events in 2020 in the context of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr John Whittingdale:**

DCMS is responsible for organising the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Whitehall on 8 November. We have taken advice from Public Health England on the appropriate mitigations to ensure social distancing and we will continue to review the situation and take advice from experts as necessary.

Those organising Remembrance Sunday events should follow the guidance on outdoor events prepared and issued by the Events Industry Forum, with input from DCMS and in consultation with Public Health England and the Health and Safety Executive. This guidance can be found [here](#). The Local Government Association has also issued guidance for local authorities about outdoor events [here](#).

## EDUCATION

### ■ Assessments

**Rachael Maskell:** **[92816]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in reference to a letter of 18 June 2020 from the Secretary of State to the Chief Regulator of Ofqual, what the evidential basis is for the statement that exams are the best fairest form of assessment.

**Rachael Maskell:** **[92818]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the oral Answer of 7 September 2020 by the Minister for School Standards, Official Report, column 350, what comparative assessment he has made of the effectiveness of (a) continuous assessment, (b) coursework and (c) exams in assessing student's performance.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department reformed GCSEs and A levels from 2011 to be in line with the highest performing education systems. We consulted widely with schools, colleges, universities and employers, both on the principles for reform and the detail of the content of individual subjects, to help them prepare for their introduction. The move to a linear exams system encourages a deeper understanding of the material and



facilitates greater preparation for further study, rather than a focus on preparing for module resits.

The independent qualifications regulator, Ofqual, advised that non-exam assessment (NEA) should only be used when it is the only valid way to assess essential elements of the subject. For example, NEA is still required in modern foreign languages (the speaking assessment) and in art and design.

Research suggests that there is evidence that students' characteristics can influence teacher judgements. We therefore continue to believe that exams are the best and fairest way of judging students' performance. Following the difficulties experienced with awarding grades without exams this summer, we are determined that exams should go ahead next year.

The Department will continue to work with school and college stakeholders, Ofqual and the exam boards, to ensure that exams in 2021 are fair and proceed smoothly.

## ■ Children and young people: Mental Health Services

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[91686]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he makes of the change in demand for (a) children's social care and (b) children and adolescent mental health services since schools returned for the autumn term.

**Vicky Ford:**

The department has been working closely with local authorities to assess the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, setting up dedicated regional teams that are in frequent contact. Bringing together expertise from across the department, these teams monitor the challenges local authorities are facing, including any increases in demand and can provide support and guidance where appropriate.

We are also monitoring referrals to children's services via our regional teams and via the Vulnerable Children and Young People survey, which collects data fortnightly from local authorities in England. The latest release is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vulnerable-children-and-young-people-survey>.

The next wave of data will be published on 14 October 2020 and will include data from the period since schools returned for the autumn term.

The government has provided £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures, including in children's services.

We will continue to work closely with local authorities as the COVID-19 outbreak progresses and for the upcoming Spending Review on long-term funding decisions.

**■ Children's Centres: Coronavirus****Tulip Siddiq:** [\[91689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of (a) children's centres and (b) Sure Start centres are open during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

The decision whether to keep Sure Start children's centres open in response to COVID-19 is one for local authorities. Data on the number of children's centres open during the COVID-19 outbreak is held at a local level.

Data on Sure Start children's centres sites is supplied by local authorities via the department's Get Information about Schools (GIAS) database portal at:

<https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk>.

Local authorities are required to update their children's centre records on a regular basis to reflect any permanent changes that they make to their children's centre provision. However, the GIAS does not provide facility for local authorities to report temporary closures.

**■ Department for Education: Apprentices****Robert Halfon:** [\[91620\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department is making on meeting the 2.3 per cent public sector apprenticeship target; and when his Department will meet that target.

**Gillian Keegan:**

The department is maintaining a strong performance on its internal apprenticeship programme, having met the 2.3 per cent public sector target for the past 3 years. We are confident that we will meet this target again in 2020/21 by the end of the financial year.

We have made plans for the department to support the government's Plan for Jobs through 4 external apprentice recruitment campaigns that will close on 30 September. We are piloting a new approach to external recruitment for junior roles from 1 September to 31 December – all of these vacancies will be advertised as apprenticeships.

**■ Department for Education: Equality****Neil O'Brien:** [\[92888\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people his Department and its agencies employ in teams working on issues relating to diversity, equality or inclusion.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department currently has eight employees in central teams who work directly on issues relating to diversity, equality and inclusion. We do not, however, hold data on

further teams across the Department who might work on these issues as part of their wider role.

## ■ Educational Institutions: Coronavirus

**Tracy Brabin:**

[88922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to support youth educational organisations resume courses that include overnight stays during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

As of 4 July, providers offering out of school activities to children, such as youth educational organisations, have been able to open for both indoor and outdoor provision with safety measures in place. Providers are also able to resume non-overnight domestic educational visits, and the Department has updated our protective measures guidance for these providers to support them to do so as safely as possible. The guidance is available at:

<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>.

The Department continues to advise against domestic overnight or overseas educational visits, and residential provision, for the time-being. This is consistent with the latest government guidance for accommodation providers, which advises that you should not stay overnight away from your home with members of more than one other household. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-advice-for-accommodation-providers>. We continue to keep this position under review; and will continue to be guided by the best scientific and medical advice, to ensure that the right decisions are taken at the right time.

The Government has also made financial support available to employers and the self-employed, including sole traders and limited company directors. Youth educational organisations that have been adversely affected by COVID-19 can find out what financial support is available for their business at: <https://www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder>. They may be eligible for tax relief, loans or cash grants depending on their circumstances.

## ■ Foster Care: Coronavirus

**Daisy Cooper:**

[92897]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of the Fostering Network's proposal for an additional payment of £50 a week to foster carers to offset the extra expenses of food, education equipment and utility bills during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

The COVID-19 outbreak has brought unprecedented challenges to some foster families. That is why we launched a new FosterlinePlus service in June, which

provides free access to a range of specialist one-to-one support and advice services for foster families experiencing difficulties.

The government issued over £3.7 billion of additional funding to support local authorities in meeting COVID-19 related pressures, including within children's social care. Fostering services have been working proactively to ensure that foster families remain together, and to maximise existing capacity, by providing additional resources and funding to families locally, where necessary. The department delegates the responsibility of allocating allowance according to local fostering services.

I remain committed to taking the necessary action to ensure that foster parents receive the respect and support that they need and deserve. I want to drive forward change to empower foster carers and to ensure that they can continue with their invaluable role in protecting our most vulnerable children.

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

Our latest guidance for fostering services can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-childrens-social-care-services/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-childrens-social-care>.

#### ■ Free School Meals

**Tulip Siddiq:**

**[91685]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the number of children who have become eligible for free school meals since March 2020.

**Vicky Ford:**

The number of children eligible for free school meals at each school is provided to the department in the school census. The last census was held in Spring 2020 and the next census will be held in October 2020. The data requested is, therefore, not yet available.

#### ■ Free School Meals: Voucher Schemes

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[91162]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 15 September 2020 to Question 86171, when the Government plans to publish the outcome of its assessment of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

**Vicky Ford:**

Last year, we commissioned Ecorys to carry out an independent evaluation of our 2019 Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

The completion and publication of the final report has been delayed, due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. We continue to work with Ecorys on this and their report will be published at the earliest opportunity.

#### ■ **GCE A-level: Assessments**

**Rachael Maskell:** [\[92824\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he requested data on the effect of the algorithm generated 2020 A-level results on the attainment gap between the date his Department received those results results and the publication of those results.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department was made aware of provisional data showing the impact of the proposed awarding process on attainment gaps between different groups of students shortly before Ofqual published those data in July 2020. The provisional data showed that there would generally be no widening of the gaps in attainment between different groups of students as a result of the proposed awarding process. The Department was provided with finalised data shortly before A and AS level results day as part of the standard pre-release of results, and this confirmed that this position had not changed.

#### ■ **Holiday Play Schemes: Free School Meals**

**Christian Wakeford:** [\[91203\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment the Government has made of the effectiveness of the pilot Summer 2020 Holiday Activities and Food programme; and whether he plans to roll that programme out across the UK.

**Vicky Ford:**

This summer, our £9 million Holiday Activities and Food Programme worked across 17 local authority areas, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities and building on the success of the 2018 and 2019 programmes. Future policy and spending decisions will be set following completion of the current Spending Review.

Our evaluation of the 2018 and 2019 programme will be published in due course.

#### ■ **Local Government and Schools: Coronavirus**

**Louise Haigh:** [\[86695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to support (a) schools and (b) local councils where incidents of covid-19 occur.

**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 includes guidance for how schools should manage confirmed cases of COVID-19 amongst the school community, and contain any outbreak. Schools must take swift action when they become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for COVID-19 and should contact the local health protection team. This team will also contact schools directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 attended the school – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

The health protection team will work with schools in this situation to guide them through the actions they need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, schools must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. The health protection team will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. For individuals or groups of self-isolating pupils, remote education plans should be in place.

#### ■ Pupils: Coronavirus

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[81553\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) reception, (b) Year 1 and (c) Year 6 students have tested positive for covid-19 since 1 June 2020.

**Sir Mark Hendrick:** [\[81554\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of (a) teachers and (b) auxiliary school staff that tested positive for covid-19 from March to July 2020.

**Nick Gibb:**

Keeping close track of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools is a priority for the Government. The Department collects data on daily suspected COVID-19 related absences as well as data on the number of schools that have indicated they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment measures. However it is not possible to extrapolate from this the number of confirmed positive cases.

Public Health England (PHE) collects data on infection, incidence and COVID-19 cases overall. PHE publishes data on COVID-19 incidents by institution, including educational settings, which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports> (page 20). The data are not broken down by year group, nor by profession.

All children, young people, members of staff and their households have access to a test if they are displaying symptoms of coronavirus and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario. Where a positive result is identified local health protection teams will

work with the setting to carry out a rapid risk assessment and advise them of the actions to be taken.

## ■ Schools: Coronavirus

**Ian Lavery:**

**[86056]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional funding from the public purse he plans to make available to schools to enable them to hire more staff so that pupils can work in smaller groups 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 provides 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.

The guidance sets out that the use of small groups can restrict the normal operations of schools, presenting both educational and logistical challenges, so class sizes can return to normal. The overarching principle that schools have been asked to apply is reducing the number of contacts between children and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate in class or year group sized 'bubbles' and through maintaining distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on children's ability to distance, the lay out of the school and the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum.

To implement the required protective measures, schools may also 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. Schools should use their existing resources to make arrangements to welcome all children back.

**Stephen Morgan:**

**[87629]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what additional funding is being provided to schools to ensure that home learning packs are distributed to pupils who are not returning to school during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Stephen Morgan:**

**[87630]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support teachers in the distribution of home learning packs to pupils who are not returning to school during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Nick Gibb:**

Shielding advice for all adults and children was paused on 1 August. We now expect all pupils, in all year groups, to return to school full time for the autumn term. On 2 July, the Department published guidance to support schools to do this. While our aim is to have all pupils back in the classroom, every school will need to plan for the possibility of local restrictions and how they will ensure continuity of education.

The Department is committed to the continuation of high-quality remote education during this difficult time and is supporting schools to ensure that it is aligned to their normal provision for their pupils. We expect schools to have a strong contingency plan for remote education in place by the end of September. We have asked schools to look to align the quality of their existing provision with the expectations set out in the published guidance on curriculum and remote education provision:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-3-curriculum-behaviour-and-pastoral-support>.

We have published a comprehensive range of advice and guidance to support schools. This includes examples of teaching practice during the COVID-19 outbreak, which provides an opportunity for schools to learn from each other's approaches to remote education. It outlines strategies and techniques that have worked for teachers and school leaders and contains information about effective remote provision. This can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-practice-for-schools-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

The guidance also includes examples of how schools can support pupils without internet access by, for example, providing physical work packs, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/remote-education-practice-for-schools-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/providing-physical-work-packs-for-pupils-with-limited-or-no-internet-connection>.

The Government has already invested over £100 million to help schools and young people continue their education at home and access social care services. This includes investment of over £14 million on technical support to give schools access to cloud based education platforms, nearly £6 million to support a new EdTech demonstrator school network, and over £85 million to provide laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to young people who would not otherwise have access. 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. These should be used to enable disadvantaged children in years 3 to 11 to continue to access remote education.

The Department has also supported sector-led initiatives, like Oak National Academy, which launched on 20 April. By 12 July, 4.7 million unique users had accessed the Oak National Academy website and 16.1 million lessons had been viewed. The



Department has made £4.84 million available for Oak National Academy both for the summer term of the academic year 2019-20, and then for the 2020-21 academic year to provide video lessons for reception up to year 11. This will include specialist content for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Oak will remain a free optional resource for 2020-21.

**Stephen Morgan:**

**[87639]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the availability of covid-19 testing on the requirement of pupils with symptoms to be tested prior to returning to school.

**Nick Gibb:**

The capacity of the NHS Test and Trace system must be protected for those with symptoms of COVID-19. Booking is essential for drive in and walk in test sites, and under 18s must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

In line with our guidance, the home test kits supplied to schools and colleges must be reserved for those who face significant barriers to accessing a test and would not otherwise get tested. The Department of Health and Social Care is emailing all schools and colleges with details of how to access additional test kits. An order may be placed each month for a number of kits proportionate to the number of pupils or students at that school or college. The guidance can be found here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers?utm\\_source=10%20September%202020%20C19&utm\\_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm\\_campaign=DfE%20C19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers?utm_source=10%20September%202020%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19).

No one with symptoms should attend their nursery, school, college or university. In the case of a confirmed positive test for COVID-19, the relevant local health protection team should be contacted immediately. The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment and identify the appropriate next steps.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Autism

**Sir Alan Campbell:**

**[90948]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has provided to schools on supporting autistic children to return to school during the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government recognises the significant challenges the COVID-19 outbreak has presented for autistic children, young people and their families. As I set out in my letter of 2 September to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), their families and carers and those who work to support them, we know that it is critical that all pupils and students can once again benefit from a full-time on-site education 5 days a week. Schools and colleges should ensure that they receive the education, therapeutic or specialist support and reasonable adjustments required for a successful return to school or college. To support this, we have published guidance for the full opening of schools, which is available here:

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

We have also published guidance for the full opening of special schools and other specialist settings, which provides a framework, approved by Public Health England, that sets out the high-level actions that should be taken. and is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings>.

The guidance makes it clear that coproduction and collaboration with families is crucial.

The department funds the Autism Education Trust (AET) to deliver training to education professionals and embed good autism practice in schools and colleges across England. AET has developed a hub of guidance and resources for families, teachers and other professionals aimed at supporting children and young people during the COVID-19 outbreak and in this period of adjustment as they return to school. The guidance is available at:

<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/?s=covid>.

This includes guidance for schools on making appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical strategies for managing increased anxiety, changes in routine and environment and transitions to new settings.

The department has also launched a new programme run by mental health experts, backed by £8 million, to provide schools and colleges across England with the knowledge and access to the resources they need to support children and young people, teachers and parents, if they have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes a focus on the specific mental health and wellbeing needs of children with autism and SEND.

## ■ Special Educational Needs: Finance

**Daisy Cooper:**

**[91160]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of allocating additional money to local authorities in the Comprehensive Spending Review to help ensure the needs of children with education, health and care plans are met.

**Vicky Ford:**

The government is currently providing the biggest increase to schools funding in a decade, with total additional investment of £14 billion across the next 3 years. This includes significant investment in high needs. There has already been a £2.6 billion increase in 2020-21, including £780 million for high needs, and in 2021-22 there will be a further year-on-year increase of £2.2 billion overall, including an additional £730 million for high needs. High needs funding will therefore have increased by £1.5 billion in 2 years. The additional investment in high needs will go directly to local authorities to support children and young people with the most complex special

educational needs and disabilities, including those with education, health and care plans.

Conversations about the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review are currently ongoing, and the department will set out the importance of providing sufficient funding to ensure high quality high needs provision for all children who needs it, as part of these. The results from these discussions will be announced in due course.

**Daisy Cooper:** [\[91161\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish the conclusions of the review on support for children with special educational needs and disabilities that was launched on 6 September 2019.

**Vicky Ford:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 17 September 2020 to Question [87715](#).

#### ■ **Special Educational Needs: Per Capita Costs**

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[91167\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what change there has been in the level of per pupil funding for pupils in special schools in County Durham in each of the last three financial years.

**Vicky Ford:**

Special schools are funded through a combination of place funding and top-up funding from a local authority's high needs budget. The high needs budget is allocated to each local authority who determine funding for special schools in their area. Local authorities also use their high needs budgets to pay top-up funding for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in mainstream schools, and to fund alternative provision. Consequently, the department does not hold data on the level of per pupil funding for pupils in special schools in Durham.

The total high needs allocations for Durham for the past 3 years are as follows:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>HIGH NEEDS FUNDING AMOUNT (TOTAL)</b>
2021-22 (provisional allocation)	£69,364,424
2020-21	£61,157,652
2019-20	£52,502,760
2018-19	£50,003,532

**■ Special Educational Needs: Pupil Exclusions****Tulip Siddiq:** [\[91687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children with SEND were excluded from school in each week since schools returned for the autumn term.

**Vicky Ford:**

Schools and colleges should work with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families and carers so that they receive the education, therapeutic support or specialist support and reasonable adjustments that they need.

The department does not currently hold information related to school exclusions for SEND pupils for this period. This data is collected on a termly basis as part of the school census and released in the annual 'Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England' statistical releases.

As set out in the letter of 2 September to children and young people with SEND, their families and carers and those who work to support them, we know that it is critical that all pupils and students can once again benefit from a full-time on-site education 5 days a week.

The department is introducing intelligence gathering and monitoring processes to identify in real time any changes in the use of exclusions and other disciplinary measures. This includes discussions with stakeholders including Regional School Commissioners, Ofsted and local authorities.

**■ Special Educational Needs: Reviews****Tulip Siddiq:** [\[91688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress has been made on the SEND review since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Vicky Ford:**

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 17 September 2020 to Question [87715](#).

**■ Students: Coronavirus****Ian Lavery:** [\[86054\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what research is being done on younger students spreading covid-19 into the wider community.

**Nick Gibb:**

The Department regularly reviews advice from Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and Public Health England (PHE) to ensure our policies are guided by the most up to date scientific evidence.

Public Health England have published preliminary results of the COVID-19 testing and antibody prevalence surveillance in schools programme (sKIDs), available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/914700/sKIDs\\_Phase1Report\\_01sep2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914700/sKIDs_Phase1Report_01sep2020.pdf).

The report concluded that there was no evidence of an increased risk of COVID-19 infection in students or staff attending school during the summer half term in England, with no secondary cases identified among household or school contacts.

The SAGE sub-group, the Children's Task and Finish Working group, has provided advice that focusses specifically on the transmission of COVID-19 in children and within schools. This has included data from a meta-analysis looking at the susceptibility to and transmission of COVID-19 amongst children and adolescents, available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/903377/S0604\\_Annex\\_A\\_-\\_Update\\_on\\_susceptibility\\_and\\_transmission\\_of\\_SARS-CoV-2\\_by\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903377/S0604_Annex_A_-_Update_on_susceptibility_and_transmission_of_SARS-CoV-2_by_children_and_adolescents.pdf).

SAGE have also considered principles for managing COVID-19 transmission associated with both schools and colleges.

The Rapid Response and the Rapid Rolling Calls, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) are funding studies that aim to make a significant contribution to the understanding, prevention, and management of COVID-19. Two prominent examples include the Coronavirus STORY (Serum Testing of Representative Youngsters) project led by the University of Oxford and in collaboration with Public Health England will study the presence of antibodies against COVID-19 in children and teenagers 0 to 19 years old. The COVID-19 Mapping and Mitigation in Schools (CoMMInS) project led by Bristol University will, over a six-month period, test for infection in schools and test whether staff and pupils have current or past COVID-19 infection.

The UK Chief Medical Officers have also been clear that school attendance is very important for children and young people.

## ■ Teachers: Coronavirus

**Andrew Gwynne:**

**[90066]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to update guidance for schools to ensure that health risks for teachers who shielded during the covid-19 lockdown are minimised.

**Nick Gibb:**

On 2 July the Department 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. This guidance is kept under review and updated as necessary. 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 guidance includes information on school workforces and the public health advice schools must follow to minimise the risks of COVID-19 transmission. The public health advice in the guidance makes up a Public Health England endorsed 'system of controls', building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the COVID-19 outbreak. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced.

Shielding measures were paused from 1 August. Clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable staff are able to return to school. While in school they should follow the advice in the Department's guidance to minimise the risks of transmission. This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distancing where possible.

The Department recommends that school leaders discuss any concerns individuals may have around their particular circumstances and reassure staff about the protective measures in place.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### ■ Air Pollution: Coronavirus

**Barbara Keeley:**

**[92743]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of changes in the level of air pollution during lockdown restrictions due to the covid-19 outbreak; and what steps he is taking to reduce air pollution.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Government is taking a proactive approach to understand the possible links between air quality and COVID-19. That is why, with our Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG), we ran a rapid Call for Evidence to ensure we can more fully understand the impact that COVID-19 is having on air pollutant emissions, concentrations and human exposure. A report was published on 1 July (the report can be found here: [https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/reports.php?report\\_id=1005](https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/reports.php?report_id=1005)) which outlines the findings from this Call for Evidence. The report provides an early snapshot of evidence (pre-April 30th 2020) and is an important component of Defra's response to COVID-19 and strategic leadership to improving air quality in the UK. A detailed follow-up by AQEG in the form of a more traditional review of the peer reviewed evidence will follow when more is known about the impact of the pandemic on air quality.

The National Air Quality Monitoring Network continuously monitors air quality across the UK for a range of pollutants including for key pollutants like nitrogen dioxide and particulates. These networks have provided valuable insights into the impacts COVID-19 has had on air quality throughout this pandemic and continue to provide valuable information to assess air pollution trends.

Our assessment of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and PM2.5 concentrations during the pandemic has shown that:

- Between 23 March and 31 May, NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations were on average 46% lower compared to the 3-year average for the same period in 2017-2019, although there was substantial local level variability - with NO<sub>2</sub> reductions at individual locations ranging from 5 to 68%. Concentrations of other air pollutants, such as particulate matter, have not shown similar trends.
- Since the start of June, we have seen NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations increase slightly as lockdown measures were lifted and traffic activity increased, although on average roadside NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations remain lower than levels observed in the previous 3 years. From 1 June to 16 September 2020, roadside NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations were on average 26% lower compared to the 2017-2019 average for this period, although there continues to be considerable local level variability.
- There has been an impact on PM2.5 concentrations. Between 23 March and 16 September 2020 concentrations of PM2.5 measured by our monitoring network decreased by 15% at urban sites compared to the same period averaged over years 2017-2019. There is substantial local variability, however, with several sites reported increasing concentrations over the period.

Improving air quality remains a top priority for the Government and, especially during these unprecedented times, we will continue to take robust and comprehensive action to improve air quality in the UK and minimise public health impacts. This includes action that Government is taking to deliver our Clean Air Strategy, including through the Environment Bill. We will apply our understanding of the longer-term implications from these unprecedented changes in living and working patterns to delivering our environmental commitments.

#### ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Carbon Emissions

**Paula Barker:**

[\[91184\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will place in the Library his Department's plan to reduce its carbon emissions.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Defra has a number of initiatives to reduce carbon emissions which include:

- Reducing our property footprint
- Generating renewable energy on our properties (such as solar panels) so that they are self-powered as much as possible
- Increasing energy efficiency by increasing insulation, replacing lighting, heating and air handling systems and using modern building management systems to minimise energy consumption
- Offsetting through tree-planting

As well as our internal initiatives, Defra is the Senior Responsible Owner for sustainable information technology (IT) across Government. Our vision for sustainability in Digital, Data and Technology Services (DDTS) is to show leadership and expertise as a “Centre of Excellence”. We have worked with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as a centre of excellence in sustainable IT, to help 200,000 businesses with their net zero targets:

<https://defradesa.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/14/working-towards-achieving-a-sustainable-future-defra-unfccc/>

Our current commitments for carbon reduction are published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greening-government-commitments-2018-to-2019-annual-report>. These will be updated for the next four years in April 2021 and they will set out our targets up until 2025.

Our DDTS have set out the Defra Group sustainable IT strategy to 2025. This is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-group-sustainable-information-technology-it-strategy>

We are currently finalising our bid for funding under SR20. Once we know Defra’s settlement, we will be updating our plans to further reduce our carbon emissions over the next four years.

## ■ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: Sustainable Development

**Paula Barker:** [\[91180\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to discuss sustainability at his Department with civil service unions.

**Victoria Prentis:**

As with any plans that will impact on the way we work, we will be discussing these with staff and unions. This is because, in order to tackle the sustainability challenge, we need the support and engagement of all of our employees.

In addition to our internal engagement, as Senior Responsible Owner for Sustainable Information Technology (IT) Across Government and in partnership with the UNFCCC, we’ve produced learning and development material for 400,000 civil servants across Government, which we’ve also shared globally through the United Nations.

## ■ Fish: Sales

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91145\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sales notes were submitted (a) outside and (b) inside the statutory deadlines in 2019 for fish landed by UK vessels within the Marine Management Organisation's (i) south east and (ii) east marine districts.



**Luke Pollard:** [\[91146\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sales notes were submitted (a) outside and (b) within the statutory deadlines in 2019 for fish landed by UK vessels in England.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91147\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sales notes were submitted (a) outside and (b) within the statutory deadlines in 2018 for fish landed by UK vessels in England.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91148\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether the Marine Management Organisation always records as first sales the fish landed in England and transported subsequently for onward sale abroad or whether there are circumstances when any such sales abroad are not recorded by the Marine Management Organisation as first sales.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The following table provides data on the numbers of sales notes submitted inside and outside of statutory deadlines:

	SALES NOTES SUBMITTED WITHIN STATUTORY DEADLINES	SALES NOTES SUBMITTED OUTSIDE STATUTORY DEADLINES
<b>2018 (England total)</b>	55505	85687
<b>2019 (England total)</b>	55291	88482
<b>2019 (South East District)</b>	12977	28330
<b>2019 (East District)</b>	4209	9563

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) undertakes desk-based checks of sales notes submitted, working with industry to support the submission of timely and accurate data. Where consistent failure to submit data in a timely manner occurs the MMO also has powers to take enforcement action. Since 2018, checks undertaken by the MMO have resulted in action being taken against 178 merchants for late submissions, failure to submit and inaccurate submissions.

The MMO has also launched an initiative to increase understanding among fishermen in England of the benefits to the industry of individual fishermen and merchants submitting timely and accurate data. The additional support and assurance being offered by the MMO seeks to assist the industry in meeting its legal responsibilities to submit sales data on time.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many sales notes were submitted with incomplete data for fish landed by UK vessels in 2019 in England.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The information requested is not held centrally and to obtain it would incur disproportionate costs.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91150\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of registered buyers with an ESR number submitted sales note data electronically in accordance with EU regulations in 2019.

**Victoria Prentis:**

For sales notes submitted in 2019, 63 merchants would have been required to submit these electronically as they had a turnover of 200,000 Euros for the financial year 2017/18. Of these, 91% submitted electronically, 1% by paper, and 8% using a combination of both methods.

## ■ Fisheries

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91143\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with reference to the 19 September 2013 European Commission pilot infraction letter to his Department and subsequent correspondence, whether the UK has tackled to the satisfaction of the Commission the lack of control and enforcement of fish catches, landings and sales.

**Luke Pollard:** [\[91144\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential for European Commission infraction of the UK for the lack of control and enforcement of fish catches, landings and sales identified in the 19 September 2013 Commission pilot infraction letter and in subsequent correspondence.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The letter dated 19 September 2013 from the European Commission to Defra raised issues regarding the UK's implementation of the Control Regulation. The UK Fisheries Authorities worked closely together to address the issues noted and undertook a number of actions to resolve the EU's concerns. This included implementing new IT systems and a focused campaign with industry to increase understanding and compliance. This issue was closed to the satisfaction of the Commission in August 2018.

All the Fisheries Administrations continue to work together to ensure compliance with all aspect of fisheries legislation, including control and enforcement of fish catches, landings and sales. At the end of the Transition Period, the UK will once again become an Independent Coastal State, no longer bound by the Common Fisheries

Policy and we will be able to set our own rules on fisheries including control and enforcement.

## ■ Food Supply

**Martyn Day:** [\[91672\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the resilience of the food supply chain after the transition period.

**Martyn Day:** [\[91674\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what plans he has to ensure food supply is maintained in the event of a free trade agreement not being reached with the EU before the end of the transition period.

**Martyn Day:** [\[91676\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment the Government has made of the potential effect of (a) the end of the transition period, (b) the covid-19 outbreak and (c) winter-related absenteeism on the food supply in the UK in winter 2020-21.

**Victoria Prentis:**

The UK has a highly resilient food supply chain. We work closely with food retailers and the food industry to ensure that it is prepared for a range of scenarios. Our thorough preparations for leaving the EU in 2019, alongside the lessons we have learned during the Covid-19 response provide a robust foundation for end of Transition Period planning on food supply.

We are currently working alongside industry and across Government, including with the Devolved Administrations, to plan for the end of this year. This includes responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, associated increases in absenteeism and preparations for the end of the Transition Period. The Government remains committed to negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the EU, but if the transition period ends without a trade agreement in place, there will not be a shortage of food in the UK. Consumers will continue to have access to a wide range of food products.

## ■ Food Supply: Social Services

**Martyn Day:** [\[91673\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential effect on the food supply to the public and private care sectors of a free trade agreement not being reached with the EU before the end of the transition period.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Our thorough preparations for leaving the EU alongside the lessons we have learned during the Covid-19 response provide a robust foundation for end of transition period planning on food supply. We are currently working alongside industry and across

Government including with the devolved administrations to plan for the end of the year.

The Government remains committed to negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU, but if the transition period ends without a trade agreement in place, there will not be a shortage of food in the UK.

My department is working closely with officials in DHSC, as the lead department for public sector food provision for the care sector, providing advice and supporting their engagement with their food suppliers. NHS England and DHSC are engaging with the supply chain for the care sector to ensure their suppliers are fully prepared for the end of the year.

## ■ Game

**Jim Shannon:**

[\[91041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to help shooting organisations meet the growing demand for game meat in the UK.

**Victoria Prentis:**

Game rearing businesses play an important role within our rural economy. While there are no specific schemes to support shooting organisations, I am pleased that there is a growing demand for game meat.

Our new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme will be based on the principle of 'public money for public goods'. It will allow us to provide funding to those who manage land to deliver environmental public goods. This will include shooting estates or other game managers who manage their land in a way that delivers these public goods. Detailed eligibility criteria will be established for ELM as the scheme is developed, working with stakeholders.

## ■ Heather Burning

**Olivia Blake:**

[\[92945\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps (a) his Department and (b) Natural England take to monitor moorland burning; and whether staff from (i) his Department and (ii) Natural England make regular site visits to assess the environmental effect of that burning.

**Rebecca Pow:**

Moorland burning is a legitimate land management practice where it is carried out in accordance with the Heather and Grass Burning (England) Regulations (2007) and in accordance with any requirement for consent from Natural England where the land is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Natural England monitors the condition of SSSIs, which may be affected by burning, through its programme of SSSI condition monitoring. This includes site visits where it is necessary and appropriate.

Reports of burning made to Natural England are followed up to ensure that the activity is being carried out with the appropriate SSSI consent where that is required.

## ■ Water: Environment Protection

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[92858\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of water bodies are in good ecological health in (a) England, (b) Wales, (c) Scotland, and (d) Northern Ireland.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The Environment Agency's latest classification results for England show that 16% of surface water bodies meet the criteria for good ecological status or good ecological potential. We are committed to improving our water with a legally binding target in the Environment Bill and we are making a concerted effort on many fronts. This includes working with water companies who are investing £4.6 billion in improvements, educating and incentivising farmers to reduce harmful run-off and developing a new chemicals strategy.

Water quality in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is a devolved matter.

**Stephanie Peacock:** [\[92859\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many water samples have been taken in each year since 2010.

**Rebecca Pow:**

The numbers of water samples taken each year since 2010 are:

YEAR	NUMBER OF SAMPLES TAKEN
2010	131,602
2011	137,250
2012	155,394
2013	159,737
2014	135,452
2015	122,103
2016	112,022
2017	95,247
2018	87,605
2019	100,037

## FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

■ **China: Foreign Relations****Stephen Kinnock:**[\[91051\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of (a) the UK negotiating with China a similar agreement to the in-principle agreement that the EU has reached with that country whereby British diplomats act as observers in Xinjiang province and (b) British diplomats being included in the EU delegation to that province.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* It would not be appropriate to comment on third party agreements. British diplomats have visited Xinjiang on multiple occasions, most recently in November 2019. The UK has also repeatedly called on China to allow UN experts unfettered access to Xinjiang, including at the most recent session of the UN Human Rights Council in June where we delivered a statement on Xinjiang on behalf of 28 countries.

■ **China: Nuclear Weapons****Anthony Mangnall:**[\[90255\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the US Department of Defense report entitled, Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, published 1 September 2020, what steps the UK is taking to support nuclear arms controls on China.

**Nigel Adams:**

While US and Russian strategic arms are limited by the New START Treaty, China's growing nuclear arsenal is not. We recognise the contribution New START has made to international security by increasing transparency and mutual confidence among the two largest Nuclear Weapons States. We support its continued implementation and have encouraged the US to extend New START while negotiating a successor agreement. However, New START does not place any limits on China's growing nuclear arsenal. We therefore urge China to engage seriously with the US calls for a new trilateral arms control agreement.

■ **China: Uighurs****Siobhain McDonagh:**[\[90937\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support he plans to provide to the independent tribunal on China's alleged genocide against Muslim Uighur population established by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC.

**Nigel Adams:**

We have serious concerns about gross violations of human rights occurring in Xinjiang and welcome any work that is rigorous, balanced and raises awareness of

the situation faced by Uyghurs and other minorities in China. We are aware of this initiative by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, and will study any resulting report carefully.

## ■ Developing Countries: Coronavirus

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[88377\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 September to Question 82263, with reference to the £24 million provided to charities through the Government's partnership with Unilever, how much was allocated to (a) small, (b) medium and (c) large UK-based international development charities.

**Wendy Morton:**

Through the UK Government's partnership with Unilever, the Hygiene, Handwashing and Behaviour Change Coalition for COVID-19, the UK Government has now allocated over £26 million to provide urgent COVID-19 hygiene support to some of the world's most vulnerable people.

Large UK-based charities (organisations with an average annual income of over £10 million for the last three years) have been allocated £11 million of this overall total. Delivery partners were selected through open competition. The remaining £15 million has been disbursed through non-UK-based not-for-profit organisations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

## ■ Developing Countries: Religion

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[86615\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to ensure that UK aid distribution workers that are from religious minorities within the recipient country are not subject to religious discrimination.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government works to ensure that those responsible for the distribution of aid, including religious minorities, do not face discrimination as a result of their faith.

FCDO calls for rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid workers to those in need. We strongly advocate for compliance with International Humanitarian Law and Humanitarian Principles, which serve to protect aid workers and those they seek to assist. International Humanitarian Law states that parties to a conflict must allow humanitarian relief for civilians in need, which is impartial in character and conducted without any adverse distinction. They must not withhold consent to the delivery of aid arbitrarily. Parties to a conflict must not discriminate against aid agencies and/or their personnel delivering aid of this nature because of their faith.

We work to prevent any discrimination against aid agencies and their personnel delivering aid because of their faith. FCDO conducts thorough due diligence assessments of its partners to ensure that they have the ability implement their work without discrimination. We have processes for reporting harassment or discrimination for all of our partners and staff.

**■ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Staff****Rachel Hopkins:** [\[89899\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many of the fixed-term contract staff in his Department have gone through (a) the deep vetting process, (b) language training and (b) other professional training; and what estimate he has made of the cost of each of those processes.

**Nigel Adams:**

The FCDO's vetting provider, UKSV, charges £1371 for an initial DV clearance. A small number of FTC officers hold DV clearance but, for security reasons, we are not able to provide a total figure as this may make individuals identifiable.

Language and professional training information for fixed-term contract staff is not held centrally and to compile this information would incur disproportionate cost. We can however confirm that no fixed-term contract staff have received full-time language training.

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[89902\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he plans to take to ensure that staff in his Department who are non-UK nationals and transferred into his Department as a result of the machinery of Government change will have the same rights and opportunities as other staff.

**Nigel Adams:**

Further work is underway to agree a long term policy for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on reserved and unreserved roles. This will take account of the considerations around reserved posts as set out in the Civil Service Nationality Rules to ensure the FCDO continues to have access to world class talent and provides varied career paths whilst meeting the necessary security and nationality requirements.

**■ Human Rights: Older People****Preet Kaur Gill:** [\[82257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking support proposals for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK is committed to protecting the human rights of all persons, including older persons. We recognise the serious human rights issues that older persons often face in many parts of the world. The UK engages in the annual sessions of the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEGWA), supports resolutions on the rights of older persons at the UN Human Rights Council and at the UN General Assembly, and engages constructively in the debate in other fora. We are supportive, in principle, of a multilateral instrument dedicated to the rights of older persons and welcome OEGWA's work to help deepen our understanding of these important issues, before we consider what might be the most appropriate solution. We will



continue to work closely with academia, civil society and national human rights institutions to draw on their expertise and ensure that our approach takes account of their views.

■ **Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy: Females**

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi:**

[\[92867\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will take steps to ensure that the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy includes (a) women, peace and security and (b) women and girls' rights in (i) conflict and (ii) peacebuilding as key priorities for his Department.

**James Cleverly:**

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is an important component of the UK's work to promote human rights and support sustainable peace processes. In 2020 we celebrate the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This Government will mark the anniversary by calling for renewed commitment by the international community to implement all of the WPS UN Security Council resolutions. Our priorities for the anniversary are to promote women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes and increase support and protection for women resolving conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace at the grassroots level. The cross-government National Action Plan on WPS 2018-2022 outlines our WPS strategy. We continue to prioritise preventive diplomacy and mediation through the UN and push for greater collaboration on peacebuilding amongst international organisations. The evidence is also clear that women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention through to conflict resolution is key to securing sustainable peace. We also continue to drive more concerted, coordinated and scaled-up global action across the international system to prevent gender-based violence in conflict settings.

The Integrated Review and the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) are evidence of the Prime Minister's commitment to a unified British foreign policy that will maximise our influence around the world, ensuring the UK is a force for good in the world. When the Prime Minister launched the Integrated Review, he was clear that it will set out the way in which the UK will be a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation. Our aim continues to be for an ambitious and bold Integrated Review that is guided by the UK's foreign policy, national security and development objectives. Gender equality and women's rights will remain a core part of the Government's mission and it is at the heart of the new FCDO.

■ **Nigeria: Violence**

**Carla Lockhart:**

[\[89882\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help bring about a cessation of violence in southern Kaduna, Nigeria.

**James Duddridge:**

The Government condemns all incidents of intercommunal violence in Nigeria, including recently reported attacks in Kaduna State. Intercommunal violence continues to have a devastating effect on local communities. The causes of intercommunal violence are complex, and include disputes over natural resources, competition over land, and population growth.

We are working with Nigeria to respond to the drivers of conflict. We have provided technical support to the Nigerian Government for the development of the National Livestock Transformation Plan. The plan aims to promote cattle-rearing in one place, rather than the traditional nomadic practice, to limit competition over land and resources leading to violence. The plan is currently being implemented in eight Middle Belt states in Nigeria, including Kaduna. We are also funding Christian Aid and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development to support communities who have recently been displaced due to the violence in Kaduna State. "We are also developing a new conflict, security and justice programme, which aims to reduce levels of inter-communal violence through the development of more effective conflict-management systems."

The British High Commissioner and her team are increasing their engagement with state governments in areas affected by the violence, including through visits to Kaduna, Plateau and Benue states. The High Commission team have met with Governors; Christian and Muslim faith leaders; Fulani communities; NGOs active in reconciliation, and affected communities including displaced persons. I [the Minister for Africa] also discussed intercommunal violence with President Buhari's Chief of Staff in June. We will continue to encourage the Government of Nigeria to take urgent action to protect those at risk of intercommunal violence, to bring perpetrators to justice and to implement long-term solutions that address the root causes of violence and meet the needs of all communities.

**■ Overseas Aid: Nutrition****Mrs Pauline Latham:**[\[91015\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when he plans to publish a response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, Assessing DFID's results in nutrition review, published on 16 September 2020.

**Wendy Morton:**

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs aims to respond to the ICAI review of DFID's results in Nutrition within six weeks of the report's publication date. This is the usual timescale for Government responses to ICAI reviews and will enable the Government to give proper consideration to the report and the recommendations made within it.

## ■ Pakistan: Females

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[91052\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking with his Pakistani counterpart to ensure that police officers in Pakistan are trained to work (a) effectively and (b) sensitively with the parents of abducted girls from a religious minority.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We are working with the Government of Pakistan to strengthen and improve Pakistan's police and judicial systems. The UK's Strengthening Rule of Law in Pakistan programme aims to increase public confidence and trust in the Rule of Law. It focuses on delivering outputs that improve the justice system for victims, witnesses and offenders, including vulnerable women and girls.

**Stephen Kinnock:**

[\[91053\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Pakistani counterpart on ensuring that criminal cases are registered against individuals who (a) kidnap, (b) forcibly convert and (c) forcibly marry girls from religious minorities.

**Nigel Adams:**

The UK Government strongly condemns the forced marriage and forced conversion of women and girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise our concerns about Freedom of Religion or Belief, women and girls' rights and gender equality with the Government of Pakistan at a senior level. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon last raised our human rights concerns with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 27 August. On 8 September, Lord Ahmad discussed our concerns regarding Freedom of Religion or Belief with the Governor of Punjab.

## ■ Poland: Human Rights

**Taiwo Owatemi:**

[\[82476\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the UK Embassy in Poland is taking to help support human rights defenders in that country.

**Wendy Morton:**

Our Embassy in Warsaw actively promotes human rights and helps prevent discrimination. It works closely with human rights defenders, including on media freedom, LGBT rights and freedom of religion or belief. The Embassy has established itself as one of the diplomatic missions in Warsaw that is most active on the LGBT agenda. During last year's Pride season, it brought the diplomatic community in Warsaw together to endorse a joint letter to the Polish Prime Minister expressing support for LGBT equality and respect for human rights. It works with NGOs such as

the Campaign Against Homophobia and Polish Society for Anti-Discrimination Law on projects to improve the situation of LGBT people. The British Ambassador in Warsaw regularly meets Dr Adam Bodnar, Poland's Human Rights Commissioner; we will continue to work with NGOs through the Embassy and through international organisations, including the UN, OSCE, and the Council of Europe, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination.

## ■ River Nile: Floods

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[86610\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department has provided to reduce risks to (a) life, (b) health, (c) homes, (d) livelihoods, and (e) education from flooding of the Nile river system along its course in the last 12 months.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK has responded to flooding along the Nile in Sudan this year and in South Sudan in 2019. In Sudan the UK is providing £25million in 2020 to the UN Sudan Humanitarian Fund to support a range of urgent needs, including flood response. In South Sudan, the UK provided vital support to affected communities including food, clean water and sanitation, disease prevention and shelter, as well as a helicopter to deliver vital supplies to those communities and support to livelihoods recovery.

We also reduce flooding risks through the UK funded Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa programme. This support to the work of meteorological and associated offices across East Africa helps strengthen weather forecasting and early warning, as well as longer term climate forecasts. Access to early warning is one important aspect of building resilience to floods and other climate shocks.

## ■ Rwanda: Females

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[91695\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister at the Liaison Committee on 16 September 2020, HC 744, whether he discussed the provision of Official Development Assistance funding for the Investing In Adolescent Girls in Rwanda project with the Prime Minister.

**James Duddridge:**

Standing up for the right of every girl to 12 years of quality education is a major priority for this Government. Our bilateral programmes and funding to organisations like the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait make the UK a global leader in promoting girls' education. We will soon be publishing a Girls' Education Action Plan, expanding our activity in this area and we will work with countries around the world to do more, to step up, to give every girl access to 12 years of quality education.

The Investing In Adolescent Girls in Rwanda programme was a life skills project not an education project. The difficult decision was taken not to start this project as it had not already commenced. This was part of a wider process of prioritisation of ODA in order to meet new needs created by the pandemic and to manage the impact of COVID-19 on GNI.

The First Secretary and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury oversaw this decision-making, which looked at every strand of the ODA budget. This thorough process has ensured we remain prioritised on poverty reduction for the 'bottom billion', as well as tackling climate change and reversing biodiversity loss, championing girls' education, UK leadership in the global response to COVID-19, and campaigning on issues such as media freedom and freedom of religious belief.

The process and principles were discussed with the Prime Minister and information presented at a strategic level using headline figures. Individual projects were not discussed.

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[91785\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the oral contribution of the Prime Minister at the Liaison Committee on 16 September 2020, when his Department made the decision to discontinue the Investing In Adolescent Girls in Rwanda project.

**James Duddridge:**

Standing up for the right of every girl to 12 years of quality education is a major priority for this Government. Our bilateral programmes and funding to organisations like the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait make the UK a global leader in promoting girls' education. We will soon be publishing a Girls' Education Action Plan, expanding our activity in this area and we will work with countries around the world to do more, to step up, to give every girl access to 12 years of quality education.

The Investing In Adolescent Girls in Rwanda programme was a life skills project not an education project.

Hard decisions were needed through the ODA prioritisation process to meet new needs created by the pandemic and to manage the impact of COVID-19 on GNI.

Over the summer, the First Secretary and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury oversaw this decision-making process, which looked at every strand of the ODA budget. This thorough process has ensured we remain prioritised on poverty reduction for the 'bottom billion', as well as tackling climate change and reversing biodiversity loss, championing girls' education, UK leadership in the global response to Covid-19, and campaigning on issues such as media freedom and freedom of religious belief.

## ■ South China Sea: Shipping

**Anthony Mangnall:**

[\[90257\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to support freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

**Nigel Adams:**

In the South China Sea, our commitment is to international law, particularly the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and to freedom of navigation and overflight. We encourage all parties to settle their disputes peacefully through the existing legal mechanisms, particularly UNCLOS.

Given the importance we attach to UNCLOS, on 3 September, I (Minister Adams) set out in full our legal analysis on the South China Sea for the first time. I (Minister Adams) made clear that the group of rights generally considered under "freedom of navigation", including innocent passage and overflight, apply in the South China Sea, regardless of sovereignty claims. On 16 September, we issued a joint Note Verbale with France and Germany to the UN Secretary General in response to assertions in Chinese Notes Verbale that we consider inconsistent with UNCLOS. We underlined the importance of unhampered freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

As part of the UK's consistent presence in the region, five Royal Navy ships have transited the South China Sea since April 2018, most recently HMS Enterprise in early 2020. These deployments serve to reinforce our commitment to regional security and to upholding UNCLOS. Wherever the Royal Navy operates, it does so in full compliance with international laws, norms and rights to freedom of navigation provided for by UNCLOS.

## ■ Sub-Saharan Africa: Water

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[92710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of whether the Millennium Development Goal targets on access to clean water by the end of 2020 will be met in sub-Saharan Africa.

**James Duddridge:**

The UK Government works with the United Nations Statistics Division via the UNICEF and WHO Joint Monitoring Programme, an initiative which the UK supports, to assess progress against sanitation and water goals. The Millennium Development Goal target to reduce by half the number of people without access to improved water supply was not met in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

The Millennium Development Goal targets were superseded by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The sub-Saharan Africa Region is currently not on track to reach the SDG access to water target by the target year of 2030. The most recent evidence on access to safe water suggests that only 61% of people in sub-Saharan Africa had access to at least basic water supply services in 2017. The impact of COVID-19 makes attainment of the global goals harder but also more urgent as

access to water is vital to enable people to wash their hands to stop the spread of the virus.

## ■ Sudan: Floods

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[86608\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what humanitarian support his Department is providing to people in Sudan following recent heavy flooding in that country.

**James Duddridge:**

Supplies were prepositioned in anticipation of this year's floods and in addition the UK quickly responded through the UN's Sudan Humanitarian Fund which provided US\$3.25 million allowing UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and NGOs to provide sleeping mats, clean water, food and medicines to help people affected. We also worked with our partners, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to reallocate UK funding for sandbags, water and sanitation and other immediate needs.

**Harriett Baldwin:**

[\[89692\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to provide support to the people of Sudan following the recent flooding in that country.

**James Duddridge:**

In addition to supplies that were prepositioned in anticipation of this year's floods, the UK quickly responded through the UN's Sudan Humanitarian Fund which provided US \$3.25 million, allowing UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and NGOs to provide sleeping mats, clean water, food and medicines to help people affected. We also worked with our partners, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to reallocate UK funding for sandbags, water and sanitation and other immediate needs.

## ■ Taiwan: Sovereignty

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[91649\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the UN on its potential recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.

**Nigel Adams:**

*[Holding answer 22 September 2020]:* The UK's longstanding policy on Taiwan has not changed: we have no diplomatic relations with Taiwan but a strong, unofficial relationship, based on dynamic commercial, educational and cultural ties. We regularly lobby in favour of Taiwan's participation in international organisations where statehood is not a prerequisite.

**■ Turkey: Overseas Aid****Anna McMorrin:**[\[82293\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what was the total budget this year for DFID's Turkey aid programme; and with reference to his 22 July announcement of cuts to the aid budget of £2.9bn, how much will be cut from the programme's proposed spend.

**Wendy Morton:**

*[Holding answer 3 September 2020]:* In the financial year 2020/21 the UK has contributed £41.9 million through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT), to support Turkey help meet the needs of refugees and their host communities. This forms part of the UK's Syria Crisis Response. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will continue to meet direct contribution commitments to the FRIT for the duration of the programme with no cuts to the programme's proposed spend.

**HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE****■ Coronavirus: Children****Sarah Olney:**[\[91781\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of exempting children from covid-19 restrictions on the number of people allowed to meet in a group from 14 September 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 23 September 2020]:* It is illegal to gather socially in a group of more than six in England. The rule of six includes children so it applies to people of all ages.

We have set out a clear and consistent limit of six people of any age in all settings to make the rules easier to understand for the public and easier to enforce by the police and public health officials.

The Government keeps social distancing restrictions under continual review and will make changes if the data and science supports it.

**■ Coronavirus: Disease Control****Rebecca Long Bailey:**[\[88335\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the transmission rate of covid-19 in socially-distanced (a) visits in household gardens and (b) indoor hospitality venues.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The rule of six has been put in place to keep social interactions as safe as possible with a simple and easily understood message. Going into winter, when more people will be socialising indoors or may start socialising outdoors and then move indoors, it



is essential to have clear and well-understood rules, in order to prevent the spread of the virus. Venues like pubs, restaurants and other leisure settings like cinemas must follow COVID-19 Secure guidelines, including making sure there is adequate social distancing. Businesses are making significant efforts to ensure their workspaces are COVID-19 Secure and only then bring back employees. With these measures in place, employees should remain safe.

**Sarah Olney:**

[\[91782\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase the availability to the public of the scientific evidence base for the covid-19 restrictions on the number of people allowed to meet in a group from 14 September 2020.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

We have taken swift action to limit the gathering group size to six people, against the backdrop of an increase in cases and infection levels across the country.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) provides Ministers and officials with evidence-based scientific advice in emergencies based on a range of sources. SAGE already publishes the statements and the accompanying evidence to demonstrate how our understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data merges, including the role that social interaction plays in transmission.

This data by SAGE is also supported by the work of the Joint Biosecurity Centre and the wider Test and Trace system to identify outbreaks and trends of COVID-19. Data on COVID-19 is published daily at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

## ■ Department of Health and Social Care: Apprentices

**Robert Halfon:**

[\[91616\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress his Department is making on meeting the 2.3 per cent public sector apprenticeship target; and when his Department will meet that target.

**Edward Argar:**

The Department has taken a proactive approach to embedding apprenticeships so that they are a core part of our learning and development offer. We continue to increase the take-up of apprenticeships year on year. Apprentices currently make up 3.5% of the Department's 2,044 headcount as at 1 September 2020.

We have refreshed our apprenticeship strategy for 2020/21 and are further developing our engagement strategy to continue raising awareness and improve take-up. We are continuing our proactive approach by aligning apprenticeship opportunities more closely with recruitment activity. Given the target is a percentage of the total workforce, the percentage changes in line with workforce fluctuations making it challenging to predict when the Department might meet this.

The impact of the current pandemic has impacted on the number of apprenticeship opportunities we have been able to create. However, we are focused on how we can

continue to support the apprenticeship agenda and drive forward recruitment through our apprenticeship strategy, which will enable us to keep making improvements.

## ■ Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome

**Jonathan Reynolds:**

[\[91639\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of providing social care for children diagnosed with fetal valproate spectrum disorder as a result of their mother being prescribed valproate in pregnancy in the last year for which data is available.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Department does not hold data on the cost of providing social care to children diagnosed with fetal valproate spectrum disorder.

The Department for Education is responsible for the legal and policy frameworks within which children's social care services operate. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provides funding to local authorities for children's services.

## ■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus

**Stella Creasy:**

[\[91636\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to encourage NHS Trusts to implement as soon as possible the 8 September 2020 guidance on visitor restrictions.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

*[Holding answer 22 September 2020]:* The Department expects trusts to use the Framework to assist National Health Service trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services and consider as a priority how access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be reintroduced as soon as possible whilst maintaining the safety of all service users, staff and visitors. This 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>

The Chief Midwifery Officer, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (England), and the National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health wrote to all NHS Directors of Nursing and Heads of Midwifery in England on 19 September to thank the majority of services that have quickly implemented this guidance and relaxed visiting restrictions and to inform those that are still working through the guidance that this must happen now so that partners are able to attend maternity units for appointments and births. The letter is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/letter-to-directors-of-nursing-and-heads-of-midwifery-19-september-2020.pdf>

## ■ NHS: Ventilators

**Helen Hayes:**

[\[73013\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, pursuant to the Answer of 1 July 2020 to Question 61474 on NHS: Ventilators and the Chancellor's summer economic update of 8 July 2020, how much of the £1 billion allocated to procure additional ventilators to support the NHS has been spent on acquiring additional stock.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 16 July 2020]:* Of the £1 billion allocated for the procurement of additional ventilators, around £280 million has been spent by the Department on the purchase of established ventilator models and other breathing support devices and £292 million has been spent by the Cabinet Office on the purchase of new ventilators as part of the Ventilator Challenge. The Government has now exceeded its target of increasing the number of mechanical ventilators available to the National Health Service to 30,000. This is more than three times the number available at the beginning of March and ensures the NHS is well prepared to meet any future need.

## ■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures

**Sarah Champion:**

[\[91650\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will take steps to investigate reports of mobile and home-based practitioners providing non-surgical cosmetic treatments in unsuitable premises with poor hygiene.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

The Government is committed to improving the safety of cosmetic procedures and the Department is exploring the regulation of premises, practitioners, products and consumer safeguards. The Government expects all providers to safely deliver the treatments they offer and adhere to hygiene standards, in line with health and safety legislation.

Concerns about the hygiene standards or suitability of premises used by mobile and home-based practitioners can be reported to the Health and Safety Executive, or any relevant professional body the practitioner is registered with. Concerns about the fitness to practise of regulated healthcare professionals carrying out cosmetic procedures should be reported to their regulatory body.

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[91660\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to (a) protect the safety of consumers seeking (i) special treatments and (ii) other non-surgical cosmetic procedures and (b) ensure that all practitioners offering those treatments are appropriately qualified.

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[91661\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to introduce mandatory requirements for formal training and qualifications for all practitioners providing (a) special treatments and (b) other non-surgical cosmetic treatments.

**Rebecca Long Bailey:**

[\[91662\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that non-surgical cosmetic treatments available to consumers are carried out (a) by qualified practitioners and (b) in safe and hygienic premises.

**Ms Nadine Dorries:**

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 knowledge and skills to safely deliver the treatments they offer.

## ■ Public Health

**Sir Christopher Chope:**

[\[90938\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether in deciding to use the urgency procedure to lay The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No.4) Regulations 2020 he made an assessment of the serious and imminent threat to public health caused by the inability of the public to access other NHS services providing diagnosis and treatment; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* The requirements imposed by these Regulations are a proportionate public health response to the threat of the incidence and spread of COVID-19. In making these amendments we took account of responsibilities including to promote a comprehensive health service, and quality of services.

Our message is clear – anyone who is concerned or needs treatment should come forward – the National Health Service is open for business.

NHS guidance sets out a focus on accelerating the NHS's return to near-normal levels of non-COVID-19 health services making full use of the capacity available in the 'window of opportunity' between now and winter.

Trusts, working with general practitioner practices, should ensure that between them, every patient whose planned care has been disrupted by COVID-19 receives clear communication about how they will be looked after, and who to contact in the event that their clinical circumstances change.

## ■ Queen Mary's Hospital Roehampton: Accident and Emergency Departments

**Fleur Anderson:** [\[86770\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Urgent Care Centre at Queen Mary's Hospital will be reopening.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 11 September 2020]:* A date has not yet been set for the reopening of the Urgent Treatment Centre at Queen Mary's Hospital.

The Trust and local commissioners are undertaking work to agree a new COVID-secure model of care. The unit cannot use the model previously in place due to social distancing requirements and to infection prevention and control pathways.

## ■ Surgery: Older People

**Sir Christopher Chope:** [\[88809\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether it is Government policy to restrict NHS elective surgery for people aged over 70; and if he will make a statement.

**Edward Argar:**

*[Holding answer 16 September 2020]:* The National Health Service provides a comprehensive service available to all, irrespective of gender, race, disability or age. No guidance has been issued on the provision of appropriate treatment based solely on age.

The NHS has issued guidance for the restoration of non-COVID-19 health services, working on the principle that the most clinically urgent patients should be seen first, followed by those who have been waiting the longest.

## HOME OFFICE

### ■ Asylum

**Chi Onwurah:** [\[92768\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether asylum applicants are required to claim asylum in the first safe country they reach.

**Chris Philp:**

We believe that those who reach safe countries should stay and claim asylum without delay, rather than make further, unnecessary and often dangerous journeys in order to claim asylum in a country of their own choosing.

Illegal migration from safe countries undermines our efforts to help those most in need - controlled resettlement via safe and legal routes is the best way to protect such people and disrupt the organised crime groups that exploit migrants and refugees.

To support these principles, the UK, the EU and other countries in the world employ legal procedures to return people to the safe countries through which they have

passed. In the case of the UK, the majority of such returns presently take place under the Dublin Regulation, but from 1 January, such returns will take place according to our domestic rules.

Where the UK considers the claim of someone who has failed to take advantage of a reasonable opportunity to make an asylum claim or human rights claim while in a safe country, the law requires that behaviour to be taken into account as damaging to the claimant's credibility.

## ■ Asylum: Coronavirus

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[92701\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure people seeking asylum are protected from covid-19 in the event that they are evicted from accommodation provided by her Department.

**Chris Philp:**

We are committed to preventing the further spread of Covid-19. Cessations are taking place in a phased way and we will keep them under review to ensure that this does not place people at greater risk.

We will work closely with accommodation providers to make sure people are moved on safely and in line with public health guidance. We will consider local lockdowns and other factors as part of this process.

People who are awaiting a Covid test result should not be asked to leave their current dwelling until they receive a negative test result and are symptom free and that those self-isolating due to a positive test result should adhere to the full 14-day self-isolation period for close contacts.

## ■ Asylum: Evictions and Finance

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[92787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will publish the (a) evidence, (b) reasons and (c) analysis for the decision to resume cessations of support and evictions of unsuccessful asylum seekers.

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[92788\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she had discussions with (a) Public Health England, (b) Public Health Scotland, (c) Public Health Wales and (d) local public health officials, prior to the decision to resume cessations of support and evictions of unsuccessful asylum seekers.

**Chris Philp:**

Since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Home Office paused ending support for people who had been granted asylum, or whose claim had been refused. This was to ensure that people were not made homeless and able to follow social distancing.

We said from the outset that this was a temporary measure which would be brought to an end as soon as it was safe to do so.

The Home Office has started cessations of support in a phased way which will reduce demand on the asylum system while prioritising the safety of those within the asylum system. This means moving people out of Home Office accommodation and ending subsistence payments from the Home Office.

We have been working closely with National and Local health Colleagues throughout the pandemic to inform our approach and will continue to do so.

We remain committed to working closely with the accommodation providers and communicating with local authorities to relieve pressure and capacity as much as possible and ensure that health guidance is being followed.

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[92789\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what discussions she had with local authorities in asylum dispersal areas prior to the decision to resume cessations of support and evictions of unsuccessful asylum seekers; and in which dispersal areas the first cessations of support will take place.

**Chris Philp:**

We are resuming negative asylum support cessations in England, and soon after in the rest of the United Kingdom following discussion with officials in the Devolved Administrations.

Local authorities have been consulted about cessations and we continue to work closely with councils to plan for these changes. Data has been shared with authorities as part of move-on planning and communication channels are open throughout the move-on period.

We remain committed to working closely with local authorities to relieve pressure and capacity as much as possible, however it is only right that recently granted refugees move into local authority care to assist with their integration. It is also right that those no longer entitled to asylum support leave the United Kingdom.

**Stuart C McDonald:**

[\[92790\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the decision to resume cessations of support and evictions of unsuccessful asylum seekers, what (a) public health and (b) other criteria will be used to inform decisions on whether to evict and cease support for individual unsuccessful asylum claimants.

**Chris Philp:**

The Home Office has started cessations of support in a phased way which will reduce demand on the asylum system while prioritising the safety of those within the asylum system. This means moving people out of Home Office accommodation and ending subsistence payments from the Home Office.

For those whose asylum claims have been rejected and appeal rights exhausted, they will be expected to leave the country, assistance is available to those who opt to

leave voluntarily. The Voluntary Returns Scheme will pay for travel and provide a cash amount, and this can and should be utilised whenever possible.

People who are awaiting a Covid test result should not be asked to leave their current dwelling until they receive a negative test result and are symptom free and that those self-isolating due to a positive test result should adhere to the full 14-day self-isolation period for close contacts.

These factors, applied to an individual case, might mean that a failed asylum seeker continues to be eligible to receive support because they are unable to leave the UK or take the necessary practical steps to enable them to leave (for example by attending an interview for the purposes of obtaining a necessary travel document).

### ■ Asylum: Hotels

**Philip Davies:** [\[91598\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many asylum seekers have been put into hotel accommodation in (a) Shipley constituency, (b) Bradford district, (c) West Yorkshire and (d) England in each of the last 12 months.

**Chris Philp:**

The number of asylum seekers accommodated in each local authority can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#asylum-support>

This includes the number of those accommodated in hotels.

Data is published on a quarterly basis with the latest information covering until 31<sup>st</sup> June 2020. The next quarterly figures are due to be released in November 2020

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### ■ Building Safety Fund

**Mike Amesbury:** [\[92878\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications have been received for the Building Safety Fund.

**Christopher Pincher:**

We are currently reviewing registrations to the Building Safety Fund and verifying the registration data. We will publish registration statistics in due course.

### ■ Flats: Insulation

**Stephen McPartland:** [\[92764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will provide support to leaseholders in flats that require cladding safety works.



**Stephen McPartland:**[\[92765\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will provide a Government loan facility for leaseholders needing to fund cladding safety works.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Government is providing £1.6 billion to speed up the removal of unsafe cladding and make homes safer, quicker. We have also appointed construction experts who are reviewing remediation timescales and identifying what can be done to increase pace. Where building owners have failed to act, despite government support, the Government has supported enforcement action.

However, we recognise that there are wider remediation costs which will need to be met to ensure the safety of existing blocks of flats. We have asked MHCLG advisor Michael Wade to accelerate work on identifying options for financing solutions that remove barriers to fixing historic defects and protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs; but we must also ensure that the bill does not fall on taxpayers.

The new building safety regime will prevent similar safety defects occurring in new builds in the future. It will also systematically address historic defects by requiring safety case reviews and reasonable improvements.

**Listed Buildings: Council Tax****Karen Bradley:**[\[92766\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing an exemption from council tax for unoccupied listed buildings to reflect the application of business rates to listed buildings.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government is committed to the protection of the historic environment and has put in place a strong legislative and planning policy framework to achieve this. The Government also supports the maintenance of listed properties through “Our Heritage” funding, further information about which is available at: <https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/our-heritage>. Although there are no plans to introduce a council tax exemption for unoccupied listed buildings, local authorities do have powers to provide discretionary council tax discounts where they consider such action appropriate.

**Members: Correspondence****Hilary Benn:**[\[92700\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, when he plans to respond to the letter of the 24 July 2020 from the Rt. hon. Member for Leeds Central on the draft building safety bill.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The response was emailed to the Rt Hon Member on Tuesday 22 September.

**■ Right to Buy Scheme: Housing Associations****Mr Richard Holden:**[\[92916\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the voluntary right to buy pilot scheme for housing association tenants in the West Midlands; and what plans he has to extend that scheme to (a) County Durham and (b) other parts of the country.

**Christopher Pincher:**

The Voluntary Right to Buy Midlands pilot will complete later this year, and is being fully evaluated. The Government committed to evaluate new pilot areas, and further details will be provided in due course.

**■ UK Shared Prosperity Fund****Mike Amesbury:**[\[92879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what progress he has made on the (a) establishment and (b) operational details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Luke Hall:**

The Government understands the importance of local growth funding to places and people and is committed to creating the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to succeed European structural funds, providing vital investment in local economies, cutting out bureaucracy and levelling up those parts of the UK whose economies are furthest behind.

The 2019 Conservative Manifesto committed to targeting the UK Shared Prosperity Fund at the UK's specific needs, at a minimum matching the size of European structural funds in each nation. This builds upon previous commitments to create a fund which tackles inequalities between communities by raising productivity, especially in those parts of the UK whose economies are furthest behind.

Final decisions on the design and operation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will need to be made following a cross-Government Spending Review.

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE****■ Arms Trade: Saudi Arabia****Emily Thornberry:**[\[92734\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, with reference to the Written Statement of 7 July 2020 HC entitled Trade Update, HCWS339, which Department's officials were responsible for (a) developing the revised methodology used to analyse and evaluate allegations of violations of International Humanitarian Law in Yemen, (b)

conducting the analysis and evaluation of those allegations, and (c) making a submission to ministers on the conclusions, options and recommendations arising from that analysis and evaluation.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The revised methodology used to analyse and evaluate allegations of violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) in Yemen was the result of cross-Whitehall work involving officials from the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Department for International Trade (DIT).

MOD analyse the incidents they have recorded, which feeds into the overall assessment by FCDO of the risk that IHL has been breached.

The Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (the 'Consolidated Criteria') set out that, in making licensing decisions, my Rt Hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade 'will continue to take into account advice received from FCDO, MOD and other Government Departments and agencies as appropriate.'

FCDO leads on Criterion 2c, which concerns whether there is a clear risk that the items might be used in the commission of a serious violation of IHL. My Rt Hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a recommendation to the Secretary of State for International Trade for her to take account of in making the licensing decisions referred to in her Written Statement of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Officials in FCDO and DIT submitted advice to their respective Ministers to support the decision-making process.

■ **Human Rights: Yemen**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[91597\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 11 September to Question 86598, for what reasons her Department did not begin its evaluation of alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law in Yemen until after 30 April 2020.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

The Rt Hon. Lady will understand that the reference to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020 only relates to the number of incidents recorded by the Ministry of Defence at that date; it is not the date the evaluation of alleged violations of International Humanitarian Law in Yemen started.

■ **Institute of Economic Affairs: Meetings**

**Emily Thornberry:**

[\[84681\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, where her dinner with the Institute of Economic Affairs on 14 January 2020 took place; and whether she used a ministerial car to attend that location.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84682\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which representatives of the Institute of Economic Affairs and other external guests were present at her dinner with the Institute of Economic Affairs on 14 January 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, at what location her meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs took place on (a) 10 February 2020 and (b) 17 March 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether Government (a)(i) property, (ii) IT equipment and (ii) refreshments were used and (b) a cost to the public purse was incurred during her meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs on (A) 10 February 2020 and (B) 17 March 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, which (a) representatives of the Institute of Economic Affairs and (b) other individuals from external organisations were present at her meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs on (a) 10 February 2020 and (b) 17 March 2020.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84983\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs on (a) 10 February 2020 and (b) 17th March 2020 were arranged through her (i) ministerial office or (ii) special advisers.

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[84985\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether one of her private secretaries or other Departmental officials was present at (a) her dinner with the Institute of Economic Affairs on 14 January 2020 and (b) meetings with the Institute of Economic Affairs on (b) 10 February 2020 and (c) 17 March 2020.

**Greg Hands:**

The Secretary of State's attendance at a dinner and two meetings on 10 February and 17 March was declared in line with the Government's transparency requirements. The three engagements were conducted in line with the guidance to Ministers on meetings with external organisations. The Government does not routinely release detailed information about ministerial engagements and the operation of the ministerial private office.

## ■ Trade Agreements

**Emily Thornberry:** [\[92733\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 18 September 2020 to Question 89629, whether her Department has not yet signed

agreements to roll over current trade arrangements with 31 non-EU countries, comprising (a) the 23 countries listed in the Trade Agreements Still in Discussion section of her Department's website and (b) Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Suriname, Samoa, Comoros, San Marino and Andorra.

**Mr Ranil Jayawardena:**

We are continuing our programme to replicate the effects of existing EU trade agreements with trading partners to secure continuity for British businesses following the transition period. An up-to-date list of trade continuity agreements, signed and in discussion, is publicly available on GOV.UK ([LINK](#)) – and this will be updated to reflect a change in status for agreements in discussion when they are signed.

## JUSTICE

■ **[Subject Heading to be Assigned]**

**Elliot Colburn:**

[\[906456\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the CPS's use of restorative justice to support victims of crime.

**Alex Chalk:**

The Ministry of Justice has not conducted an assessment of the CPS's use of restorative justice. This is because the CPS has a very limited role in restorative justice (reparative conditions are an option for conditional cautions) and it does not provide or fund restorative justice services.

Under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, all victims have the right to receive information about the availability of restorative justice services. The Code also stipulates the obligations on providers of restorative justice, including ensuring that victims are able to give informed consent to participation and that it is in the best interests of the victims.

The Ministry of Justice provides funding to Police and Crime Commissioners to commission a wide range of local support services for victims, including restorative justice services. From April 2018 to March 2019 the Ministry provided about £68m, with about £4.4m spent on restorative justice services. PCCs also spent another £1m from other sources on restorative justice services.

■ **Motor Vehicles: Crime**

**Andrew Griffith:**

[\[91206\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many convictions there have been for non-compliance with section 44 of the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 in (a) Sussex and (b) England.

**Chris Philp:**

The number of offenders convicted for offences under section 44 of the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 at courts in Sussex and England between 2015 and 2019 can be found in the table below.

**NUMBER OF OFFENDERS CONVICTED FOR OFFENCES UNDER SECTION 44 OF THE VEHICLE EXCISE AND REGISTRATION ACT 1994 AT COURTS IN SUSSEX AND ENGLAND, 2015 TO 2019** <sup>1,2,3</sup>

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
England	40	34	63	79	105
<i>of which 1</i>	2	1	1	2	1
<i>in</i>					
<i>Sussex</i>					

Source: Ministry of Justice  
court proceedings database

PQ  
91206

1) The figures given in the table relate to defendants for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

2) Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

3) Police Force Areas provide breakdowns of where offences were dealt with (not where they were committed).

The Ministry of Justice has published data on the number of prosecutions and convictions for offences in England and Wales for the years 2013 to 2019. This data is available in the Principal offence proceedings and outcomes by Home Office offence code data tool available here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/888344/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/888344/HO-code-tool-principal-offence-2019.xlsx)

The Home Office offence code 81403 includes information on offences under section 44 of the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994, however please note that this

offence code also includes a very low volume of offences (typically 1 or 2 a year) under sections 45 and 59 of the legislation.

## ■ Prisoners' Discharge Grants

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[90986\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress has been made on his Department's review of the Discharge Policy and £46 Discharge Grant; which stakeholders have been consulted as part of that review; and when that review will be published.

**Lucy Frazer:**

Earlier this year, the Lord Chancellor asked officials to consider options for the Discharge Grant, and to contact stakeholders during the wider review of the discharge policy (Prison Service Instruction (PSI) 72/2011).

The review of the PSI and the Discharge Grant is ongoing and preliminary discussions have been held with Clinks and Switchback. Further consultation with stakeholders will take place in due course.

## ■ Prisoners' Release

**Ms Lyn Brown:**

[\[90987\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what proportion of people leaving prison were released without a (a) bank account and (b) valid photo ID in each of the last twelve months

**Lucy Frazer:**

Data on the proportion of those released from prison without bank accounts or valid photo IDs is recorded in individual resettlement plans, but not collated centrally. To obtain this information would exceed cost limits.

We recognise the importance of valid photo IDs and bank accounts in supporting rehabilitation. Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) are clearly responsible for their provision as part of Through the Gate support to prisoners on release. We have invested an additional £22 million per annum to improve delivery of these vital services for the remainder of the CRC contracts.

The Offender Banking Programme enables individuals to apply for a basic bank account whilst in custody, to use on release. On average, approximately 6000 accounts were opened each year between 2016 and 2019 as a result of this programme.

**PRIME MINISTER**■ **Special Envoy On Freedom of Religion Or Belief**

**Ruth Jones:** [\[92661\]](#)

To ask the Prime Minister, what plans he has to appoint a Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

**Boris Johnson:**

I refer the Hon Member to the answer I gave on 22 September to my Hon Friend the Hon Member for Romford and the Hon Member for Glasgow North.

**TRANSPORT**■ **Air Traffic Control: Staff**

**Kirsten Oswald:** [\[92798\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with National Air Traffic Services on its decision to terminate the contracts of trainee air traffic controllers before they have completed their training.

**Robert Courts:**

Ministers have regular contact with NATS to discuss the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their business. We understand that the decision NATS have taken to place at risk the contracts of 122 trainees in their training college, whilst regrettable, has been carefully considered. NATS have committed to staying in contact with the trainees and looking for opportunities to restart their training as soon as possible.

■ **Cars**

**Barbara Keeley:** [\[92742\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage lower levels of car use; and if he will make a statement.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department is creating a Transport Decarbonisation Plan for publication later this year setting out a bold and ambitious pathway to decarbonisation. This holistic and cross-modal approach to decarbonising the entire transport system will set out the measures needed to accelerate modal shift to public and active transport.

■ **Department for Transport: Equality**

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[92887\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people his Department and its agencies employ in teams working on issues relating to diversity, equality or inclusion.



**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

The Department for Transport wants to make transport better and accessible for all people in UK. Part of this objective is to consider diversity and inclusion in our policy and policy developments. In line with the Civil Service D&I strategy we are particularly focused on increasing the representation of talented Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people, and people with disabilities, in our organisation. For 2020/21 we have a specific Race Action Plan, setting out how we will increase ethnic diversity, and equality of opportunity for ethnic minority staff.

There are 10.95 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in the central Department and its Executive Agencies working on "internal" diversity and inclusion. Additionally, there are four staff working on equality, diversity and inclusion in the Active Accessible Travel team.

**■ Department for Transport: Sustainable Development****Paula Barker:**[\[91178\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what consultative arrangements are in place between trade unions and his Department to discuss sustainability issues at his Department.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

No specific arrangements are in place for consultation between the department and the trade unions on sustainability issues, but sustainability issues may feature in the consultation and negotiation undertaken between the department and its recognised trade unions.

**■ Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency: Staff****Jonathan Edwards:**[\[92748\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what estimate he has made of the (a) staffing resources available to the DVLA to process hard-copy documents and (b) additional resources it requires to clear the backlog of unprocessed documents.

**Rachel Maclean:**

All Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) staff who can work from home continue to do so as office space has been prioritised for operational staff who have to be on-site to process paper applications. The DVLA's online services have worked well throughout the pandemic and this remains the quickest and easiest way of making applications.

The DVLA is employing shift patterns, staggered start times, weekend working and other measures to ensure that social distancing can be maintained. Due to this, the number of staff who can be on-site at any one time is greatly reduced but the working day has been significantly extended. This means that almost all DVLA operational staff are now working on-site but not all at the same time. Staff are allocated to different work streams at different times depending on where the need is greatest.

## ■ High Speed Two Railway Line: Vehicles

**Dame Cheryl Gillan:** [\[92663\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will take steps to ensure that (a) HS2 and (b) HS2 contractor vehicles display HS2 identification on their windscreens to enable checks that they are using the correct routes to HS2 sites.

**Andrew Stephenson:**

All vehicles over 3.5t employed on deliveries of construction equipment or materials, or moving quantities of spoil on public roads are required to display an A4 size identifier, stating 'HS2' inside the cab windscreen in a position that does not obscure the driver's visibility. The requirement applies when the vehicle is on HS2 business.

The requirement to display identification is monitored by the contractors and by HS2 Ltd's dedicated compliance team, and all reasonable steps are therefore taken to ensure compliance with the requirement.

In exceptional circumstances, HS2 Ltd can apply a derogation to this requirement, for example, when lorries and drivers are being specifically targeted by non-peaceful protesters.

## ■ Members: Correspondence

**Rachel Hopkins:** [\[92953\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State with responsibility for aviation plans to reply to the letter of 10 September 2020 from the hon. Member for Luton South on Luton's aviation sector.

**Robert Courts:**

The Department aims to respond to Invitation requests as soon as practicable. The Department responded to your letter on 22<sup>nd</sup> September to seek suitable dates for a meeting.

## ■ Motor Vehicles: Excise Duties

**John Spellar:** [\[92677\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, for what reason the DVLA notified local authorities on 30 March 2020 that all enforcement action undertaken on vehicles under devolved powers was to stop; and when he plans to reintroduce that action.

**Rachel Maclean:**

During the height of the pandemic, The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency adopted a pragmatic approach to vehicle excise duty enforcement, including the pausing of local authority devolved powers. This approach ensured that those impacted by the pandemic were not further disadvantaged and that a vehicle that may have been needed in an emergency was not immobilised or removed.

DVLA enforcement activity has now recommenced. The onus remains with the registered keeper of a vehicle to ensure that their legal obligations are fulfilled and that vehicles are licensed on time.

#### ■ **Motor Vehicles: Hire Services**

**Barbara Keeley:**

[\[92741\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what steps he is taking to encourage private hire vehicles to switch to lower emission or electric vehicles.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Government has provided over £20m to install dedicated chargepoints for ultra-low emission taxis and private hire vehicles across the UK to give drivers the confidence to make the transition to electric. This includes over 200 fast chargers and over 550 rapid chargers. Private hire operators are also able to take advantage of the Plug-in Car and Van Grant schemes, as well as the Electric Homecharge and Work Place Charging Schemes. The Plug-in Car Grant offers up to £3000 off an electric or fuel cell cars and the Electric Homecharge Scheme provides a grant of up to £350 towards the installation of domestic chargepoints.

#### ■ **Public Transport: North East**

**Mr Richard Holden:**

[\[92917\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how much covid-19 related financial support has been provided to support public transport (a) in the North East of England and (b) to each council in the North East of England.

**Rachel Maclean:**

Government has committed over £40m to the North East of England to date. £22,312,105 has been provided from the Coronavirus Bus Services Support Grant, including payments of £20,589,277 to commercial operators and £1,722,829 to the Tees Valley Combined Authority and North East Combined Authority. £20,228,359 has been provided for the Tyne and Wear Metro from the Coronavirus Support Grants scheme. Over £1.5m has been provided to the North East Joint Transport Committee for additional transport for schools and colleges up to the Autumn half term.

#### ■ **Railway Stations: Parking**

**Theresa Villiers:**

[\[92722\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussions he has had with the Office of Rail and Road on ensuring continued provision for parking at stations owned by Network Rail and TfL.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

My Rt Hon Friend, the Secretary of State, and I have regular meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Office of Rail and Road to discuss a wide range of issues, but we have not recently discussed the provision of car parking at stations.

## ■ Railways: West Midlands

**Daniel Kawczynski:**

[\[90982\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, how many people use the train service between Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton monthly on average.

**Chris Heaton-Harris:**

Passenger demand flows between specific stations and on specific routes are not publicly available as this data is commercially sensitive. However, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) publish data on the estimates of the total number of passengers entering and exiting each station in Great Britain.

The table below, which includes the number of station entries and exits at Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton, may be of interest.

### **Total number of station entries and exits, 2018-19 financial year**

<b>STATION NAME</b>	<b>ENTRIES AND EXITS</b>
Shrewsbury	2,226,302
Wolverhampton	5,305,432

Data for additional stations and years are available at:

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage/>

## ■ Shipping: Carbon Emissions

**Kerry McCarthy:**

[\[90957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what plans he has to promote the potential merits of decarbonising the UK maritime sector at COP26.

**Robert Courts:**

In 2019 the UK legislated the 2050 net zero target and subsequently published the Clean Maritime Plan, outlining the pathway to zero emissions shipping. In doing so, the UK became one of the first countries to publish a strategy on domestic action to reduce shipping emissions following the agreement of the Initial IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships.

As the incoming President of COP26, the UK will push for international action on climate change, and lead by example. We have been working collaboratively with industry and States in the development of ambitious maritime decarbonisation initiatives to be presented at COP26. These will deliver tangible results, contributing to the global effort to reduce shipping emissions while delivering green growth.

**■ Transport: Wales****Bill Wiggin:**[\[91577\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will commission Midlands Connect to conduct a review on adequacy of (a) the A49 and (b) strategic links to Wales.

**Rachel Maclean:**

The Department has no plans to do so: it is for Midlands Connect and its membership to determine its priorities, and other work that will review these matters is imminent. Highways England will review the current performance of the A49 and other strategic road links between Wales and England, and their future requirements, through the development of its Route Strategies. In addition, in his speech on 30 June, the Prime Minister announced a review “of all future road, rail, air and cross-sea links between our all four parts of the UK”. We expect to launch that review shortly.

**TREASURY****■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]****Alexander Stafford:**[\[91742\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make an assessment of the merits of introducing a green gilt to encourage private investment in regions outside London.

**John Glen:**

This Government is committed to building back better and investing in the green infrastructure that will help us to achieve our climate change objectives and level up the country. At the Plan for Jobs 2020, the Government announced an ambitious £3.05 billion package including the Green Homes Grant, designed to aid homeowners and landlords retrofit to upgrade the energy and cost efficiency of their homes. At Spring Budget 2020 the Government announced at least £800 million to support Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in two initial industrial clusters, the first by the mid-2020s and the second by 2030. CCS has the potential to reduce carbon emissions from power plants and factories. And on Tuesday (22 September), Dogger Bank Wind Farm announced the creation of almost 250 jobs in the North East on a project that will be capable of powering up to 4.5m homes when complete.

Our upcoming National Infrastructure Strategy will set out our long-term economic infrastructure ambitions, focusing on decarbonisation and levelling up the nation.

The UK is a global centre for sustainable finance with an established reputation in green finance and a frontrunner in the structuring, underwriting, and listing of green bonds, with more than 100 bonds listed on the London Stock Exchange, raising over \$26 billion across eight currencies

The government has been carefully considering the potential issuance of a UK sovereign green bond and will keep this under review. The government remains open to the introduction of new debt instruments, but would need to be satisfied that any

new instrument would meet value-for-money criteria, enjoy strong and sustained demand in the long term and be consistent with wider fiscal objectives.

#### ■ **Bank Services: British Nationals Abroad**

**Sir Roger Gale:**

[\[92667\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) passporting arrangements and (b) banking facilities used by UK citizens resident in the remaining EU 27 countries will be maintained after the 31 December 2020.

**John Glen:**

The UK has consistently been clear that we want an agreement with the EU that reflects the maturity of our financial services relationship.

The EU's financial services passport is not available for firms based in countries outside of the EU and the EEA as they are based on the single EU rulebook for financial services. The UK is leaving the Single Market, and therefore is not subject to the passport. The UK has taken a pragmatic approach to the future relationship on financial services, and has been clear that politicisation of equivalence is in no-one's interests.

The UK authorities have taken all the action we can to mitigate risks of disruption to cross-border financial services at the end of the Transition Period (TP), including confirming that the Temporary Permissions Regime will apply from the end of the TP. It will allow EEA firms currently providing services in the UK via a financial services 'passport' to continue operating after the TP while they apply for full UK authorisation.

But whether UK firms can service EEA-based retail customers remains a matter of local law and regulation in each country. We expect banks to act lawfully and in accordance with local regulators' expectations.

We also expect that banks work to ensure good outcomes for their customers and provide timely communications to enable them to make appropriate decisions and take necessary steps. If customers are concerned then they should speak to their provider.

**Hilary Benn:**

[\[92702\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what guidance his Department has issued to UK customers of British banks who are resident in the EU on the continued availability of their bank accounts after 1 January 2021.

**John Glen:**

Whether UK banks can service EEA-based customers is a matter of local law and regulation and may be impacted by how firms are set up, and what steps they have taken to continue to service customers. We expect banks to act lawfully and in accordance with local regulators' expectations.

We also expect that banks work to ensure good outcomes for their customers and provide timely communications to them to enable them to make appropriate decisions

and take necessary steps. If customers are concerned then they should speak to their provider.

## ■ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: North West

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[92807\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on unemployment of the ending of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in (a) St Helens North, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has supported 13,200 employments in St Helens North, 64,900 employments in the local authority of Liverpool and 1,035,600 employments in the North West region of England.

Many of these employments will have already returned to work. In the North West region of England, as of 31 July, the number of employments furloughed had fallen to 453,700.

The Government is adapting its response to the changing context, evolving as restrictions have changed. Today the Government has published its Winter Economy Plan, a targeted package of measures to support jobs and business through the winter months. As part of that Plan, the Job Support Scheme will support viable businesses who are facing lower demand due to COVID-19 to keep their employees in work and attached to the workforce. This is in addition to the targeted Plan for Jobs, which includes a Job Retention Bonus to encourage firms to keep on furloughed workers, providing £1.2 billion to significantly expand and enhance work search support, as well as additional support to people to build the skills they need to get into work, and the new £2 billion Kickstart Scheme, creating hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people.

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[92808\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on unemployment among 16-24-year olds of ending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in (a) St Helens North, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has supported the employment of nearly 1.89 million 16-24-year olds across the whole of the UK.

Many of these employees will have already returned to work. Across the whole of the UK and all ages, the number of employments furloughed has decreased from a peak of 8.9 million on 8 May to about 4.8 million on 31 July.

The Government is adapting its response to the changing context, and today the Government has published its Winter Economy Plan, a targeted package of measures to support jobs and business through the winter months. As part of that Plan, the Job Support Scheme will support viable businesses who are facing lower

demand due to COVID-19 to keep their employees in work and attached to the workforce. This is in addition to the targeted Plan for Jobs, which includes a Job Retention Bonus to encourage firms to keep on furloughed workers, £1.2 billion to expand and enhance work search support, additional support to people to build the skills they need to get into work, and the new £2 billion Kickstart Scheme, creating hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people.

**Conor McGinn:**

[\[92809\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what estimate he has made of the effect on unemployment in the hospitality sector of ending the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in (a) St Helens North, (b) Liverpool City Region and (c) the North West.

**Jesse Norman:**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) has supported 182,000 employments in the accommodation and food services sector specifically in the North West region.

Many of these employments will have already returned to work. In the accommodation and food services sector across the UK, the number of employments furloughed has decreased from a peak of 1.62 million on 10 April to 942,300 on 31 July.

The Government is adapting its response to the changing context. As restrictions have changed, Government support has evolved. Today the Government has published its Winter Economy Plan, a targeted package of measures to support jobs and business through the winter months.

## ■ Economic Growth

**Preet Kaur Gill:**

[\[91125\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent projections he has made of (a) GDP and (b) GNI growth in (i) 2020 and (ii) 2021.

**John Glen:**

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is responsible for producing forecasts of the economy and public finances. HM Treasury does not produce forecasts of the economy or public finances.

The latest OBR forecast of Gross National Income (GNI) was published by the OBR in March. The OBR also published a set of economic scenarios as part of their July Fiscal Sustainability Report. In their central scenario real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is assumed to fall by 14.3 per cent in 2020 before growing by 4.6 per cent in 2021.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has asked the Office for Budget Responsibility to prepare a new economic and fiscal forecast.



## ■ Employment: Coronavirus

**Tracy Brabin:**

[\[92853\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of introducing a furlough-style scheme for people who cannot work as a result of being instructed to self-isolate.

**Jesse Norman:**

If an employee is on sick leave or self-isolating as a result of coronavirus, they may be able to receive Statutory Sick Pay. Those who have been furloughed already can inform their employer that they are unable to work due to ill health, and until the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme closes on 31 October, the employer has the option to treat the days they should have been working as furlough days instead. However, it remains the case that the CJRS is not intended for short-term absences from work due to sickness.

As announced on 20 September, the Government is introducing a new package to support and enforce self-isolation. People required to self-isolate who are on a low income, cannot work from home and have lost income as a result will be eligible for a payment of £500. Just under four million people who are in receipt of benefits in England will be eligible for this payment from 28 September.

## ■ Import Duties

**Bambos Charalambous:**

[\[92860\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when new rules will be introduced to allow traders to apply for a Duty Deferment Account without a Customs Comprehensive Guarantee.

**Jesse Norman:**

To be approved for a Duty Deferment Account (DDA) under the current Union Customs Code (UCC) rules customers need to be authorised by HMRC to provide a Customs Comprehensive Guarantee (CCG). This approach will continue until the end of the Transition Period, after which the requirement for a CCG to underpin a DDA in Great Britain will be removed for most compliant and solvent businesses.

The legislation to enable this change was laid in Parliament on 10 September. HMRC are developing a new application process for businesses wishing to use duty deferment in Great Britain at the end of the Transition Period. This is expected to be available by early November 2020.

The existing UCC rules for guarantees will continue to apply to businesses using duty deferment in Northern Ireland.

**■ Money****Charlotte Nichols:** [\[92913\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to implement a system to (a) measure, (b) analyse and (c) report how well the cash system performs for consumers.

**Charlotte Nichols:** [\[92914\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make it his policy to give a public body the responsibility for tracking trends in the acceptance of cash by businesses.

**John Glen:**

The Government and regulators are closely monitoring developments relating to impacts on cash access and usage, particularly in light of COVID-19, including through the Joint Authorities Cash Strategy Group. This group, chaired by the Treasury, aims to ensure coordinated oversight of the UK's cash infrastructure. In July 2020, the Group published an update on its actions, including work led by the Payment Systems Regulator and Financial Conduct Authority to develop a comprehensive picture of cash access infrastructure across the UK in relation to socioeconomic factors that reflect consumer needs.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the longer term so that widespread access to cash, which remains extremely important to millions of people across the UK, remains available. That is why, at the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect access to cash. The Government is working at pace to develop legislation and will ensure that regulators have the appropriate responsibilities and powers.

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[92918\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress he has made in (a) protecting cash payments and (b) ensuring access to cash in all communities.

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[92919\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of bringing forward legislative proposals to ensure that cash is always an accepted method of payment.

**Mr Richard Holden:** [\[92920\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what steps he is taking to ensure free to use cash machines are available in all communities in the UK.

**John Glen:**

The Government recognises that widespread access to cash remains extremely important to millions of people across the UK. That is why, at the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor announced that the Government will bring forward legislation to protect access to cash, which builds on industry initiatives. This will protect access to

cash for those who need it, and ensure that the UK's cash infrastructure is sustainable in the long run. Treasury is working at pace to develop legislation.

LINK, the scheme that runs the UK's largest ATM network, has existing arrangements in place to protect free-to-use ATMs that do not have another free-to-use ATM or Post Office within 1 kilometre. LINK's members have also made £5 million available to fund ATMs at the request of communities with poor access to cash.

## ■ Overseas Loans: Republic of Ireland

**Mr Gregory Campbell:**

[\[92711\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether the Republic of Ireland will conclude repaying its loan under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010 by March 2021.

**John Glen:**

The total outstanding principal of the bilateral loan to Ireland stands at £806,740,000 as of 24 September 2020. Ireland is scheduled to pay the final tranche of the loan when it matures in March 2021. The Government continues to expect the loan to be repaid in full and on time.

## ■ Personal Care Services: Coronavirus

**Andrew Gwynne:**

[\[92725\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of providing support for (a) the hair and beauty and (b) other industries that operate according to appointments to compensate for loss of income due to fewer appointments and regular cancellations as a result of Government regulations.

**Kemi Badenoch:**

The Government recognises that this is a challenging time for the hair and beauty sector, where businesses were required to stay closed for longer than some others and as certain treatments were restricted until 15 August.

Businesses in this sector and those in its supply chain can already benefit from many elements of the Government's unprecedented package of support for business, including grants, rates reliefs, loans and wage support packages.

The Government is adapting its response to the changing context, as we said we would. As restrictions have changed, government support has evolved. This week the government has published its Winter Economic Plan, a targeted package of measures to support jobs and business through the winter months. As part of that, the Job Support Scheme will support viable businesses who are facing lower demand due to Covid-19.

We will continue to monitor the impact of the restrictions necessary to curb the spread of Covid-19 on businesses and the economy and the need for further support.

**■ Revenue and Customs: Edinburgh****Tommy Sheppard:** [\[92802\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September 2020 to Question 83904 on Civil Servants: Edinburgh, how many HMRC staff are working in Queen Elizabeth House, Edinburgh; and how many have been based there in each month since its opening.

**Tommy Sheppard:** [\[92803\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which Departments in addition to HMRC have staff based in Queen Elizabeth House in Edinburgh.

**Jesse Norman:**

The UK Government Hub in Edinburgh, Queen Elizabeth House, opened to staff on 1 September 2020. In line with current social distancing measures, HMRC have adapted their plans to welcome staff to their new location.

Since the opening, the number of HMRC staff in attendance has increased gradually as business-critical staff and others who need to be there completed their mandatory building inductions.

There will be other Government departments, in smaller numbers than HMRC, based at Queen Elizabeth House, although they are not currently working from the building: the Valuation Office Agency, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Office of the Advocate General, the Competition and Markets Authority, the Office for Statistics Regulation, the Government Actuary's Department, HM Treasury, the Health and Safety Executive, Cabinet Office and the Information Commissioner's Office.

**■ Revenue and Customs: Scotland****Tommy Sheppard:** [\[92804\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many HMRC staff were employed in Scotland on (a) 1 September 2020, (b) 1 April 2020, (c) 1 April 2019, (d) 1 April 2018, (e) 1 April 2017, (f) 1 April 2016 and (g) 1 April 2015.

**Jesse Norman:**

The number of HMRC staff employed in Scotland is as follows:

1 April 2015: 8,450

1 April 2016: 9,256

1 April 2017: 9,038

1 April 2018: 8,592

1 April 2019: 8,201

1 April 2020: 7,881

1 September 2020: 7,726

**Tommy Sheppard:** [\[92805\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the cost to the public purse has been of wages for HMRC staff based in Scotland in each of the last five financial years.

**Jesse Norman:**

The estimated cost of wages for HMRC staff based in Scotland for the last five financial years is as follows:

FINANCIAL YEAR	COST
20/21	190,197,894
19/20	192,907,940
18/19	195,917,991
17/18	200,454,678
16/17	197,811,410

**Tommy Sheppard:** [\[92806\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what the absence rate has been for HMRC staff based in Scotland in each of the last five financial years.

**Jesse Norman:**

The average working days lost for each HMRC employee based in Scotland are as follows:

1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019: 7.25 days

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020: 7.50 days

In the time available, it has not been possible to provide the information requested for earlier years. I will write to the Honourable Member with the further information requested in due course, and I will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

The average working days lost for all HMRC employees over the three earlier years are as follows:

1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016: 7.58 days

1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017: 6.86 days

1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018: 6.89 days

#### ■ Unpaid Taxes: Fines

**Mr Gregory Campbell:** [\[92712\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how much was paid in fines by people who submitted tax returns after the deadline of 31 January 2020.

**Jesse Norman:**

The 2018-19 Self-Assessment tax return typically has an online filing deadline of 31 January 2020.

The value of payments attributed to late filing penalties for people filing late and after the deadline of 31 January 2020:

TAX YEAR PENALTY RELATES TO	PENALTY PAYMENTS
2018-19	£18,558,000

Note: The figure has been rounded to the nearest thousand. The figure has been produced using an extract of the data provided for analytical purposes, and there may be small differences between this and other HMRC systems including the live SA system (CESA).

This analysis is based on penalties created and payments received to 4 September 2020. It includes penalty payments made during a period of about six months. Further penalties will be issued and paid relating to this tax return.

The figure provided should not be compared with previous figures provided for earlier years. More penalties will be issued and paid relating to all years but further payments to recent years will be relatively higher, so there will be greater changes to recent years. It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between different years' figures.

The above figures include payments for the initial £100 late filing penalty. Late Payment penalties have not been included.

These late filing penalties relate to: individuals who filed online after 31 January after the end of the corresponding tax year and at least 3 months after they were issued with a notice to file; individuals who have missed the 31 January deadline and who have not yet filed their SA return for the corresponding tax year; and individuals who did not need to file an SA return for that tax year but received late filing penalties due to late notification.

The figures may include some penalty payments relating to Trust returns as they receive the same penalty code. Penalty payments relating to partnership returns are not included.

Penalties are not used as a means of generating revenue. HMRC charge penalties to encourage taxpayers to meet their tax obligations and to act as a sanction for those who do not, so the majority who do pay correctly and on time are not disadvantaged. Not all taxpayers who fail to submit their return on time will have to pay a penalty. A penalty will not be payable if a taxpayer had a reasonable excuse for not filing their return on time or if they no longer need to file a return.

HMRC recognise that because of the exceptional circumstances presented by COVID-19, some taxpayers will not be able to meet their tax obligations on time, or appeal or review HMRC decisions within the usual time limit. HMRC's approach has

been to collect the tax and penalties due in a way that recognises the challenges that businesses and individuals are facing, and these figures reflect that approach.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### ■ Department for Work and Pensions: Carbon Emissions

**Paula Barker:**

[\[91181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what plans her Department has to reduce carbon emissions arising from the operations of the Department.

**Mims Davies:**

DWP has performed well in reducing its carbon emissions to date. DWP recently submitted its annual Greening Government Commitments (GGC) return for 2019/20. Our analysis shows that we have exceeded our carbon targets for 2019/20.

DWP Estates are developing the Estates Carbon Management Plan, which makes reference to the Government's Clean Growth Strategy, as well as the UK's commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2050 and the UKGBC's Net Zero Carbon Framework. The Carbon Management Plan utilises the OGP Net Zero Carbon tool, which DWP have been beta testing, to help determine prioritised impactful activities. These plans are currently being incorporated into the department's CSR20 bid to Treasury. The plan includes recommendations to:

- Improve the operational performance of our estate;
- Invest in our estate to improve energy efficiency;
- Ensure we lease highly energy efficient buildings for our long term estate;
- Ensure that energy efficiency standards are adhered to when we refurbish or fit out buildings.

It is by implementing this Carbon Management Plan that we propose to meet the forthcoming new Greening Government Commitments targets, and in doing so meet the 2032 target to halve direct emissions on the public estate. This will also position the Department on the correct pathway towards the Net Zero Carbon 2050 target.

It should be noted that, as a result of COVID-19, we are looking to lease additional estate capacity for the additional coach recruitment announced by the Chancellor. This will inevitably lead to a short-term increase in overall carbon emissions across the Estate during the period of these leases. However, the lease commitments for these additional properties will be short term (typically less than 3 years) and the Department is committed to implementing measures to reduce the carbon emissions within its longer-term property portfolio.

The Department is committed to supporting the Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) targets of 25% of its fleet to be electric vehicles (EV) by 2022 and 100% by 2030. Prior to COVID-19, plans were in place to start implementation this year. We are now reviewing the impact of COVID-19 on our plans.

**■ Department for Work and Pensions: Staff****Neil O'Brien:** [\[92883\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people work in her Department's Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety and Health team.

**Neil O'Brien:** [\[92884\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many people in her Department's Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety and Health team are responsible for work on issues relating to inclusion.

**Mims Davies:**

Of the c.80,000 Civil Servants working in the Department, there are 72 people who work in the Wellbeing, Inclusion, Safety and Health team. The total number of colleagues working on issues relating to Inclusion is 22, including 1 SCS.

**■ Jobcentres: Coronavirus****Seema Malhotra:** [\[92778\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made in enabling appointments with work coaches to be held by video.

**Mims Davies:**

Tests of the use of video for appointments with Universal Credit Work Coaches started in July and are currently being tested with claimants and Work Coaches in five job centres across the UK. Tests continue to inform understanding of the benefits to claimants and Work Coaches, to identify where barriers may exist for some claimants and to identify any limitations that may need to be overcome. The tests will inform any future evaluation of the use of video as part of the Department's operating model.

**Seema Malhotra:** [\[92779\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what her Department's policy is on the requirement to attend face-to-face appointments with work coaches at jobcentres; and whether any updated guidance has been issued to jobcentres.

**Mims Davies:**

In line with Public Health guidance and with safety measures in place across the Jobcentre network, face-to-face appointments can be booked with claimants who will benefit from this support.

Updated guidance has been issued to Jobcentres and is reviewed regularly.

As we double the number of Work Coaches, we will continue to expand multi-channel engagement with claimants, including booking appointments across our network to support people face-to-face where they need it.



## ■ Personal Independence Payment

**Jessica Morden:** [\[90090\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 81701 on Personal Independence Payment, how many of the 18,290 people who registered to claim personal independence payment since April 2018 and who died within six months of making a claim (a) had their application rejected under Normal Rules and (b) were subsequently awarded benefits after appeal; and what primary condition those claimants had.

**Jessica Morden:** [\[90091\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer on 8 September 2020 to Question 81701 on Personal Independence Payment, how many of the 18,290 people who registered a claim for personal independence payment since April 2018 and who died within six months of making a claim and who had their application rejected under Normal Rules subsequently reapplied for that benefit under the Special Rules for Terminal Illness process.

**Jessica Morden:** [\[90092\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer on 8 September 2020 to Question 81701 on Personal Independence Payment, how many of the 18,290 people who registered to claim for personal independence payment since April 2018 and who died within six months of making a claim had their application rejected.

**Justin Tomlinson:**

*[Holding answer 21 September 2020]:* Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is claimed by people with a range of health conditions and disabilities, many of which are degenerative or life limiting and the Department treats the death of any claimant sympathetically.

New Claims made under Special Rules for Terminal Illness (SRTI) are fast tracked and were being cleared in 4 working days on average in April 2020. This is compared to an average of 16 weeks for New Claims cleared under Normal Rules in April 2020, down by 62% from their peak of 42 weeks in July 2014.

The cause of death of claimants to PIP is not collated centrally by the Department. There is no evidence in this data to suggest someone's reason for claiming PIP was the cause of their death and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise.

Of the 18,290 people who registered a claim to PIP between April 2018 and October 2019 and had died within 6 months of registering a PIP claim:

- There were 2,140 claimants who had their claim disallowed at initial decision under either Normal Rules or Special Rules for the Terminally Ill.
- There were 1,860 claimants who had their claim disallowed at initial decision under Normal Rules.

- Of these 1,860 claimants, there were 30 claimants who registered a subsequent claim for PIP under Special Rules for the Terminally Ill.

Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the 1,860 claimants who had their claim disallowed at initial decision under Normal Rules by main disabling category:

**Table 1: Breakdown by Disability Category of claimants who died within 6 months of registering a PIP claim from April 2018 – October 2019 and who had their claim disallowed under Normal Rules**

DISABILITY CATEGORY	NUMBER OF CLAIMANTS
Autoimmune disease (connective tissue disorders)	-
Cardiovascular disease	30
Diseases of the liver, gallbladder, biliary tract	10
Endocrine disease	10
Gastrointestinal disease	10
Genitourinary disease	10
Haematological Disease	-
Hearing disorders	10
Infectious disease	-
Malignant disease	50
Musculoskeletal disease (general)	30
Musculoskeletal disease (regional)	20
Neurological disease	30
Psychiatric disorders	100
Respiratory disease	30
Skin disease	-
Unknown or missing	1,540
Visual disease	-
<b>Total (ALL)</b>	<b>1,860</b>

#### Notes

Sources: PIP ADS, Customer Information System

- PIP data includes normal rules and special rules for the terminally ill claimants, and is for both new claims and DLA reassessment claims.
- Data is based on primary disabling condition as recorded on the PIP computer system. Claimants may often have multiple disabling conditions upon which the decision is based but only the primary condition is shown in these statistics.
- The primary disabling condition does not get recorded until a claimant has attended an assessment. This means that claimants who are disallowed without attending an assessment (e.g. for failing to attend an assessment or for disallowances pre-referral to the Assessment Provider) do not have a disability recorded and are recorded in Table 1 as “Unknown or Missing”.
- The outcome is the first DWP decision recorded on the PIP Computer system. This does not take into account any mandatory reconsideration or Appeal action so some of these claimants may have subsequently been awarded PIP. Some cases do not have a decision recorded.
- The latest PIP Official Statistics, including data to 31 st July 2020, were published on 15 th September 2020. We have provided figures here as at 30 th April 2020 for consistency with the original answer to PQ 81701.
- This is unpublished data from the PIP computer system’s (PIP CS) management information. It should be used with caution and may be subject to future revision.
- Data has been rounded to the nearest 10.
- Fields with fewer than 5 cases are replaced by a “-“.
- Components may not sum to the total due to rounding.
- Figures cover PIP claims registered from April 2018 – October 2019, initial decisions made from April 2018 – April 2020, and deaths from April 2018 up to 30 th April 2020 as recorded at 31 st August 2020. Data may be subject to retrospection.
- GB Only.

Under the Social Security (Notification of Deaths) Regulations 2012 and s125 of Social Security Administration Act 1992 date of death is provided to the Department for all registered deaths. Additionally next of kin also provide information on the date of death of an individual and this information is used appropriately in the administration of Departmental benefits.

Of the 18,290 people who registered a claim to PIP between April 2018 and October 2019 and had died within 6 months of registering a PIP claim, there were 280 claimants who had their claim disallowed following a PIP assessment under Normal Rules up to March 2020. This does not include disallowance decisions made prior to an assessment being completed.

Appeals information for these 280 claimants show that there were 0 Appeals where the DWP decision was overturned or upheld and there were fewer than 5 appeals withdrawn/struck out or lapsed.

Due to small numbers, figures on appeal outcomes by primary disabling condition are not shown.

#### Notes

- These figures cover PIP claims registered between April 2018 and October 2019, disallowance decisions following a PIP assessment up to March 2020 and appeals to June 2020.
- Data has been rounded to the nearest 10. Fields with fewer than 5 cases are replaced by a “-”.
- This is unpublished data from the PIP computer system’s (PIP CS) management information. It should be used with caution and may be subject to future revision.
- GB Only.
- 'Appeals - withdrawn/struck out' - includes where an appeal is brought to an end, or cleared, without a determination on the issue in dispute. Struck out appeal is where the proceedings have been brought to an end by the Tribunal Judge.
- Definition of 'Appeals - lapsed' - where DWP changed the decision (in the customer’s favour) after an appeal was lodged but before it was heard at a tribunal hearing.
- Definition of 'Appeals - overturned' - where the DWP decision is revised in favour of the customer at a tribunal hearing.
- Definition of 'Appeals - upheld' - where the DWP decision is upheld at a tribunal hearing.

Under the Social Security (Notification of Deaths) Regulations 2012 and s125 of Social Security Administration Act 1992 date of death is provided to the Department for all registered deaths. Additionally next of kin also provide information on the date of death of an individual and this information is used appropriately in the administration of Departmental benefits.

#### ■ State Retirement Pensions: Females

**Mick Whitley:**

[\[92895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of enabling women affected by the Pensions Acts 1995 and 2011 to take up their state pension early in lieu of support under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, Self-employed Income Support Scheme, universal credit and other support schemes.

**Guy Opperman:**

No assessment has been made. Unlike a personal or workplace pension, which can potentially be drawn earlier on grounds of ill health, it has always been the case, under successive governments, that nobody can claim their State Pension early, before they reach their State Pension age. The welfare system continues to provide a safety-net for those who need support, that have not yet reached State Pension age.

**Mick Whitley:**

[\[92896\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment she has made of the potential effect on local economies of enabling women affected by the Pensions Acts 1995 and 2011 to receive their (a) state pension and (b) pension credit early.

**Guy Opperman:**

No assessment has been made. Unlike a personal or workplace pension, which can potentially be drawn earlier on grounds of ill health, it has always been the case, under successive governments, that nobody can claim their State Pension early, before they reach their State Pension age. The welfare system continues to provide a safety-net for those who need support, that have not yet reached State Pension age.

## ■ Universal Credit

**Rosie Cooper:**

[\[92739\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps her Department is taking to support universal credit claimants at risk of being unable to work due to being unable to pay for childcare costs upfront.

**Will Quince:**

Childcare costs should not be a barrier to getting into work – this Government is committed to helping parents into work. Universal Credit pays up to 85% of childcare costs, compared to 70% in legacy benefits and can be claimed up to a month before starting a job. For families with two children this could be worth up to £13,000 a year.

Help with upfront childcare costs for starting work is available through a non-repayable Flexible Support Fund (FSF) award for eligible Universal Credit claimants up to the limits set. This does not apply for claimants already in work. We have issued guidance to Work Coaches in Jobcentres to ensure that eligible claimants, who require help with upfront childcare costs in order to start work, are directed to the Government's FSF. The FSF received an additional £150m this financial year to help support Universal Credit claimants to move closer to, or into work. Budgeting Advances are also available to eligible claimants who require help with upfront costs.

Support with eligible childcare costs is based on reporting actual childcare costs that a household incurs as soon as those costs have been paid. Childcare costs can be reported in the same assessment period they were paid or in the following assessment period. Claimants are then reimbursed for their eligible costs within their Universal Credit award. Monthly reporting helps to support accuracy of payment, whilst also avoiding the levels of error in the Tax Credit system and the possibility of overpayments.

The Universal Credit childcare policy aligns with the wider Government childcare offer, which includes free childcare hours for children between 2 and 4 years and tax free childcare. Eligibility for children aged 2 requires household income to be less than £15,400 a year after tax, not including benefit payments. Universal Credit claimants can utilise both the free childcare entitlement and Universal Credit childcare costs in conjunction with each other for the relevant hours.

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[92756\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy to permit the direct payment of rent to landlords at any point during a universal credit claim to support the budget management of claimants.

**Will Quince:**

Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs), such as a Managed Payment to Landlord (MPtL), are already available to enable the housing costs element to be paid directly to the landlord if the tenant is likely to have difficulty in managing their rent payments or is in rent arrears. APAs can be considered at any point during a claim to Universal Credit and the decision to implement one is assessed on a case by case basis.

Our Work Coaches and Case Managers gauge claimants' financial needs from their first interview. For those who need help with budgeting, we can signpost additional support, for example through the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), who can help with personal budgeting and money management through its free helpline, printed guides and digital guidance.

**Grahame Morris:**

[\[92757\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps she is taking to help minimise the number of evictions of people in receipt of universal credit as a result of rent arrears.

**Will Quince:**

Claimants may find themselves in rent arrears for a variety of reasons, many of which can pre-date their claim to Universal Credit. The Department encourages people out of work, or on a low income, to consider whether claiming Universal Credit could provide them with additional support before issues, such as debt, spiral out of control. We promote Universal Credit through various external channels, including through the 'Understanding Universal Credit' website, to help people navigate the range of support available and provide information about how to apply.

Our own analysis shows that Universal Credit in fact reduces debts, such as rent arrears. Supporting research carried out by the National Federation of Arm's-length Management Organisations (ALMOs), shows over three quarters of their tenants come onto Universal Credit with pre-existing rent arrears. It also shows that arrears tend to increase prior to making a claim for Universal Credit, and that Universal Credit actually appears to be helping to clear arrears over time.

Recent changes to Universal Credit include temporarily increasing the standard allowance by up to £1,040 per year and increasing the Local Housing Allowance rates, including the Shared Accommodation element, so that it covers the lowest 30% of local market rents benefiting over one million households by £600 a year on average. These measures form part of an unprecedented increase to welfare spending of £9.3 billion following the outbreak of COVID-19.

The Department has also delivered a number of improvements to support claimants during their first assessment period, such as removing waiting days and paying those

claimants moving from Housing Benefit on to Universal Credit a two week 'transitional housing payment'. Since July 2020, an additional two-week run has been introduced to assist eligible claimants moving from Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (IR) and Jobseeker's Allowance (IB). Advance payments are available so nobody has to wait five weeks for payment.

## ■ Universal Credit: Coronavirus

**Kate Osamor:**

[\[91106\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, with reference to the Change Director General & Senior Responsible Owner Universal Credit, Neil Couling's statement to the Resolution Foundation on 27 May 2020 on supporting new claimants affected by the covid-19 outbreak, for what reason the Government initially sought to provide the uplift to universal credit only to people claiming universal credit since the start of the covid-19 outbreak.

**Will Quince:**

The uplift to Universal Credit is available regardless of claimant start date and not only those claiming since the start of the covid-19.

We currently spend over £95 billion a year on working age benefits, including Universal Credit, and remain committed to supporting the most vulnerable in society.

In March 2020, following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Government took unprecedented economic intervention to support jobs and people across the country, which has been supported by additional welfare spending of over £9.3 billion across a number of areas. For example, the uplift for all Universal Credit claimants, as well as Local Housing Allowance rates including the Shared Accommodation element, were increased to cover the lowest 30% of local market rents, benefiting over one million households by £600 a year on average.

## WRITTEN STATEMENTS

### CABINET OFFICE

#### ■ The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks

**Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution (Chloe Smith):**

[\[HCWS466\]](#)

I am today laying before Parliament a report, 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 March to 25 June 2020'. I am laying this report because it is a legal requirement under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for quarterly reports to be made to Parliament on the progress of the work to develop common frameworks. The report is being made available on gov.uk and details the progress made between the UK Government and devolved administrations regarding the development of common frameworks. This report details progress made during the eighth 3-month reporting period, and sets out that no 'freezing' regulations have been brought forward under section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act. A copy of the 'The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 March to 25 June 2020' report has been placed in the library of both Houses.

I am also laying before Parliament the Frameworks Analysis 2020. The analysis is being made available on gov.uk and outlines the expected implementing arrangements for each of the policy areas within the UK Common Frameworks programme. This analysis highlights the significant changes since April 2019 whilst recognising that future changes are expected throughout the remainder of the programme. A copy of the Frameworks Analysis 2020 has been placed in the library of both Houses.

**Attachments:**

1. Eighth EUWA and Common Frameworks Report [FINAL Eighth EUWA and Common Frameworks Report.pdf]
2. Frameworks Analysis 2020 [FINAL Frameworks Analysis 2020.pdf]

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

#### ■ Coronavirus update

**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):**

[\[HCWS468\]](#)

As set out by the Prime Minister in Parliament on 22 September, the Covid-19 infection rate is rising across the country. It is now vitally important that Government takes decisive action to limit any further spread, and reduce the chance of more restrictive measures.

I therefore wish to update you on the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2020 ('the No. 2 Amendment Regulations'), and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place and on Public Transport) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 which both came into force on 24 September 2020.



It is now a legal requirement for hospitality venues (including cafes, bars, pubs and restaurants) to close between the hours of 22:00 and 05:00. This rule also applies to social clubs, cinemas, theatres, concert halls, casinos, bowling alleys, amusement arcades (and other indoor leisure centres or facilities), funfairs, theme parks, and adventure parks and activities, and bingo halls. However, cinemas, theatres and concert halls will be able to remain open beyond 22:00 if the performance started before 22:00. There are certain exemptions to these restrictions, including delivery services, drive-through, and service stations. In addition, a 'table service only' policy means that customers must be seated to consume food and drink served on hospitality premises.

If businesses do not adhere to these new requirements, they could face a fine of £1000 increasing in intervals to £2000 then £4000 to a maximum of £10 000 for subsequent offences.

The "rule of six" introduced on 14 September prohibits social gatherings of more than six people in England, apart from specific exemptions. These exemptions have been further limited to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission. The amendments include: limiting attendance at support groups, weddings and wedding receptions to 15 people and removing the existing exemption for indoor team sports (except for indoor disabled sports and supervised under-18s sports), and significant life events (other than weddings, civil partnerships, and funerals).

Fines for initial breaches of the rule of 6 gathering limit have been doubled to reflect the severity of non-compliance. This means fines will be doubled from £100 to £200, doubling again upon re-offence.

Amendments to the Face Covering Regulations introduce a requirement for the public to wear a face covering in retail, leisure and hospitality venues including restaurants, public houses and bars, except for when seated to eat or drink. We have also extended the requirement to wear a face covering to staff working in these settings unless they have a reasonable excuse, in areas which are open to the public and where they are likely to come into close contact with members of the public.

The penalty for failing to wear a face covering where one is required or gathering in groups of more than six, will now increase from £100 to £200 on the first offence (reduced to £100 if paid within 14 days), rising to a maximum of £6,400 for repeat offenders with no reduction for early payment from the second fine.

Publicly available Government guidance on GOV.UK is being updated to ensure that it is consistent with the new Regulations. Sector bodies will also produce updated guidance where relevant.

**TREASURY****■ Operation of the UK's Counter-Terrorist Asset Freezing Regime: 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020**

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):** [\[HCWS467\]](#)

Under the Terrorist Asset-Freezing etc. Act 2010 (TAFAs 2010), the Treasury is required to prepare a quarterly report regarding its exercise of the powers conferred on it by Part 1 of TAFAs 2010. This written statement satisfies that requirement for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020.

This report also covers the UK's implementation of the UN's ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida asset freezing regime (ISIL-AQ), and the operation of the EU's asset freezing regime under EU Regulation (EC) 2580/2001 concerning external terrorist threats to the EU (also referred to as the CP 931 regime).

Under the ISIL-AQ asset freezing regime, the UN has responsibility for designations and the Treasury, through the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation (OFSI), has responsibility for licensing and compliance with the regime in the UK under the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida (Asset-Freezing) Regulations 2011.

Under EU Regulation 2580/2001, the EU has responsibility for designations and OFSI has responsibility for licensing and compliance with the regime in the UK under Part 1 of TAFAs 2010.

EU Regulation (2016/1686) was implemented on 22 September 2016. This permits the EU to make autonomous Al-Qaida and ISIL (Da'esh) listings.

The attached tables set out the key asset-freezing activity in the UK during the quarter.

**Attachments:**

1. Counter-Terrorist Asset Freezing Regime Q1 2020 [WMS Q1 of 2020 - Table.pdf]